



UiT The Arctic University of Norway

Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education

**Crafting Our Future Together**

Urban Diasporic Indigeneity from an Ainu  
Perspective in Japan

Kanako Uzawa

A dissertation for the degree of Philosophiae Doctor – December 2019





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# Abstract

This dissertation discusses living experiences and stories of urban Ainu youth, Indigenous people of Japan in the twenty-first century. I have weaved my own experiences as a Tokyo Ainu into the discussion in order to illustrate forms of Ainu cultural revitalization in cities. In the thesis, I ask: What attributes in cities facilitate the process of Ainu cultural revitalization?

I was born in Tomakomai, Hokkaido, dwelling in both cities and in the small community of Nibutani<sup>i</sup>, Hokkaido where I spent all my school holidays with my grandparents and cousins. Though I was often surrounded by Ainu culture and its environment in Hokkaido, I was mainly raised within the context of Wajin<sup>ii</sup> culture until my early twenties, when I was introduced to the Tokyo Ainu community. I cherish my experiences in the Tokyo Ainu community and Nibutani, which constitutes who I am today. From the Nibutani community, all the memories of smell and taste from wet rice fields, the forest, the rivers, the salmon, the delicious water I tasted in the mountain, and the Ainu dance I danced together with locals, are embedded in my body. My experiences with the Tokyo Ainu community reconnected me to the Nibutani community, where I began to recognize the Tokyo Ainu community as my *home*. This connection still lives in my heart and helps me in my daily struggles and challenges.

The dissertation investigates Ainu living experiences in the cities of Tokyo and Sapporo by introducing the concept of urban diasporic Indigeneity as an analytical tool to conceptualize contemporary Ainu lifestyles in cities.

The dissertation is based on three publications (one of which is forthcoming). Firstly, I set out to investigate how Ainu culture comes into life in Tokyo with a focus on the Ainu restaurant Rera Cise (House of Wind). This is done through various cultural practices of food culture, dance, and most importantly, sharing experiences. The dissertation later expands the discussion of Ainu cultural revitalization in cities to social encounters between Ainu and Wajin youth, with the case study of Sapporo University Urespa club. I argue that Urespa is a social venture that transforms individual and

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<sup>i</sup> Nibutani is known as one of the Ainu communities located in the south west of Hokkaido.

<sup>ii</sup> Wajin refers to people of non-Ainu or the ethnic Japanese. (See more in Siddle 1996, lewallen 2016, Watson 2014a).

collective values of *Ainu* people and *Ainu culture* into more positive experiences. Lastly, the dissertation discusses the bonding of Ainu and Wajin youth together through Ainu cultural practices within Urespa.

The main findings of the dissertation are (1) *Ainu cultural revitalization goes beyond the boundary between the Ainu and Wajin relations*, and (2) *geographical locations do not limit the possibilities for Ainu cultural revitalization*. Findings in my research indicate that Ainu culture is still alive, and continues to be carried forward with new inspiration and vision for the future.

## Acknowledgements

This Ph.D. project would not have been possible without the great support of my supervisors, friends, colleagues, the Urespa students, and not least, my family. Firstly, I would like to thank Professor Torill Nyseth and Professor Torjer Olsen for their support. Changing the initial project theme, from a comparative study between urban Sami and Ainu to focusing on urban Ainu, created some challenges but I believe we have collaborated well together, especially towards the end of the project. Thank you for your patient and professional insights. I would especially like to thank institute leader Professor Anne Britt Flemmen for her great support and advice along the way. Within UiT the Arctic University of Norway, I also like to thank colleagues and senior researchers Professor Unn-Doris K. Bæck, Professor Britt Kramvig, Associate Professor Brynhild Granås, Associate Professor Anniken Førde, Associate Professor Sissel H. Eriksen, Associate Professor Ande Somby, Associate Professor Lill Tove Fredriksen, and Associate Professor Camilla Brattland for their kind support and care. A thank you is also due to fellow Ph.D. students, post-doctor Velina Ninkova, and Gaute Svensson for stimulating discussions and support.

Friends and colleagues from abroad also supported me greatly in the process. Among them, my friend Associate Professor Mark K. Watson from Concordia University, Canada, a co-author of one of my articles who spent endless time and effort working with me. From the University of California at Santa Barbara, Associate Professor ann-elise lewallen<sup>iii</sup>, who contributed her professional insights and experiences as a long-term friend, is also very much appreciated. Professor Jeff Joseph Gayman from Hokkaido University shared his professional insights on Ainu issues. Professor Chris Andersen from the University of Alberta, Canada and Professor Troy Storfjell from the Pacific Lutheran University in Tacoma, Washington, as well as Dr. Gerald Roche from La Trobe University in Melbourne, Australia who continuously encouraged me to complete the Ph.D. project by providing constructive discussions

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<sup>iii</sup> This scholar chooses to write her name entirely in the lowercase, so I do the same throughout this dissertation.

around Indigenous and urban Indigenous issues within Indigenous Studies. They made me realize how important it is to have my own relationship to my research. A very special thank you to Dr. Björn Stenger for his great help during the editing process and continued belief in my project. I truly appreciate your faith in me to support this project. I also thank Adam King for his great work and patient proofreading in finalizing my dissertation.

To Urespa students, Professor Honda Yuko, and Okada Yuki: thank you for accepting who I am and allowing me to learn Ainu culture together. All of you have been my great inspiration in the project. I cherish all my memories with you. To my dear friend and musician Kano Oki: Thank you for your continuous support and inspiration. I listened to your music and the songs we sang together in the old days whenever I faced challenges. It helped me greatly to keep focused on the reason why I needed to do this project. To all my friends in Tokyo<sup>iv</sup>, Hokkaido and Tromsø: Thank you for always accepting me as I am. My memories with you are a treasure in my life. To my dear friend Ono Tetsuhito, who has always been available to any questions I had regarding Ainu language and issues: You are just so amazing. To my dear friend Tatsiana Tsahelnik, Hokkaido: Thank you for sharing ideas and supporting this project. Also, to my dear friend Hildegunn Bruland: Thank you for your friendship and amazing support, always. To Björn Hatteng and Winfried Dallmann: Thank you for your great support in creating such a beautiful map and thesis cover. To the global Indigenous community, thank you for having guided me; I have found your liveliness and positivity intriguing and hopeful, which has given me much inspiration and motivation in my life. This is a way to survive into the future. This has become particularly important in the sense that it has directed me towards establishing my priorities in research: to focus on ongoing Ainu issues.

To my mother Uzawa Michiko: Thank you for all your support all these years, and teaching me an important philosophy in life—to live independently and proudly as a woman. I thank my father Yamauchi Yasuo, who continuously sent me Ainu-related newspaper articles all the way from Japan to Norway. To my uncles Arai Akira and Kaizawa Koichi, aunts Kaizawa Miwako and Arai Mikiko, my cousins Kaizawa Tamaki

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<sup>iv</sup> I do not use macrons for words that are recognized and used in English.



and Taichi, and moreover, my grandfather Kaizawa Tadashi who taught me the importance of pursuing higher education: I thank you all for the great support.

Last but not least, I would like to thank my dearest family, B. Joakim Wikström, my daughters Miike Uzawa Wikström and Aino Uzawa Wikström, for their love, great patience, and support. Your love and smiles changed difficult days into joyful days. This is to remember our future: what we do now will be carried on to the next generation. I hope Miike and Aino will learn what it means to be Ainu in the twenty-first century, and beyond.



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# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CPA: the Ainu Cultural Promotion Act, entitled in full “Law for the Promotion of the Ainu Culture and for the Dissemination and Advocacy for the Traditions of the Ainu and the Ainu Culture” (Ainu Bunka no Shinkō Narabi ni Ainu Dentō tō ni Kansuru Chishiki no Fukyū oyobi Keihatsu ni Kansuru Hōritsu)

HFAPA: Hokkaido Former Aborigines Protection Act (Hokkaido kyū dojin hogohō)

ICCPR: International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

ILO C107: Indigenous and Tribal Populations Convention, 1957 (No.107)

ILO C169: Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No.169)

UN: United Nations

UNDRIP: United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

UNWGIP: United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Populations

New Ainu law: A Resolution for Promoting Measures for the Actualization of the Ethnic Pride of the Ainu People (Ainu Shinpō)

## **Design**

Maps: Specially designed by Winfried Dallmann

Thesis cover design: Kanako Uzawa and Bjørn Hatteng



# Chapter 1: Introduction: Being Ainu past and present

What are the challenges and possibilities for the contemporary urban lives of Indigenous peoples? <sup>1</sup> What can we learn about these issues by investigating encounters, negotiations, experiences between Ainu and Wajin<sup>2</sup> youths? This dissertation is an attempt to explore these questions. The focus of the dissertation is Ainu in Tokyo and Sapporo city through a study of urban diasporic Indigeneity and Ainu cultural revitalization.

The Urespa club in Hokkaido is the dissertation's main case study. The Urespa club is a social venture founded in 2010 by Professor Honda Yuko<sup>3</sup> at Sapporo University, aiming towards greater understanding of Ainu culture and language, and strengthening the relationship between the Ainu and the Wajin students. The other case is Rera Cise (House of Wind) run by Ainu in Tokyo. Those two cases highlight differences and similarities in Ainu resurgence in Tokyo and Sapporo.

Growing up as an Ainu girl, I asked myself many questions about how the Ainu people are represented in public. Throughout the course of my Ph.D., I have realized that many academic studies focus on a discourse of the Ainu as something distant, or take an observational approach to Ainu culture. Based on my personal experiences, this imbalanced way of conducting research on the Ainu people influences how Ainu culture is viewed and discussed. I found many negatively skewed representations, in stark contrast to my personal experience and understanding of the Ainu culture and people. This discovery triggered my desire to explore Ainu life through the youths' perspectives with the hope that it suggests a new perspective to the research field of Ainu Studies<sup>4</sup>.

This dissertation is methodologically and theoretically inspired by Indigenous methodologies, Indigenous Studies, social anthropology, and cultural geography. These different disciplines have enabled me to understand and analyze empirical data in a wider perspective. An overall aim is to contextualize the missing linkage between policy,

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<sup>1</sup> The usage of the term *Indigenous peoples* is discussed in this Chapter 1; *1.8 Defining Indigenous peoples* and *1.9 Ainu participation in the international Indigenous movement*.

<sup>2</sup> Wajin refers to people of non-Ainu or the ethnic Japanese. In this dissertation, I employ the term Wajin to refer to non-Ainu or the ethnic Japanese in order to clarify the point that having Japanese citizenship does not define one's ethnicity. (See more in Siddle 1996, lewallen 2016, Watson 2014a).

<sup>3</sup> Japanese naming conventions place family name first.

<sup>4</sup> See more in Chapter 1; *1.5. Previous research on Ainu Studies and Urban Ainu Studies*.

law and community level of Ainu lived experiences, which may be relevant to a larger discussion of global Indigenous politics. I aim to provide new knowledge about Ainu living experiences in contemporary Japanese society. One analytical contribution is to bring in a new way of looking into ethnic identity making in cities through a study of social relations between Ainu and Wajin. I and the co-author of Article 2, Mark K. Watson, introduce a new term, *creative relationality*, as a concept to describe these relations. *Creative relationality* could be understood as a new way of enacting ethnic identities through creative activities, at the same time enhancing a sense of collectivity and togetherness. This opens up a dialogue on ethnic identity politics, and challenges the conventional story of Otherness in Japan. In addition, this dissertation contributes towards creating space for an alternative interpretation of Ainu cultural revitalization as something that is not limited to the past. Finally, I envision that my research will create space for critical thinking in Ainu Studies. By highlighting the Ainu as one of the Indigenous communities in Asia, the dissertation also contributes to the field of Indigenous Studies.

The Ainu are Indigenous<sup>5</sup> people<sup>6</sup> from the areas of northern Japan and Russia who have traditionally lived with rich natural resources of deer, salmon and edible plants, and with great respect for nature. The Ainu culture has been traditionally described as a culture that maintains a complex relationship between the natural world and humans, forming the basis for diverse ceremonies, some of which are still carried out to this day (Uzawa, 2019b). Around the thirteenth century, the formation of “what is now regarded as Ainu culture developed out of the Satsumon culture” (Siddle, 1996, p. 26); later, in the late nineteenth century, the Ainu were forcibly incorporated into the project of modern Japanese nation-building.

Richard Siddle discusses the colonization of Hokkaido, suggesting that it should be understood “[...] within the broader historical contexts of nation- and empire-building that created ‘indigenous’ peoples from the Arctic to the South Pacific during

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<sup>5</sup> In the dissertation, I capitalize “Indigenous” referring to its description by Shawn Wilson: “As Indigenous people become more active politically and in the field of academia, the term Indigenous, as an adjective, has come to mean ‘relating to Indigenous people and peoples.’ The word Indigenous carries political implications” (2008, p. 15).

<sup>6</sup> There are diverse regional differences within Ainu culture. Each *kotan*—meaning “community” in the Ainu language—was historically autonomous within its own territory (see more in Gayman, 2018).



the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries” (1996, p. 3). The disposition of the Ainu as inferior people is not something unique to Japan, but rather something also recognizable in other parts of the world. Around the same period, the Japanese academic landscape was heavily characterized by the discourse of “race” together with Social Darwinism through a Western scientific understanding (Siddle, 1996, p. 3). The Ainu became a fascinating topic for researchers in Japan.

The academic discourse about the Ainu has been mainly led by outsiders’ perspectives. Tessa Morris-Suzuki shares her view on how the Ainu perspective has been marginalized: “[...T]he voices of Ainu people themselves are still often excluded from academic discourse about Ainu society, or, if included, are treated as token representations of ‘authenticity’ in a discourse dominated by non-Ainu scholars” (2014, p. 65). One of the themes in this dissertation is to contribute an *insider’s* perspective to the discourse of the Ainu. It also attempts to raise awareness of the contemporary urban life of the Ainu in Japanese society. The dissertation illustrates how contemporary Ainu have adopted a Wajin lifestyle, speaking Japanese as their mother tongue and enrolling in Japanese public schools. Throughout, I weave in personal experiences and stories from the time of my upbringing in Nibutani<sup>7</sup>, on the island of Hokkaido, and from Tokyo.

To provide a general insight into contemporary Japanese society, I also discuss the complexity of everyday life among the urban Ainu and Wajin youth and their identity negotiation by shedding light on a paradox of contemporary Japanese society. Japan has been described as a homogenous society (Lie, 2001; Siddle, 1996), in which people tend to have a strong sense of homogeneity, while in reality, Japan consists of a population that is culturally, ethnically, and socially diverse. Japan today is a mix of culturally and ethnically different groups such as the Ryukyans, people Indigenous to Okinawa<sup>8</sup>; the Ainu, Indigenous people traditionally residing in Hokkaido; the Zainichi, Koreans born in Japan; the Burakumin<sup>9</sup>, naturalized immigrants; and, increasingly, foreign migrants. As John Lie states “By the early 1990s most people acknowledged that Japan had

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<sup>7</sup> Nibutani is known as one of the Ainu communities located in the south west of Hokkaido.

<sup>8</sup> Ryukyans have claims to be Indigenous to Okinawa; however, the government has not yet recognized them as Indigenous peoples of Japan.

<sup>9</sup> Burakumin are considered an outcast group forcibly placed at the bottom of the traditional Japanese social order (Japan’s feudal order).

become considerably less ethnically homogeneous than it had been” (2001, p. 17). This dissertation also touches upon how this paradox affects the way that both Ainu and Wajin youth in contemporary Japan relate to their own ethnicity, identity, and culture.

The focus on *urban*<sup>10</sup> Ainu is intended to challenge the general notion within a national context: that of Ainu living in urban areas being viewed as *out of place*, which I will discuss further in the dissertation. In this regard, I argue that urban Ainu are marginalized among an already marginalized people, the Ainu. In addition, it is remarkable that there is very little literature on Ainu in cities (see more in Chapter 1 Section 1.5). However, this phenomenon is not unique to the urban Ainu, as Evelyn Peters and Chris Andersen state: “In many developed countries, most Indigenous people live in urban areas, yet relatively few researchers work in this area and little is known about Indigenous urbanization patterns and experiences” (2013, pp. 1-2). Considering the growing numbers of Indigenous peoples in cities, this is paradoxical. As a report by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs states, 66% of the world’s population will be living in urban areas by 2050 (2014, p. 2). Furthermore, Peters and Andersen use the data from demographic analyses provided for various countries, revealing that approximately 50% of Indigenous peoples in Canada live in urban areas, well over 80% in Aotearoa New Zealand, over 80% in Australia (which includes peri-urban locales), while about two-thirds of Native Americans reside in urban areas in the United States (2013, p. 378). In Japan, there has been no nationwide statistical survey based on ethnicity. However, Ainu in Tokyo suggest that there are as many as 10,000 Ainu living in and around the capital region<sup>11</sup> (Watson, 2014b, p. 69).

Finally, the dissertation positions the Urespa case study in a larger context by broadening the Urespa discussion to one of the Ainu becoming an Indigenous global player at the international arena of the twenty-first century by suggesting that contemporary Ainu life goes beyond a fixed idea of the Ainu being perceived as an extinct race (*horobiyuku minzoku*), essentially inferior and Other to the modern nation-

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<sup>10</sup> In the dissertation I make particular use of the cities of Sapporo and Tokyo. For further discussion on the complexities of cities and urban space in which Indigenous peoples reside (which is otherwise beyond the scope of this research), please see Peters and Andersen, 2013b; and Ramirez, 2007.

<sup>11</sup> Regarding the Ainu population around the capital region, please see Chapter 1; 1.2 *Being Ainu in Japan today*.

state (Siddle, 1996).

## **1.1 Research questions**

This dissertation seeks to explore some key elements of Ainu cultural revitalization in Tokyo and Sapporo through the analysis of urban diasporic Indigeneity among Ainu and Wajin youth.

The main research question is: *How does urban space provide challenges and opportunities to the expression of Ainu Indigeneity in contemporary Japanese society?*

The dissertation takes a local starting point by illustrating the status and situation of urban Ainu from the national to the international context. Therefore, the first sub-question is: (1) *What is the situation for the Ainu in Japan, and also for the Tokyo Ainu community, with a special focus on Indigenous policy at the national and international policy level?*

The second sub-question is posed at a new location, Sapporo, where I analyze Urespa as a social venture. I ask: (2) *How does Urespa work as an arena for social encounters between Ainu and Wajin students, empowering them as actors in the expression of Ainu Indigeneity?*

In the third sub-question, I ask: (3) *How is the Ainu cultural revitalization received and processed within Urespa?*

In answering those questions, the dissertation demonstrates the attributes that constitute living experiences of Ainu and Wajin youth in contemporary Japanese society.

## **1.2 Being Ainu in Japan today**

The Ainu (meaning *human beings* in the Ainu language) are the Indigenous people of northern Japan, traditionally occupying the geographic area incorporating the Kurile

Islands, southern Sakhalin, Hokkaido, and parts of northern Honshu<sup>12</sup>. This area has been the site of disputes between the Ainu and the Wajin Japanese as well as between the powers of Japan and Russia (see figure 1).

When it comes to the question of identifying who the Ainu are today, Japan does not collect data on ethnicity in the national census. Thus, the ethnic make-up of Japan is unclear. However, two types of survey on Ainu living conditions have been conducted by the Japanese government. The first type has been conducted in Hokkaido every seven years since 1972 by the Hokkaido prefectural government (Advisory Council for Future Ainu Policy, 2009, p. 16). The second type was a first nationwide survey on Ainu living conditions outside of Hokkaido in 2011 by the Japanese central government (Council for Ainu Policy Promotion Working Group on the Ainu Living Conditions Outside of Hokkaido Survey, 2011; see more Uzawa, 2018).

As mentioned above, Ainu in Tokyo suggest there could be as many as 10,000 members of the Ainu community living in and around the capital region (Watson, 2014b, p. 69), while the most recent nationwide survey, the *Ainu Living Conditions outside of Hokkaido Survey*<sup>13</sup> in 2011 only had 210 respondents (Council for Ainu Policy Promotion Working Group on the Ainu Living Conditions Outside of Hokkaido Survey, 2011, p. 3). In addition, another survey, in which Ainu outside Hokkaido were included, was conducted in 2016, the *Consciousness Survey on the Degree of Public Understanding for Ainu People*. The number of Ainu survey respondents living in Kanto<sup>14</sup> was only 28 individuals (see more Council for Ainu Policy Promotion, 2016, p. 4). The vast difference in those numbers clearly shows a challenge in articulating the Ainu population in and around the capital.

When it comes to the Hokkaido Ainu population, according to the latest report from the *Hokkaido Ainu Living Conditions Survey*<sup>15</sup> in 2017, the number of Ainu in the

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<sup>12</sup> Honshu is the largest of the four major islands that form the Japanese archipelago.

<sup>13</sup> Survey participants are Ainu people migrated from Hokkaido after the Meiji era (1868–1912) and their descendants who are over 15 years old. However, those who have Ainu bloodlines but do not consider themselves as Ainu are not counted as Ainu in the survey (Council for Ainu Policy Promotion Working Group on the Ainu Living Conditions Outside of Hokkaido Survey, 2011, p. 2).

<sup>14</sup> The Kanto region includes the Greater Tokyo area.

<sup>15</sup> The criteria for being considered Ainu in the *Hokkaido Ainu Living Conditions Survey* in 2017 include individuals who are considered to have Ainu bloodlines in their communities, those who identify themselves as Ainu, and those who reside with Ainu due to marriage as well as adoption. However,

region consisted of 13,118<sup>16</sup> individuals in 5,571 households across 63 municipalities (Department of Hokkaido Environment & Lifestyle, 2017, p. 3 and see figure 1 ), which is a decline of nearly 45% in the Ainu population compared to the 23,782 individuals in 8,274 households in 72 municipalities recorded in the 2006 survey (Department of Hokkaido Environment & Lifestyle, 2006, p. 3). In addition, the 2017 survey states that the response rate is not 100% for some parts of the survey due to protection of individual information (Department of Hokkaido Environment & Lifestyle, 2017, p. 1). Overall, it is not controversial to assume that the vast difference in the numbers of the Ainu population can be linked to the fact that Japan does not collect data on ethnicity in the national census, and lingering prejudices and discrimination (see more Council for Ainu Policy Promotion, 2016).

Besides the survey by the Japanese government, the *Hokkaido Ainu Living Conditions Survey* in 2008 by the Hokkaido University Center for Ainu and Indigenous Studies confirms some of the challenges the Ainu face. It shows that the college entrance rate of Ainu is only half of the national average. Over 70% of those who entered higher education reported financial difficulties (Advisory Council for Future Ainu Policy, 2009, p. 16). Moreover, the *Ainu Living Conditions outside of Hokkaido Survey* gives the following reasons for migration from Hokkaido: 50% for work, 10.1% for education, and 11.4% to escape discrimination towards the Ainu (Council for Ainu Policy Promotion Working Group on the Ainu Living Conditions Outside of Hokkaido Survey, 2011, p. 27). It is generally understood among Ainu outside of Hokkaido that a breadwinner, usually the man in the household, leaves Hokkaido for seasonal or permanent work to support the family back in Hokkaido. This lifestyle is considered as a normal part of the urban and Hokkaido Ainu experience in contemporary Japanese society. When it comes to discrimination towards the Ainu can be rather harsh, especially in Hokkaido. The reasons behind the discrimination can differ. It can be from remarking on different physical appearances in comparison to the Wajin based on a

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those who have Ainu bloodlines but do not consider themselves as Ainu are not counted as Ainu in the survey (Department of Hokkaido Environment & Lifestyle, 2017, p. 1).

<sup>16</sup> The survey states that the number does not cover the total Ainu population in Hokkaido, but represents the numbers that each city managed to count (Department of Hokkaido Environment & Lifestyle, 2017, p. 3).

fixed stereotype of the Ainu, to the challenging social and financial conditions of the Ainu (see more in Council for Ainu Policy Promotion, 2016).

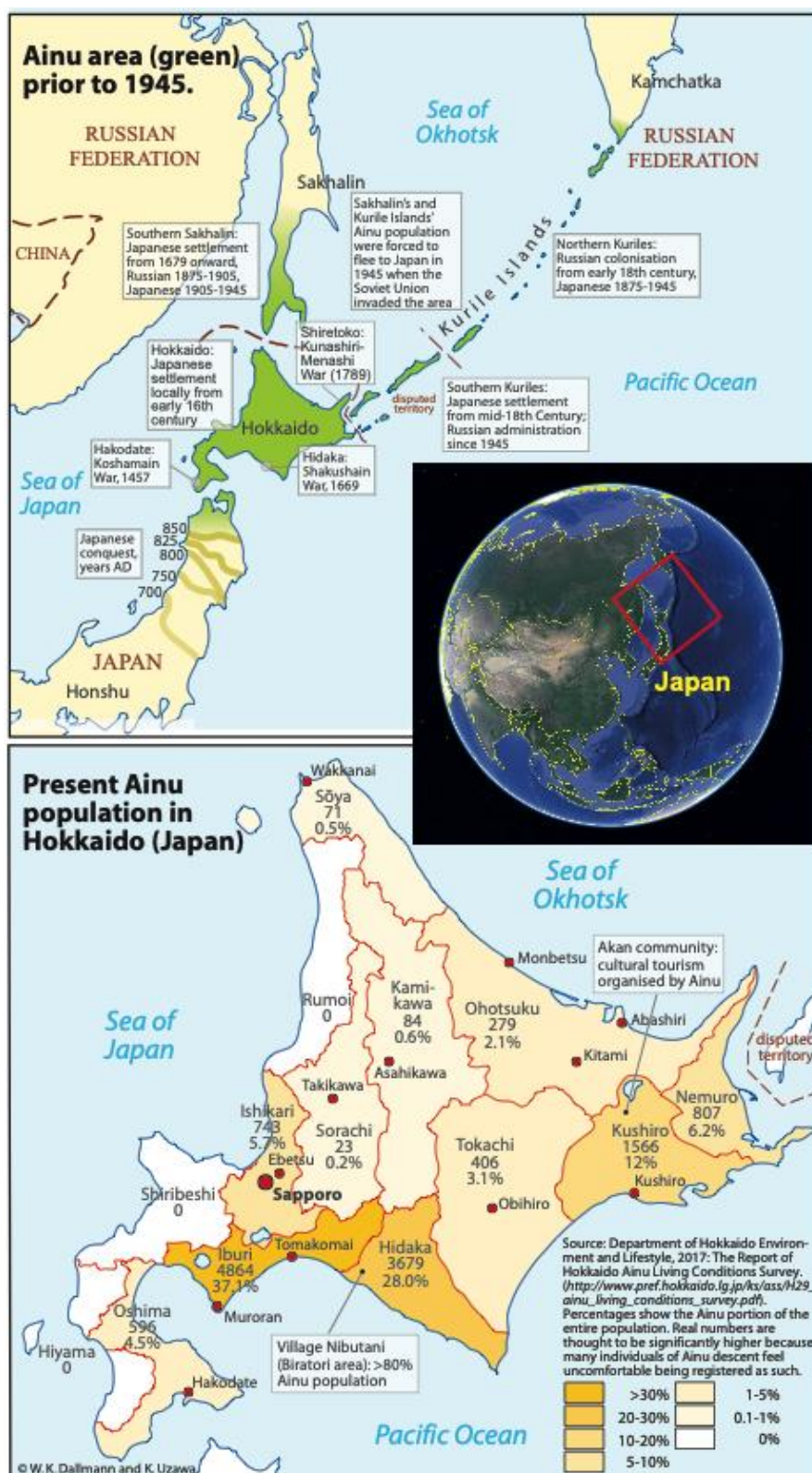


Figure 1 Maps showing the historical and present distribution of AINU in Japan and Russian Federation. It is based on AINU population by the Report of Hokkaido Ainu Living Conditions Survey 2017, and map of Hokkaido indicating global location. Data compiled by Uzawa, K and Dallmann WK, drawn by WK. Dallmann, Tromsø 2007 (updated 2018 and 2019)

### 1.3 Images of Ainu in Japan and overseas

What is considered to be the first authentic artwork portraying the Ainu after *Ezo-shi*<sup>17</sup> was created by Komada Teiryō, a Japanese artist who was active between 1751–1764 (Sasaki, 1999, pp. 82–83). The artworks show colorfully painted Ainu garments, traditional ornaments, and detailed facial expressions. It should also be noted, however, that “The images of Ainu life and customs that were produced by Japanese travelers and are known as *Ainu-e* are valuable sources [...] although such works also reflect occasionally mistaken and prejudicial views of Ainu society” (Siddle, 1999a, p. 67). Such prejudices can be seen in the portrayal of Ainu with hairy bodies, darker skin, and so forth. Thus, this representation of the Ainu by the Wajin in the artistic tradition of *Ainu-e* continues to portray the Ainu as “[...] an inferior and barbaric Other” (Hudson, Iwawaki, & Watson, 2014, p. 1).

When it comes to information about the Ainu outside of Japan, Hans Dieter Ölschleger states: “Knowledge of the existence of the Ainu first appeared in the West in the writings of Jesuit fathers only a few years after the discovery of Japan by the Portuguese adventurer Fernão Mendez Pinto and a few companions in 1543” (Ölschleger, 2014, p. 26). In his work, he describes the period when Japan was finally forced to end its age of self-imposed seclusion,<sup>18</sup> which had isolated Japan from the rest of the world for more than two hundred years, by American commander Perry and his “black ships” in 1853–1854. Publications about the Ainu for the public, including the scholarly world, have grown since the beginning of the 1870s, where “The overwhelming majority of these descriptions were based on firsthand encounters with the Ainu, but nevertheless they were biased by preconceived ideas concerning the development of cultures” (Ölschleger, 2014, p. 33).

He further explains that among those missionaries who visited or stayed in Hokkaido, the Englishman John Batchelor (1901, 1902) was the most prominent missionary. Batchelor spent a period of 63 years in Hokkaido trying to convert the Ainu to Christianity, yet continued to hold onto the idea of the Ainu as *primitive* (Ölschleger,

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<sup>17</sup> *Ezo-shi* sketched Ainu people and material cultures as graphic ethnography from the early eighteenth century (Sasaki, 1999, p. 82).

<sup>18</sup> The period is known as *Sakoku* (closed country), which restricted relations and trade between Japan and the rest of the world during the Tokugawa shogunate.



2014, pp. 36–37). He explains Batchelor’s interpretation of *primitive* as “One characteristic of the primitive way of thinking is its missing thoughtfulness for the future [...]” (Ölschleger, 2014, p. 37). I understand this as the Ainu being perceived by Batchelor as a primitive people who were not able to develop their culture in accordance with his perception of *civilization*, which was based on British society. Overall, Ölschleger gives an account of documentations of the Ainu from various visitors to Hokkaido from the sixteenth to the twentieth century. They all seem to fail to see the Ainu as living human beings with a different cultural and social structure. As presented in Article 2 (see more Uzawa & Watson, 2020), this has, to some degree, become evident in my research where some of my research participants with Ainu heritage expressed their fear of being perceived as people who still live in a traditional lifestyle (see more in Uzawa & Watson, 2020). This signals that the backward image of the Ainu still continues into the twenty-first century (see also Council for Ainu Policy Promotion, 2016).

However, it is worth noting that the younger generation of Ainu are emerging to express their culture and identity through music, dance, arts, and even traditional practices such as holding ceremonies, weddings and so forth, both in Hokkaido and in other parts of the country (see more Kitahara, 2019; Uzawa, 2018, 2019b).

How are the Ainu presented in the contemporary public discourse? As argued in Articles 2 and 3 (Uzawa, 2019b; Uzawa & Watson, 2020), some Wajin students indicate that it is rare to encounter Ainu people and culture in their daily life. In reality, there are many occasions in which one may encounter the Ainu and Ainu culture without being aware of this. Such situations can be in schools, neighborhoods, work places, and so forth. Other examples are geographical locations or through commercial food brands in Hokkaido that are named using the Ainu language. Such small signs of Ainu culture are embedded in the everyday life of people in Hokkaido. Moreover, increasingly over the years, there have been more Ainu-related events and public concerts available for audiences in Japan and even overseas, for example by musician Kano Oki (see Kano, 2019). There is also increased coverage of Ainu-related topics in the media (Hokkaido Shimbun, 17 July, 2018; Murata, 11 May, 2018; Yoshida, 16 February, 2019), while there are still few open forums or places for dialogue between the Ainu and Wajin.

One example of the Ainu being perceived as an extinct race is a 2014 post on Twitter by Sapporo city councilman Kaneko Yasuyuki, stating that Ainu people do not exist anymore (Iewallen, 2015; Uzawa & Watson, 2020). Overall, this signals a lack of information about the Ainu and Ainu culture in contemporary Japanese society.

## **1.4 Historical background from 1869**

The land of the Ainu, *Ainu Mosir* in the Ainu language (also previously called *Ezochi*), was renamed as Hokkaido in 1869. It constitutes approximately 20% of Japan's national territory. Hokkaido is located in sub-arctic northern Japan. Due to its geographical location, central government policy toward the Ainu in the modern period was tied to Japanese and Russian diplomatic relations (Oguma, 1998, p. 53). Hokkaido was considered a disputed territory between Russia and Japan, while the Ainu were considered neither a military threat nor economically relevant to the Japanese government due to Hokkaido's low population (Oguma, 1998, p. 53). The contact through trade between the Wajin and Ainu goes back to the fourteenth century (Siddle, 2003, p. 451). This changed when the Meiji government took full control of Hokkaido by redrawing the northern national border in 1869. In 1899, the Ainu were legally categorized by the Japanese government as former aborigines under the Hokkaido Former Aborigines Protection Act (hereafter HFAPA) (Siddle, 1999b, p. 108). The original Ainu territory thus became part of the Japanese colonization strategy. Oguma describes the purpose of the colonization and assimilation of the Ainu was not to reform the Ainu, but rather to possess Ainu land as Japanese territory in order to create defensive borders towards the West, based on the belief that sending a great number of Wajin to Hokkaido would eventually achieve the goal of the colonization, rather than focusing on Japanizing the Ainu (1998, pp. 54–55).

HFAPA was aimed at assimilating the Ainu into modern Japanese society in the name of protecting the Ainu people by banning the Ainu traditional lifestyle of fishing, hunting and gathering (Siddle, 1999a, p. 72; Sonohara, 1997). Oguma (1998) further mentions a prohibition in both 1871 and 1876 by which the Ainu were no longer allowed to practice tattooing or to wear earrings, but had to learn the Japanese language. In the same year, 1871, under the enactment of Family Registration Law, the Ainu were

registered as commoners by changing their names to Japanese names (Oguma, 1998, p. 54). The shift from hunting and gathering to an agricultural lifestyle led many Ainu communities into severe economic hardship.

Hokkaido was referred to as “an empty land” by the government and transformed into a colony within the new Japanese state (Siddle, 1999a, pp. 71–72). The largest tracts of land were used to experiment with western technology in order to produce “[...] dairy products, salmon, aquaculture, and canned product processing” (Cheung, 2003, p. 952). In 1997, HFAPA was finally repealed; it was replaced in the same year with *the Ainu Cultural Promotion Act* (hereafter CPA), or in full, the *Law for the Promotion of the Ainu Culture and for the Dissemination and Advocacy for the Traditions of the Ainu and the Ainu Culture*, the first multi-cultural legislation in Japan (Iewallen, 2008; Siddle, 2002). In his 2003 publication, Richard Siddle describes this law as follows:

[...] the government appeared to finally abandon the myth of homogeneity and embrace multiculturalism by enacting the so-called Ainu Cultural Promotion Act (CPA). This “Ainu New Law”, however, bears little resemblance to that which Ainu activists had been campaigning for since 1984 [...] Of particular concern is the power of the state to define and legitimate one particular version of Ainu culture – the “traditional” – as authentic [...] Moreover, the CPA indicates that the government’s strategy is to focus on “culture” in order to de-politicize the Ainu problem and disconnect it from the international struggle for indigenous rights. (Siddle, 2003, pp. 455–456).

Furthermore, Stevens points out: “Notably, the subject of the CPA is Ainu culture, not Ainu peoples or Ainu rights” (Stevens, 2014, p. 211). This can be seen in Article 2 of the CPA, which defines what Ainu culture means in this law: “[T]he Ainu language and cultural properties such as music, dance, crafts, and other cultural properties which have been inherited by the Ainu people, and other cultural properties developed from these” (The House of Representatives Japan, 1997). This law thus focuses on Ainu culture; the Ainu are not referred to as a distinct group (Siddle, 2003, p. 457).

My understanding regarding the CPA is that it received much criticism at the grassroots level because it did not support or strengthen the independence of the Ainu nor the livelihood of the Ainu as Indigenous peoples of Japan. The colonization and assimilation policies had had a great impact on Ainu society, leading to many economic

and social struggles, none of which were addressed in the CPA.

## 1.5 Previous research on Ainu Studies and Urban Ainu Studies

The history of Ainu Studies is a vast research field. Yamada cites Irimoto's estimate of over 3,500 volumes of Japanese Ainu Studies, if defining Japanese Ainu Studies to include all the Ainu and culture-related studies conducted in Japan (Irimoto, 1992, cited in Yamada, 2003, pp. 75–76).

Around the turn of the twentieth century, the Ainu came to be perceived as a “dying race”<sup>19</sup> and became accessible as “tailor-made material for research” used in the development of anthropology, archaeology, and linguistics in Japan (Siddle, 1996, pp. 76–77). Physical anthropology was one of the earliest areas of Ainu Studies. One example is George Busk's paper “Description of an Aino skull” in 1868 (Hudson et al., 2014, p. 3). Unethical research methods and the stealing or collecting Ainu human remains and funeral accessories from Ainu cemeteries in Hokkaido continued until the mid-twentieth century (Hudson et al., 2014, p. 4). Kodama Sakuzaemon (1970) is one of leading figures in osteological research of the twentieth century, having “[...] collected and analyzed more than a thousand Ainu skeletal remains” (Hudson et al., 2014, p. 4). Kodama's collections are stored at Hokkaido University even today (Iewallen, 2007). Moreover, through the influence of Social Darwinism and racial typologies in Europe, Koganei Yoshikio (1935), known as the father of Japanese archaeology, collected Ainu skeletal remains for racial typologies and ethnogenesis for a discussion on the Ainu in Japan (Iewallen, 2007, p. 513). In his book *European Studies on Ainu Language and Culture*, Josef Kreiner writes “European scholar-visitors had earlier claimed Ainu to be distant ‘Caucasian’ brethren residing in Asia at the close of nineteenth century” (Kreiner, 1993, cited in Iewallen, 2007, p. 513).

These lines of research on the Ainu are nowadays seen as highly problematic, and further attention is needed in academia to reassess how this has influenced the

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<sup>19</sup> In this dissertation, I do not go into a discussion of racialization. However, the discussion of racialization of the Ainu is taken up by, for example, Richard Siddle in his work, *The Ainu and the Discourse of ‘Race’* (Siddle, 1997).

development of present research, and furthermore, its effect on the general public discourse of the Ainu both in Japan and the world.

In terms of studies by Ainu scholars, few academic papers have been published by the Ainu themselves. Two of the most recognized Ainu scholars are Chiri Mashiho, who specialized in the field of Ainu linguistics (1952, 1953, 1955, 1956) and Kayano Shigeru (Kayano, 1990, 1996), the first Ainu politician, serving in the Diet of Japan from 1994 to 1998, who devoted his life to the further development of the Ainu language and education in the Ainu community. It is only recently that a handful of young Ainu-identified researchers has begun to present first-hand and indigenous perspectives. Moreover, amongst younger researchers who have emerged recently are Kitahara Jirota (2011, 2019), who focuses on Ainu language and Ainu culture, including Ainu music, photography, and films, with a focus on rituals and ceremonies; Ishihara Mai, who recently completed her auto-ethnographical doctorate thesis *“Silence”: the process of becoming subaltern and the post-colonial situation* (2018); and Tsuda Nobuko (2014a, 2014b), who, at the age of 69, completed a dissertation on Ainu clothing culture. Importantly, emerging Ainu-identified scholars increasingly seem to focus on contributing to the Ainu community by targeting the present for their research. This modern scholarship provides a richer alternative interpretation and understanding of Ainu culture, and what it means to be Ainu today.

In terms of urban Ainu Studies, there are only very few academic studies on urban Ainu, of which only few again are in English: Simon Cotterill’s article “Documenting Urban Indigeneity: Tokyo Ainu and the 2011 survey on the living conditions of Ainu outside Hokkaido” (2011) sheds lights on Ainu within Greater Tokyo and explores the complex contemporary urban life of Ainu through the lens of the documentary film “TOKYO Ainu”. Cotterill touches upon an important point—*urban Indigeneity* presented through the challenges and struggles the Tokyo Ainu face.

The second is the article by Nakamura Naohiro, “Being Indigenous in a non-Indigenous Environment: Identity Politics of the Dogai Ainu<sup>20</sup> and new Indigenous Policies of Japan” (2015), which investigates socioeconomic relations and identities of Dogai Ainu in a non-Indigenous environment. Nakamura states:

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<sup>20</sup> *Dogai Ainu* refers to Ainu living outside of Hokkaido.

[...] the Dogai Ainu – the Ainu who left their original homeland of Hokkaido and live elsewhere in Japan – have experienced “statistical genocide”, the rejection of their Indigenous identity, and a lack of social welfare services, such as protections for life and employment, scholarships, and financial support for cultural promotion (Nakamura, 2015, p. 661).

Nakamura also touches upon identity politics among urban Ainu, providing representations of what it means to be urban Ainu. Both Cotterill and Nakamura describe the complexity of urban Ainu everyday life in Tokyo. The articles give an insight into urban Ainu life and their vulnerability in their environment, which is an important contribution to urban Ainu Studies. In contrast, this dissertation goes beyond descriptions of the vulnerability of urban Ainu toward more open views on how Ainu and Wajin youth in cities perform and experience Ainu cultural practices.

Relevant studies to my research are Mark K. Watson’s *Japan’s Ainu Minority in Tokyo: Diasporic indigeneity and urban politics* (2014a) and *Diasporic Indigeneity: Place and the articulation of Ainu identity in Tokyo, Japan* (2010), and his book chapter “Tokyo Ainu and the urban Indigenous experience” (2014b). Watson’s work explores marginalized people in history in the national context of Japan, in particular how Tokyo Ainu re-oriented themselves in or around Tokyo after the early 1950s. Based on his ethnographic research, the study sheds light on Ainu living experiences and the unknown diasporic side of Ainu life and society in Tokyo. Watson uses *diasporic Indigeneity* as a main theoretical framework to discuss the complexity of identity politics by focusing on individual agency and human-centered experiences in and around Tokyo.

This dissertation differs from Watson’s work in that it brings new understandings of Ainu cultural practices in a city other than Tokyo and the Kanto area, and in that it includes the voices of the younger generation. In addition, the dissertation focuses more on Wajin and Ainu relations in the context of reconciliation.

As for Japanese publications, Sekiguchi Yoshihiko (2007) published an academic book based on his ethnography, compiling life stories of Ainu encountered at a Tokyo Ainu restaurant called Rera Cise (“House of Wind”) where he worked as a waiter, as well as his experience as an Ainu living around Tokyo. In terms of non-academic literature, there is respected Ainu activist and artist Ukaji Shizue (2011), who wrote an

essay about her life story from her childhood to her life in Tokyo. Rera no kai (the Association of Rera) in Tokyo (1997) compiled the history of the Rera Cise restaurant, including members' life stories and their involvement with the restaurant. Lastly, Ogasawara Nobuyuki (1990) wrote a reportage compiling life stories of Tokyo Ainu in the 1980s. These are rich narratives of urban Ainu that give an insightful view of their everyday life in Tokyo. These differ from this study in that this dissertation discusses the everyday lives of urban Ainu and Wajin in an analysis of *diasporic Indigeneity* and *Ainu cultural revitalization*. Moreover, it suggests a possible and alternative way of *doing* Ainu culture together by opening up a dialogue between Ainu and Wajin youth.

## 1.6 Ainu modern history from 1997 to 2019

In 1997, the enactment of the Ainu Cultural Promotion Act brought much dissatisfaction to the Ainu community as it failed to make a binding resolution to recognize the Ainu as Indigenous peoples. The Ainu share many of the political, cultural, and economic challenges that other Indigenous peoples in the world face. It was only in 2008 that the Japanese government recognized the Ainu as an *Indigenous people* of Japan (Advisory Council for Future Ainu Policy, 2009, p. 1). This official status continues to be a contentious point since it recognizes neither any right for self-determination, nor collective rights. As a backdrop of the 2008 resolution, in September 2007, the government of Japan voted in favor of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (hereafter UNDRIP), while refusing to recognize the Ainu as *Indigenous peoples* of Japan according to the standards of international law (see more Stevens, 2014). This implied not being bound by legal guidelines of self-determination and collective rights provided by UNDRIP and ILO C169, entitled fully as Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No.169) (hereafter ILO C169).

However, the 2008 resolution was still a major political shift within Indigenous politics in Japan, where both houses of the Japanese Diet passed a “Resolution calling for recognition of the Ainu People as an Indigenous People” in June 2008 (see more Stevens, 2008). lewallen<sup>21</sup> interprets the hasty adoption of the resolution being linked to

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<sup>21</sup> This scholar chooses to write her name entirely in the lowercase, so I do the same throughout this dissertation.

the governments' anticipation of global attention due to the Indigenous Peoples Summit (IPS)<sup>22</sup> in Hokkaido in July and grassroots protests in Tokyo in May, which took place just before the G8 summit<sup>23</sup> in Hokkaido in July 2008 (Iewallen, 2008).

Participants in the grassroots protest in Tokyo by Ainu living outside of Hokkaido made an important public statement by submitting their "Petition on the Rights of Ainu Living Outside of Hokkaido" to the Prime Minister's Office, signed by over 6,600 people (Watson, 2014a, p. 156). The Ainu Utari Renrakukai<sup>24</sup> (liaison) submitted six demands:

- (1) that the government formally recognize the Ainu as Indigenous peoples
- (2) that it officially apologizes to Ainu for the history of colonization
- (3) that the Ainu Cultural Promotion Act (1997) be reviewed
- (4) that a new national Ainu policy be enacted, based on a government-sponsored nationwide survey of Ainu living conditions
- (5) that a new Ainu/ethnic law be implemented, and
- (6) that a commission of inquiry be set up to design it (see more Iewallen, 2008; Watson, 2014a, p. 156)

In 2019, some of general claims have been met, and even implemented to some degree. However, some of the key issues have not been met to the satisfaction of the Ainu parties. First, the government formally recognized the Ainu in 2008, but fundamental problems still remain. Second, the first ever nationwide Ainu living condition survey was conducted in 2011; however, certain limitations in the survey process were pointed out (Cotterill, 2011; Council for Ainu Policy Promotion Working Group on the Ainu Living Conditions Outside of Hokkaido Survey, 2011).

Finally, the new Ainu law was enacted on April 19, 2019 by the Japanese government (Hokkaido Shimbun, 19 April, 2019). The Japanese Cabinet submitted a

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<sup>22</sup> The IPS was the first international gathering with a focus on Indigenous peoples, climate change solutions and critique of the global economic model within the context of a G8 Summit (Iewallen, 2008).

<sup>23</sup> The G8 summit represented an opportunity for Indigenous peoples to urge G8 nations to find alternative solutions to the current environmental crisis that goes beyond economic growth-based models, by urging non-signatory states Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United States and Russia to adopt the UNDRIP and pay attention to the appeals of indigenous peoples within each nation-state (Iewallen, 2008).

<sup>24</sup> The umbrella group representing all four Ainu organizations around the capital.



proposal for a Bill to the Diet, “A Resolution for Promoting Measures for the Actualization of the Ethnic Pride of the Ainu People” (hereafter new Ainu law) on February 15, 2019 (Ministry of Land Infrastructure Transport and Tourism, 2019). However, the core principle of the law is not favorable to the needs of the Ainu. The newspaper *Hokkaido Shimbun* reports that the government outlined the core principle of the law, announcing that it intended to enact the new Ainu law based on two pillars: (1) to establish special measures for the Ainu to collect natural resources such as plants and salmon<sup>25</sup> for ceremonial purposes and for use in transmitting Ainu culture; (2) to establish a grant system of financial subsidies for local government “regional and industrial development” using Ainu culture. A cross-ministerial Headquarters for the Promotion of Ainu Policy is to be established within the Cabinet. The law aims at enabling Ainu people to live in society with pride and dignity wherein each individual co-exists in an environment of respect. It is the first time that the Ainu are to be recognized as an *Indigenous people* within the Japanese law. A prohibition against discrimination towards individuals is also included in the law (see also Uzawa, 2019a, 2019b; Yoshida, 16 February, 2019).

However, a close reading of the resolution reveals no definition of the term “Indigenous,” nor mention of any rights normally associated with collective rights. No concrete details of how the Ainu are to be involved in the planning, implementation, or evaluation of the financial subsidies have been included, nor can one find any concrete penalties for violations of the discrimination clause. The resolution thus not only fails to recognize Ainu self-determination, but also risks neglecting direct Ainu involvement. Furthermore, legislators have specifically expressed expectations regarding the new law’s role in bolstering Ainu tourism, a notion which, given the exploitative history of Ainu tourism, has enraged some Ainu activists (The Japan Times, 2 March 2019; see also Uzawa, 2019b).

The resolution falls far short of recent demands by concerned Ainu groups. *Hokkaido Shimbun* reports that Ainu activists, who had been critical of the process deliberations leading up to the draft bill, stated that the one-sided hearings suggest a notion of colonialism (Murata, 11 May, 2018). *Shuukan Kinyobi* reports that Ainu

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<sup>25</sup> Salmon used to be a staple food for the Ainu.

activists established the lobbying organization called the Realization of Ainu Voices as Indigenous People (Senjū minzoku Ainu no koe jitsugen) in 2018. They formulated a number of demands based on discussions with the Policy Office for Ainu Affairs: (1) an apology for historical wrongs; (2) the establishment of the right to self-determination; (3) the deregulation of the new grants for the Ainu; (4) the right to natural resources including the return of land; and (5) the ceasing of all further research on Ainu ancestral human remains (Saito, 6 December, 2018). Tahara Ryoko, one of the representatives from the Realization of Ainu Voices as Indigenous People, stated “it is 150 years since Ainu Mosir (Ainu land) was renamed. For the Ainu, it has been 150 years of struggles. I hope the New Ainu Law to be something that enables Ainu to live as human beings” (Saito, 6 December, 2018; see also Uzawa, 2019a). These responses demonstrate fundamental differences between the government’s and the Ainu groups’ understanding of Ainu livelihood and well-being as affected by colonial history throughout the past century and a half.

Acknowledging the history of the unjust relationship is a first necessary step towards *reconciliation*. This is similar to the current Ainu situation where Ainu activists seem to demand a mutually beneficial dialogue instead of one-sided hearings. What *reconciliation* could mean within a Japanese context is to be discussed in the dissertation based on a case study of an ethnically mixed social venture, Urespa.

## **1.7 2018: 150 years of colonization of Hokkaido**

After the 2008 resolution that recognized Ainu as Indigenous people of Japan, the Council for Ainu Policy Promotion was established in 2009 under the Chief Cabinet Secretary for further consideration of measures and principles on future Ainu policies (Council for Ainu Policy Promotion). The total of 14 council members includes four Ainu members (Council for Ainu Policy Promotion), and, in 2010, working groups were established for “Symbolic Spaces for Ethnic Harmony”<sup>26</sup> and “Research on Living

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<sup>26</sup> “Given the historical background of the Ainu, the significance of Ainu culture’s harmony with nature, and the necessity of the public understanding, facilities should be developed for education, research, and the exhibition of the history and culture of the Ainu, as well as for the training of successors for their traditional craft skills. Additionally, from the perspective of respecting the spirituality of the Ainu, special consideration should be given to the establishment of a memorial facility that would allow a

Conditions of Ainu People outside Hokkaido” (Council for Ainu Policy Promotion). Symbolic Spaces for Ethnic Harmony is set to open in 2020 around the Shiraoui area of Hokkaido with the aim of disseminating Ainu culture with various activities (Council for Ainu Policy Promotion). The opening of such a space is in conjunction with the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

The year 2018 was an historical anniversary as it was 150 years since Ezochi was renamed as Hokkaido by the Meiji government (1868–1912). This special occasion was celebrated on August 5, 2018 in the “Hokkaido 150 years commemoration ceremony” in Sapporo, organized by the Hokkaido 150 years Business Executive Committee Secretariat (see Hokkaido 150 years Business Executive Committee Secretariat, 2019). However, this part of history has its ironies because in contrast to the celebratory occasion, for the Ainu it also serves as a reminder of the Japanese colonization. This was publicly declared on 17 July, three weeks before the ceremony, by the Ainu citizen group Pirika National Executive Committee, which held a press conference at the Hokkaido government office, taking an opposing stance and asking the ceremony to be cancelled (Hokkaido Shimbun, 17 July, 2018). According to *Hokkaido Shimbun*, a representative of the Ainu group, Sinrit Eoripak Aynu Kawamura, said “it is not acceptable to celebrate these 150 years without an official apology towards the Ainu, and that the land developed was officially considered as pioneering, without recognizing the history of suppression and history” (Hokkaido Shimbun, 17 July, 2018). The statement further includes requests to establish a new law that encompasses land rights and self-determination as well as the repatriation of human remains collected by research institutions in the past (Hokkaido Shimbun, 17 July, 2018).

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dignified memorial service for the human remains of Ainu people, which were excavated and collected in the past and are now conserved by universities and other institutions.” (Advisory Council for Future Ainu Policy, 2009, pp. 26–27)

## 1.8 Defining Indigenous peoples

To define<sup>27</sup> Indigenous peoples within the United Nations' system is not only to illustrate the complexity of defining Indigenous peoples at an international level, but also to understand how such a definition may affect the interpretation of *urban* Indigenous peoples.

It is important to state that there are no *fixed* definitions of Indigenous peoples within the United Nations' system. The most internationally recognized *working* definition of Indigenous peoples is perhaps that by José R. Martínez Cobo's seminal *Study of the Problem of Discrimination against Indigenous Populations* in 1987, a report to the UN Economic and Social Council (Martinez Cobo, 1987). One feature to pay attention to is how he defines Indigenous peoples as those "having a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, [who] consider themselves distinct from other sectors of the societies now prevailing in those territories, or parts of them" (Martinez Cobo, 1987, p. 29). Considering the nature of Indigenous peoples' traditional livelihoods, I recognize the importance of including this particular feature. However, as argued in Article 1 (Uzawa, 2018), it also raises challenges of potential exclusion of certain Indigenous peoples in the world. In relation to Cobo's working definition, Niezen states that "It does not fit comfortably, for example, with those areas of mainland Southeast Asia in which there have been complex patterns of displacement and movements of peoples across national boundaries" (Niezen, 2003, p. 20). Niezen (2003) also raises a further challenge concerning the implications of the term *Indigenous*, which may grant certain peoples to obtain new rights and power. He explains that more peoples from African and Asia strategically claim the status of *Indigenous*, and asks how people who have experienced complex historical settlement and colonialism from former European colonies can fit into the framework of Indigenous peoples. He further emphasizes a point made by Indigenous delegates during UN meetings that pursuing the *right* or *rigid* definition can, in fact,

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<sup>27</sup> The discussion concerning the definition of Indigenous peoples is beyond the scope of this research. For further discussion on the complexities of the task, see Anaya, 2004; Dahl, 2012; Minde, 2008; and Niezen, 2003.

work against them (Niezen, 2003, pp. 18–19). The discussion around the definition clearly presents a great challenge for many Indigenous peoples in the world.

On the other hand, what is relevant to urban Indigenous peoples within Cobo's working definition is self-identification and recognition by the community members (Martinez Cobo, 1987, p. 29). The importance of self-identification is also stated in Article 1, paragraph 2 of ILO C169 (International Labour Organization). When applied to the Ainu context, self-identification is used as one of the criteria in the Hokkaido Ainu Living Conditions Survey in 2017 (see more in Chapter 1; 1.2 of this dissertation).

The next step is to narrow down how such international discussion around the definition of Indigenous peoples is relevant to the academic discourse. Evelyn and Anderson point out that academics and policy makers believe that it is essential to produce definitions of people they are concerned with, in spite of a mutual understanding that there are different ways to define Indigenous peoples (2013, p. 6). Moreover, they claim that having definitions tied to ancestral lands as an indicator of Indigenous peoples' identities influences how *urban* Indigenous peoples are understood in relation to their experiences and identities (E. J. Peters & C. Andersen, 2013, p. 6). Here Peters and Andersen clarify the complexity of the interpretation of such a definition, and how it affects the understanding of urban Indigenous peoples.

Within a Japanese context, I argue in Article 1 (see more Uzawa, 2018) that Ainu in cities—more generally referred to as Ainu outside Hokkaido—are viewed as “out of place” within a national context. This links to the general notion of Indigenous peoples still being represented as rural and environmentally romanticized (Swanson, 2007; Watson, 2014a) regardless of a growing population of Indigenous peoples living in urban areas (Chris Andersen & Peters, 2013a; Watson, 2014a). Such representations may be seen in the public discourse, such as in daily newspapers, school textbooks, media, social media, or tourist brochures, while many Indigenous peoples' lifestyles may be better and more realistically portrayed as dynamic and urban. Some scholars (e.g., Nadasdy, 2005; Sissons, 2005; Watson, 2014a) discuss the point where such romanticized representations casts Indigenous people as “out of place” when they move to cities, which challenges the origins and characteristics of their traditional lifestyles.

## 1.9 Ainu participation in the global Indigenous movement

Ainu participation in the global Indigenous movement<sup>28</sup> needs to be considered in its historical context. Kelly L. Dietz suggests that there were two major factors influencing how Indigenous matters were treated internationally in the latter half of the twentieth century (1999, p. 359). According to Dietz, the first factor is human rights having become a focus of international law in the United Nations in the wake of World War II by the international community of nations. Being forced to face their own human rights violations, nation states took the necessary steps “[...] to protect the fundamental freedoms and basic human rights of the world’s peoples” (Dietz, 1999, pp. 359–360). The International Bill of Human Rights was a major milestone, with five documents granting “[...] basic rights such as self-determination, political participation, freedom of thought and religion, the right to work and to equal pay, to social security, to food, education, health care, and to an adequate standard of living” (Dietz, 1999, p. 360). The second factor was increasing activism by Indigenous peoples, accelerated by such historical momentum, where many communities in the world recognized that “[...] existing instruments did not sufficiently address indigenous circumstances, specifically, they do not accord indigenous peoples the right to self-determination *as peoples*” (Dietz, 1999, p. 360). Dietz here points out the paradox that enjoying the right to self-determination was the prior natural state for Indigenous peoples before the domination of nation states (1999, p. 360). The right to self-determination and the collective right go hand-in-hand: Self-determination lets Indigenous peoples make individual decisions, and the collective right transforms these into wider-scale cultural development.

Linda Tuhiwai Smith describes the history of the term *Indigenous peoples* starting from 1970s, and how it emerged as an internationally recognized term among some of the colonized peoples of the world (1999, p. 7). The usage of the term *Indigenous peoples* with “s” was discussed intensively in the drafting process of the ILO C169, where state governments took a strong oppositional position of the usage of “s” in ILO C169 (Anaya, 2004; Niezen, 2003). Ronald Niezen (2003) describes the negotiation process around the issue of *self-determination* as the term *Indigenous peoples* has a legal

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<sup>28</sup> The global Indigenous movement here in the dissertation means Indigenous movement through a participation and discussion through the United Nations.

implication. The legal implication of the term *Indigenous peoples* with “s” under international law implies a collective right (Anaya, 2004, p. 100; Dahl, 2012, p. 4) and self-determination with a right of independent statehood (Anaya, 2004, p. 100). In conclusion, the term *Indigenous peoples* was stipulated in Article 1, paragraph 3, “The use of the term **peoples** in this Convention shall not be construed as having any implications as regards the rights which may attach to the term under international law” (International Labour Organization, n.d.).

Within the Ainu context, neither right is recognized by the Japanese government since it appears that the government is concerned that, by granting these rights, it would raise the possibility of the Ainu establishing their independence, or accessing certain natural resources to be able to maintain Ainu culture. Notably, Japan has not yet ratified ILO C169, as Siddle states: “It also refuses to recognize existing definitions of the term ‘indigenous peoples’ in such instruments as ILO Convention No.169 [...], insisting that the concept has not been legally clarified” (2003, p. 459).<sup>29</sup>

From the second half of the twentieth century onwards, the presence of Indigenous peoples became more visible as they began to actively participate in the international arena, such as the United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Populations (hereafter UNWGIP) held in Geneva, the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in Geneva, or the Permanent Forum in New York. Siddle states that “[s]ince 1987, when Ainu began to participate in the UNWGIP in Geneva, these rights have been increasingly understood and presented within the context of the ongoing attempt to define and establish ‘indigenous rights’ in international law” (2003, p. 455).

It was only in 1987 that the Hokkaido Ainu Association<sup>30</sup> began to take part in the UN arena such as the UNWGIP (Stevens, 2014, p. 203). In 1992, an Ainu elder, Nomura Giichi, the executive director of *Utari Kyokai* (Ainu Association of Hokkaido) made an official speech at the United Nations General Assembly during the opening ceremony for the International Year of the World’s Indigenous People. His speech was a clear and powerful rebuttal to the Japanese government’s denial of Ainu existence in 1986, which

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<sup>29</sup> Taking this into account, in this dissertation I opt to use the term *Indigenous peoples* with “s”, rather than *people*, in solidarity with the global Indigenous community.

<sup>30</sup> The Hokkaido Ainu Association, presently called Ainu Association of Hokkaido, is the largest Ainu organization in Japan (Ainu Association of Hokkaido).

claimed Japan to be a *monoethnic nation*, while Nomura stated that he certainly exists and is “definitely not a ghost” (Ainu Association of Hokkaido, n.d.-b).

Despite such statements, there has been progress in Ainu politics as Ainu participation at the UN was a successful strategic tactic to pressure the Japanese government internationally on the Ainu issue. Stevens uses the term *gaiatsu* (outside pressure):

*Gaiatsu* was utilized initially to secure recognition of the Ainu as a minority, and later to attempt to ensure recognition as an Indigenous peoples with Indigenous rights. In a country where Ainu form less than half of one percent of the population, *gaiatsu* represented an opportunity to escape the limitations their numbers imposed on Ainu ability to effectively utilize domestic lobbying (Stevens, 2014, p. 202).

By concerted domestic lobbying by both Ainu and Wajin supporters, the Ainu finally gained recognition as Indigenous people of Japan in 2008. As noted previously, this adoption was likely accelerated due to anticipated global attention by the Japanese government hosting the G8 summit in Hokkaido (lewallen, 2008). This is a paradox of an Ainu political landscape in Japan, where the government has recently enacted the New Ainu Law<sup>31</sup> while there is strong political opposition towards the existence of the Ainu, as represented by the incident of hate speech in 2014.<sup>32</sup>

Nevertheless, the Ainu becoming part of the global Indigenous community might be an effective way to voice their demands and claim the legitimacy of their rights as Indigenous peoples in Japan. The UN has become a contemporary platform where Ainu and other Indigenous peoples in the world are able to share information and experiences to strengthen their presence on the global stage. The next step is to make this movement more relevant to the everyday life of the Ainu. My research shows that the concept of *decolonization* or *the rights* of Indigenous peoples were not particularly recognized by research participants in this dissertation (see more Uzawa, 2019b). This gap needs to be filled by Ainu organizations and individuals who participated in such meetings, aiming

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<sup>31</sup> Some refer this law as the Ainu Policy Promotion Act (APPA).

<sup>32</sup> In 2014, a parliamentarian in the Sapporo City legislature, Kaneko tweeted that the Ainu people “no longer exist now” (see more lewallen, 2015; Uzawa & Watson, 2020).



to make the information available and bring awareness to the public.

## **1.10 Ainu cultural practices in contemporary society**

In the twenty-first century, people are ever more connected by technology and transportation on a global scale. For example, I, as an urban Ainu raised in Tokyo, with ancestral roots in Hokkaido, Japan, pursue doctoral studies in Norway. One hundred years ago, it would have been difficult to foresee that a female Ainu individual would ever travel so far in pursuit of higher education. Through rapid technological development, it has become a challenge in our societies to remain in touch with our traditional cultures and their expressions at the same time as it opens up more opportunities for deepening our knowledge about our world and developing our own sense of identity and belonging.

One way to understand how physical places are getting closer is through technological advancements. Traveling from northern Norway to London, for example, can be a weekend activity. If I apply this to an urban context in relation to Ainu cultural practices in Hokkaido, a short trip from Ainu communities to cities, or the other way around, seems rather commonplace among those who follow Ainu cultural practices or events.

In terms of Ainu cultural practices in Hokkaido, the Ainu Association of Hokkaido, funded by the government, supports Ainu traditional cultural practices in Hokkaido. There are 18 Hokkaido-based Ainu regional cultural preservation groups that gather for monthly cultural practices of mostly Ainu dance and song (Agency for Cultural Affairs & National Institute of Informatics). The membership rules differ between groups, but they are generally open to both Ainu and Wajin individuals (Uzawa, 2019b). Other than that, there is a local elementary school, after-school activities, and universities that provide Ainu language lesson and activities (see also Uzawa, 2017). There are also some individuals participating in Ainu performance groups or bands playing contemporary Ainu music. Another cultural space and place where Ainu—especially youth—can learn Ainu culture and language is called *Culture Bearer*, or a *bunka ninaite* in Japanese. The program is developed to teach Ainu youth a range of cultural skills and knowledge. It includes language, history, cultural traditions, and relationship with nature. The program

was designed by the curators of the Ainu museum in Shiraori in Hokkaido, and is one of the initiatives to pass on ancestral knowledge. It is aimed at building confidence and developing the youths into cultural ambassadors for the wider public. The program also guaranteed income for the students for the three years of their training period (Iewallen, 2016, p. 214).

Outside of Hokkaido, mainly around the capital, there are other privately run Ainu cultural preservation groups that have similar functions. On the whole, these groups focus on Ainu cultural preservation and restoration. In addition to such functions, for some groups, the meetings are a social gathering where they enjoy each other's company by sharing meals after the practice. As an official place, the Ainu Culture Center in Tokyo<sup>33</sup> was established after the enactment of CPA in 1997 with the aim of promoting Ainu-related research and disseminating Ainu language and culture. The Ainu Culture Center provides a place to read Ainu-related books, to learn about Ainu traditional livelihood through their exhibition, and to hold related seminars and lectures. As of 2019, there is also an Ainu restaurant called Harukoro in Tokyo, which provides an open space to experience Ainu food and culture.

## **1.11 Ainu resurgence in Tokyo and Sapporo**

Tokyo is known as the world's largest metropolitan city (Watson, 2014). The Tokyo Metropolitan Government estimated population in the city of Tokyo in 2015 at about 13 million (Tokyo Metropolitan Government, n.d.). The city generates many affordances such as jobs, education, greater access to information, cultural opportunities, and various learning resources. It is also generally known as an international melting pot where various cultures, people, and ideas meet. The population of Sapporo is a little less than two million, making it the fifth largest urban population in Japan as of 2011 (City of Sapporo, n.d.). Sapporo differs from Tokyo regarding Ainu culture insofar as in Sapporo Ainu culture is more visible in the public sphere and through tourism.

When it comes to choice of research site, Sapporo and Tokyo provide an interesting dynamic with regard to urban indigenous identity making. My observations

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<sup>33</sup> The Ainu Culture Center in Tokyo is run by the Foundation for Research and Promotion of Ainu Culture (The Foundation for Ainu Culture, n.d.).

indicate that in Tokyo, as a cosmopolitan space, expression of Ainu culture is less visible than in Sapporo. At the same time this invisibility also represents a freedom for one's choices of ethnic identity and way of life.

In Sapporo, on the other hand, Ainu cultural expression is more visible in the public space. Ainu culture and people are more easily identified and recognized through physical appearance and cultural expressions. For example, many public and commercial products at the airport and Sapporo train station are designed by Ainu artists or inspired by Ainu culture. As Sapporo is located within Ainu Mosir ("Ainu land" in the Ainu language), expressions of Ainu culture appear to be stronger than in Tokyo.

How, then, do people identify and contribute to Ainu cultural revitalization? As my case studies, what role do Rera Cise in Tokyo and Urespa in Sapporo have in terms of Ainu cultural revitalization? It is important to remark upon the organizational differences and similarities between Urespa and Rera Cise. Urespa is a non-profit social club operated by university students, while Rera Cise was a commercial restaurant operated by Ainu in addition to being a cultural association. What both share is the general aim of learning and promoting Ainu culture among members and to the public.

Rera Cise in Tokyo and Urespa in Sapporo present some similarities and differences in terms of Ainu resurgence. While both urban spaces provide safe cultural grounds for both Ainu and Wajin individuals to come into contact with Ainu culture, how one engages with and practices Ainu cultural revitalization are different. Firstly, the architectural design of Rera Cise was detailed and consciously thought through. The space was, for instance, decorated with tree materials bearing explicit Ainu symbols representing Ainu culture. The Urespa office and learning space was surrounded by concrete buildings filled with books and learning kits, with lively photos of Urespa students on the wall.

Secondly, Rera Cise as an Ainu restaurant, had direct access to Ainu food culture brought from locals in Hokkaido. Ingredients and the smell of Ainu dishes, normally only available in Hokkaido, may bring back vivid memories of Hokkaido to Ainu guests in Tokyo. The restaurant menu, based on Ainu elders' memories, was designed by the Ainu elders who worked in the kitchen. The Rera Cise kitchen also offered a learning site for the Ainu youth who worked at the restaurant. On the other hand, Urespa, located

in Sapporo, had limited access to natural resources. Despite its location in Hokkaido, access to natural resources required initiatives by the Urespa students through activities such as field trips to Ainu communities. Rera Cise also offered space within the restaurant where various Ainu ceremonies took place in the presence of elders, while Urespa students needed to go off-campus to gain similar experiences.

Lastly, Rera Cise differs from Urespa in that Rera Cise offered an intergenerational space where one could experience a close relationship with Ainu elders who worked at the restaurant. Moreover, Rera Cise had another function: as an Ainu cultural association in Tokyo, mainly consisting of Ainu members. Within the association, the intergenerational learning was most crucial. Ainu elders operated as teachers and mentors for the youth in the association. Rera Cise provided an opportunity for elders to transmit their cultural identity to the next generation.

Overall, and in spite of these differences, what Rera Cise and Urespa have in common is the creation of a sense of community and belonging. This sense of belonging is also discussed under the geographical concept of hubs (Ramirez, 2007) in which a sense of belonging is produced through various social activities and events. Rera Cise in Tokyo offered Ainu youth both a chance to create their own cultural learning space in the presence of Ainu elders, and direct access to much of Ainu culture. As it was entirely voluntary to join in on cultural activities in Rera Cise, one had a choice to engage and disengage with one's commitment and identity on one's own terms. In this way, Rera Cise regenerates Ainu cultural revitalization in an urban setting, creating safe grounds for Ainu individuals to engage with their identity making.

In contrast, Urespa is designed for university students and has its own limitations. Regardless of the students' location in Sapporo, there is a limitation to the intergenerational relationship and direct access to Ainu culture. Urespa's learning method mainly focuses on guest lectures, occasional field trips to Ainu communities, and the use of books, videos, and YouTube as learning resources. They are both teachers as well as students, and depend on each other's knowledge and capacity in learning Ainu language and culture. Those who hold a capacity for Ainu culture seem to have a powerful position in the group, which produces a certain tension, while it also creates a good motivation to work towards and with each other. My research shows that Urespa

intrigues individuals' consciousness and strengthens an awareness of Ainu culture (see more Uzawa, 2019b; Uzawa & Watson, 2020).

Urespa students use a different method to connect to Ainu culture than Rera Cise does. For example, they periodically perform maintenance of an Ainu monument called *Irankarapute* statue, which depicts an Ainu male elder at Sapporo train station and was carved by Ainu sculptors. The installation of this statue was initiated by Urespa and numerous Urespa supporters in 2014, and it contributes towards the strong presence of Ainu culture in public space (Urespa Club, 2016). My observation during my fieldwork indicates that engaging with such public activity strengthens the sense of community for Urespa students.



## Chapter 2: Theoretical approach

The theoretical framework in this dissertation is based on the different approaches to Indigenous Studies, social anthropology, and cultural geography. The choice of each discipline has its own reasoning, but all are interconnected. A general anthropological approach, based on fieldwork, participatory observation, and consideration for research participants, is very much in line with Indigenous Studies where the main focus is to center Indigenous perspectives within research and the process thereof. Cultural geography brings in perspectives on geographical space and place in relation to the human connection and culture within and towards the place in question. This has, therefore, broadened my understanding of the general discourse on Indigenous peoples in cities, which has helped me position the dissertation's focus. The theoretical discussions illustrate the key questions about urban Indigenous identity in other national contexts, and the importance of the relation between the ancestral homeland and cities. This relation is analyzed through the concepts of diaspora, Indigeneity, homeland discourse, and cultural revitalization.

### 2.1 Urban Diasporic Indigeneity

Urbanism underlines the continuous change caused by global flow and transnational connectivity, which then challenges ideas of class, gender and ethnic or racial differences positioned in close immediacy (Amin, 2006, p. 1012). This dissertation, therefore, explores possibilities and challenges of Indigenous peoples in cities.

I have chosen to add “*urban*” before *diasporic*<sup>34</sup> *Indigeneity* in the dissertation since my main focus is the issues around Ainu in the cities of Tokyo and Sapporo. I have used this term as an analytical tool to illustrate their *living* experiences in cities. The usage of the term builds first of all on Mark K. Watson's term *diasporic Indigeneity* presented in his book *Japan's Ainu Minority in Tokyo: Diasporic indigeneity and urban politics* (2014a). Watson describes *diasporic Indigeneity* as “[...] a range of adaptive, personal, collective, innovative and reactive measures that represent the extension and

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<sup>34</sup> William Safran explains that the aspect of Diaspora was used in relation to Jews for a long period of time stating, “The Jews are the oldest diaspora; they lacked a “homeland” for two millennia but thought about it constantly and the idea of a return to it-at first an eschatological conception and much later a concrete one-remained part of their collective consciousness” (2005, pp. 36–37).

development of Indigenous identities and patterns of society in non-local, predominantly urban areas” (2014a, p. 32). He argues that *diasporic Indigeneity* as a concept intends to reflect upon adaptive and innovative contemporary measures by Indigenous people who aim to create a new social and geographical extension of Indigenous communities. Moreover, he applies the term to the Ainu case as an analytical tool to focus on Ainu translocal experiences and life in Tokyo (Watson, 2014a, p. 147). My usage of *urban diasporic Indigeneity* shares some of the aspects mentioned by Watson. I therefore interpret *diasporic Indigeneity* as an innovative contemporary measure to suggest a new social model that goes beyond what is generally considered as the Ainu *homeland*, Hokkaido. This model acknowledges the transcultural lifestyle of Ainu in cities by embracing differences between how Indigenous identity is performed in those two cities. By adding Sapporo to the study of *diasporic Indigeneity*, which built on Watson, this dissertation expands and examines the relevance of the concept.

### 2.1.1 Urban place making

How can we study Indigenous presence in the city? The concept of *hub* could be helpful. According to Renya K. Ramirez (2007), the hub is a geographical concept that produces a sense of belonging through various social activities and events. In her own words “[...] the hub as cultural, social, and political concept [that] ultimately has the potential to strengthen Native identity and provide a sense of belonging, as well as to increase the political power of Native peoples” (2007, p. 3). Ramirez further describes that “Urban Indians create hubs through signs and behavior, such as phone calling, e-mailing, memory sharing, storytelling, ritual, music, style, Native banners, and other symbols” (2007, p. 3). She goes on to demonstrate how such social relations and connections, including occasional participation in community-based cultural events, disrupt fixed notions of an individual’s cultural identity (Ramirez, 2007, p. 12 ). The hub, therefore, generates a new way for Indigenous peoples in cities to associate with and express their own culture outside their *homeland*. I find the concept of hub shared by many Ainu youth in cities who utilize public space for ceremonies by means of belonging, which Kitahara discusses in further detail (see more Kitahara, 2019, pp. 189–191).



Moreover, my research participants demonstrated the usage of online activities such as sharing information, culture, song, storytelling, and so forth in order to establish a common platform from which they develop a sense of collective identity (see more Uzawa, 2019b). The *hub* could be understood as *place making*—creating a new Ainu way of being as Indigenous in cities.

In terms of understanding *space* from an Indigenous perspective, I refer to David Welchman Gegeo (2001) and the Indigenous groups of the Kwara‘ae and Lau in the Solomon Islands. His perspective on space and Indigenous being concerns the locating of a Kwara‘ae person at any given moment and recognizing the structures and external forces of contemporary life, such as employment or education, that inform their movement (Gegeo, 2001, p. 494). This is to say, *space* is associated with how and where a Kwara‘ae person moves and finds him or herself located. One’s location does not necessarily define one’s identity.

*Place* in this dissertation is first and foremost understood as relational. Here, I refer to Doreen Massey (2005), one of the leading scholars in the field of cultural geography, who defines *place* as more of an event than a fixed location: It is open, dynamic, and always in the making. She says: “place here could stand for the general condition of our being together [...]” (Massey, 2005, p. 154). This is a relational concept which recognizes *place* as something that happens, as an event and product of human interaction and meaning-making in an increasingly interconnected world. As constitutive of experience, it produces a new politics of place. This definition of place is a critique of the reductionist idea of place as rooted in a specific territory. By an act of “being together,” I understand that Massey recognizes collectiveness where people constitute *place* through social networks, food production, sharing, ideas, and so forth, transforming *place* into something more meaningful. Ash Amin uses the term *micropublics* as ordinary social spaces of organized group activities that invite people of varied backgrounds to form new social connections and break fixed patterns of behaviors (2002, p. 970). *Micropublics* is a useful concept in the way that it gives people a reason to come together for a shared interest and goal regardless of one’s background. As argued in Article 2 (Uzawa & Watson, 2020), these new social connections generate space for people to create a common identity and a sense of belonging.

### 2.1.2 Urban Indigenous identity making

Academic discourse surrounding urban Indigenous peoples<sup>35</sup> is discussed in a variety of ways. Nancy M. Lucero illustrates the new development in the Indigenous urbanization discourse in recent years by some scholars who focus more on the socially adoptive, constructive, and evolving formation of urban Native identity through urban space rather than essentialist ideas of Native identity based on the reservation (2014, p. 10). Lucero (2014) takes an approach in her research to uncover a formation of cultural identity and connectedness amongst multigenerational urban American Indian women whom she refers to as historically regarded as invisible people. She further provide specifics of a common identity discourse that generates an idea that American Indians who move to cities are less Indian, or may possibly even lose their Indigenous identity (Lucero, 2013, p. 195; 2014, p. 10).

Nyseth and Pedersen (2014) from the Scandinavian context further point out regarding urban Sámi<sup>36</sup> migration that the migration of the Sámi to cities was for a long time considered as assimilation, and therefore urban Sámi were not seen as Sámi enough (Gaski 2000 cited in Nyseth & Pedersen, 2014, p. 133). Furthermore, Nyseth and Pedersen provide an analysis of the contemporary and multifaceted aspects of urban Sámi identities through different generations in cities, with a focus on Tromsø (Norway), Umeå (Sweden) and Rovaniemi (Finland) arguing that, “[...] a new Sámi urban identity is in the making” (2014, p. 146). On the basis of their research, Nyseth and Pedersen conclude that there is a relevance and connection between “[...] the growing presence of a modern Sámi network of formal and informal institutions and organizations that makes Sámi everyday life in the cities possible” (2014, p. 146).

Furthermore, Andrea Avaria Saavedra (2005) discusses the mobile identity in the case of the Mapuche people of Santiago, Chile. In her work, she touches upon the challenges to cultural identity caused by modern life and globalization, which alter the physical distance between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. She emphasizes that

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<sup>35</sup> In order to provide coherency to the dissertation, I use the umbrella term *Indigenous peoples* here to describe Indigenous peoples in different parts of the world, rather than *Native Americans* or *native populations*, etc.

<sup>36</sup> Sámi are indigenous people of Norway, Sweden, Finland, and the Kola Peninsula in Russia. Approximate populations of Sámi in each country are 40-60,000 in Norway, 25,000 in Sweden, 15,000 in Finland, 2,000 in Russia (Guttorm, 2019, p. 66).

understanding the urban migration of the Mapuche people, which has created a new Indigenous interrelationship, is crucial to understanding their common identity (Saavedra, 2005).

From Aotearoa New Zealand, Brendan Hokowhitu explains that the urbanization of Māori was designed for ideological purposes by the state rather than satisfying the need to increase the urban labor force (2013, p. 357). The urbanization of Māori is now used as a tool of integration by the government, while a previous focus of the government was segregation (E. Peters & C. Andersen, 2013, p. 307). Tahu Kukutai explains that the recent statistical study of tribal identification indicates that urban Māori support the growth of tribal populations, which she describes as *peculiar* since urbanization and retribalization have rather opposite dynamism (2013, p. 329). Kukutai explains that urban Māori started forming collective identities with an interest in establishing social and cultural organizations such as “Māori community centres, churches, cultural groups, and even *marae* – meeting places traditionally linked to specific iwi hapū (subtribes)” (2013, p. 317). She introduces different views on this urbanization of Māori based on other scholars’ research. Some of this research focuses on resilience and adaptation to meet migrant desires in cities. Others pay attention to a new social problem: racial tension increased through closer contact between Māori and Europeans as work colleagues or other close encounters in schools or neighborhoods (Kukutai, 2013, p. 317). The racial tension caused by urbanization is also pointed out by Hokowhitu, who states “Regardless of the official policy of ideological assimilation, it seemed that, even in cities, Māori and Pākehā cultures were adjacent but afar” (2013, p. 358). Hokowhitu (2013) and Kukutai (2013) both address contested identity politics among urban Māori.

Katharine Neale (2017), from Canada, explores the construction of Indigenous identities in Canada, making links between identity and place and referring to Mark K. Watson’s (2010) usage of *diasporic* urban identities. Neale further explains “The increasing numbers of urban migrants across Canada does not signify a loss to a sense of place; rather, it denotes extensions and transitions of social identities that connect new places to the old” (2017, p. 80). Considering that more than half of Indigenous peoples in Canada reside in urban areas (Chris Andersen & Peters, 2013b, p. 378), I see

Neale's approach as relevant in understanding diverse cultures of Indigenous peoples in Canada.

Moreover, Chris Andersen (2013) explores the macro-level context of complex urban Indigenous identities in Canada. One of the examples Andersen uses in defining the Indigenous population is the Canadian state census, stating "Currently, the Canadian state measures Aboriginal 'identities' primarily through the census" (2013, p. 47). This census has been undertaken by Statistics Canada since 1871 with limited inquiries when it comes to section of Aboriginality: "[...] ancestry/ethnicity, self-identification (according to three categories<sup>37</sup>), First Nation band membership, and Registered Indian/treaty status" (Chris Andersen, 2013, p. 47). Here Andersen questions what these categorizations really measure, and asks "what makes it an 'identity' population?" (2013, p. 47). Andersen's analysis identifies a fundamental challenge of Indigenous peoples in Canada. Indigenous peoples are systematically categorized and excluded, which creates tension among themselves: Who is entitled to proclaim *Indigenous* heritage and identity?

If I compare this to the Ainu, Japan does not conduct a national census based on ethnicity<sup>38</sup>; in this process, Ainu become *invisible* in the public discourse, or are systematically positioned as *Other* in Japanese society (See more Siddle, 2006).

All these examples from the United States, Canada, Chile, Scandinavia, and New Zealand demonstrate a certain degree of relevance to the case of urban Ainu. For example, Lucero's research from the United States indicates a similar challenge Urespa students may struggle with; the challenge of maneuvering within two very different cultures, Indigenous and dominant, yet retaining an Indigenous identity regardless of geographical location (Uzawa, 2019b; Uzawa & Watson, 2020). The Scandinavian case studies show the norm in urban migration of Indigenous peoples being *out of place* and creating a new form of identity expression in cities, which I also refer to in Article 1 (Uzawa, 2018). The Scandinavian and Māori cases are highly relevant to my case studies since they highlight modern Indigenous networks of formal and informal

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<sup>37</sup> Three categories are North American Indian / First Nations, Métis, and / or Inuit (Chris Andersen, 2013, p. 48).

<sup>38</sup> For further discussion on Ainu population, see Chapter 1; 1.2.

institutions and organizations as important attributes to Indigenous identity making in cities. In my studies, I discuss the process of social transformation through food, language, ceremony, and performance (Uzawa, 2018, 2019b; Uzawa & Watson, 2020). Such social organizations enrich participants' everyday lives by enabling them to negotiate their identities within the contexts in which they live.

Saavedra's case differs from that of the urban Ainu. In Japan, there are generally no clear cultural differences between the Ainu and Wajin defined by geographical location since their cultures and lifestyles are now deeply intertwined, although certain communities are widely recognized as Ainu communities. Yet, I see that both groups share the same challenge in such a transformative process. Indigenous mobility challenges the relationship and cultural boundaries between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. Within the Japanese context, a challenge for Ainu living in cities may be to find mutual social ground to share their experiences and background due to an existing socioeconomic gap, discrimination, or fear of revealing their identity (Nakamura, 2015; Ukaji, 2011; Uzawa & Watson, 2020). Understanding Indigenous contemporary living conditions in cities better could provide an insight into how Indigenous peoples in general are socially, culturally, and politically affected by national policy and law.

The studies from Aotearoa New Zealand and Canada show a clear difference to the Ainu case in terms of the *visibility* of urban Indigenous peoples in the population census. While Aotearoa New Zealand presents the growth of tribal populations, urban Indigenous peoples in Canada and Japan seem to face challenges of *invisibility* in the cities in which they reside<sup>39</sup>.

Further discussions from other national contexts are beyond the scope of this dissertation; however, the brief review above gives a hint of the complexity of urban Indigenous identities. Focusing on *urban* Indigenous identity enables one to acquire a better understanding of contemporary Indigenous ways of living. By doing so, it also raises important questions such as how one comes to terms with the sense or feeling of what it means to be *Indigenous* in urban areas, who gets to proclaim *Indigeneity* in cities,

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<sup>39</sup> For urban Ainu population, please see Chapter 1; 1.2 *Being Ainu in Japan today*.

and what kind of attributes contribute towards urban *Indigenous* identity making. Having those questions in mind, I continue to discuss and move onto concepts of diaspora and the homeland discourse in the next section.

### 2.1.3 Diaspora and the homeland discourse

For relatively mobile native groups, the experience of moving away from homelands under pressure may not be adequately captured by the notion of “exile.” “Diaspora” gets somewhat closer to a sociospatial reality of connectedness-in-dispersion (Clifford, 2013, pp. 72–73).

Within the academic discourse of urban Indigenous peoples, the term *diasporic* has been discussed to illustrate the dynamic and lived experiences of Indigenous peoples in the contemporary world (e.g., Clifford, 2013; Harvey, 2005; Watson, 2010, 2014a). James Clifford argues why it is reasonable to address *Indigenous diaspora*. He describes the complexity of Indigenous attachment to place, which does not necessarily require constant residency in a homeland area in countries such as Canada, the United States, Australia, and Aotearoa New Zealand, where a majority of Indigenous peoples today reside in cities (Clifford 2013, p. 70). Clifford emphasizes the importance of looking into complex characteristics of different Indigenous peoples in the contemporary world. He takes up examples of *diasporic* borderlands through labor migrations of Indigenous peoples in the United States, stating:

When addressing the lived spectrum of indigenous separations from, and orientations to, homeland, village, or reservation, we need to complicate diasporic assumptions of “loss” and “distance”. Likewise, urbanization should not be conceived as a one-way trip from village to city (Clifford, 2013, pp. 73–74).

Clifford’s approach confronts multisite and diverse Indigenous experiences of circular migration and translocation in the contemporary world. This provides an alternative way of thinking beyond the classical interpretation of *diasporic*, which assumes the term to mean “[...] distance from the place of origin and deferred returns” (Clifford, 2013, p. 73).

A similar approach has been taken up by Graham Harvey and Charles D. Thompson Jr.:

Although ‘diaspora’ is regularly used in speaking of the negative experience of separation from a loved and lost homeland, it is available for use in quite different contexts. There is no linguistic law that says ‘diaspora’ must now and always refer to unwanted or forced movement whilst other words, such as ‘migration’, must be used for the welcome or international kind. [...] Diaspora is not necessarily a final, definitive tearing up of roots. It can be used with reference to the common human experience of dispersal, movement and migration – an experience which frequently has happy outcomes. (Thompson Jr & Harvey, 2005, p. 1).

Both Clifford’s and Harvey and Thompson’s descriptions of *diaspora* are relevant to my dissertation. They open a further discussion on opportunities and challenges within the context of Indigenous peoples in cities.

If I apply one of the interpretations of *diaspora* to Ainu outside Hokkaido<sup>40</sup>, it may signal a negative connotation: a lack of *authenticity*. In Japanese, the general term for Ainu outside Hokkaido is *Dogai Ainu*<sup>41</sup>, which literally means *Ainu outside Hokkaido*. My understanding of the word is that it gives a general impression of *outsider* or *those who do not belong to Hokkaido*. *Diaspora* could also mean *opportunities* for many Ainu moving to cities. It is generally known that both Ainu and Wajin move to cities in search of work or education. For Ainu, moving to cities could mean *hope* to survive and improve their life.

I see Clifford’s interpretation of *diasporic* and *diaspora* as more dynamic and future-oriented than the negative interpretation of *diaspora* pointed out above by Harvey and Thompson (2005). Following their interpretation of *diaspora*, they further explain that “[...] diaspora is not simply an uprooting, but can also be a reseeding” (Thompson Jr & Harvey, 2005, p. 11). Within the Ainu cultural context, I therefore interpret *diaspora* not to mean the end of Ainu culture, but rather the beginning of a new cultural flourishing. I see the interpretation of *diaspora* or *diasporic* by Watson, Clifford, and Harvey and Thompson as all pointing towards a future-oriented, creative, and adaptable approach to including the living experiences of urban Indigenous peoples. However, one

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<sup>40</sup> In this dissertation, I refer those who live outside of Hokkaido as Ainu outside Hokkaido. Tokyo Ainu are those who live in and around the capital Tokyo.

<sup>41</sup> Nakamura discusses *Dogai Ainu* in further detail (see more Nakamura, 2015)

needs to pay attention to the challenging side of the concept, which will be further discussed in this chapter.

What, then, is the connection between the diaspora and the homeland discourse? What is the discursive challenge between diasporic Indigenous life in cities and so-called *homeland*-based Indigenous life? Is it a question about essentialist claims to land and boundary making as opposed to more diasporic and perhaps genealogical claims to *Indigeneity* in urban areas?

My understanding is that the discussion of *homeland* plays an important role when it comes to claiming collective rights of Indigenous peoples. It opens up space for arguing for land rights, self-determination, rights to access natural resources, and the exercise of rights to maintain and develop Indigenous cultures within nation states. However, there is a certain challenge with regard to diasporic Indigenous life in which those in the diaspora may have lost a connection to their homeland. I would venture that parts of the homeland discourse, which often seems to base on an essentialist notion of Indigenous peoples, tends to exclude diasporic Indigenous peoples.

A focus on homeland relations can be useful in differentiating between ethnic minority groups and Indigenous peoples<sup>42</sup>. I understand this homeland discourse as one of the key elements characterizing Indigenous peoples. However, the concept is disputable; while it empowers Indigenous peoples, it also disempowers them. The homeland discourse challenges fundamental norms of who Indigenous peoples are, and how they should be understood in both national and global contexts. Furthermore, Richard Siddle explores Indigenous peoples within a context of national identity, stating “[...] indigenous people is not an objective anthropological category but a political construct explicitly linked to international law and human rights movements” (2006, p. 114). He continues, stating that international law instruments developed to protect minorities are not enough, and Indigenous leaders have argued for the provision of special measures in order to consider their needs and conditions within their homelands (2006, p.114). Siddle furthermore presents an analysis of this movement that resulted in the incorporation of a distinct category of Indigenous rights in the United Nations

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<sup>42</sup> Henry Minde discusses land rights for Indigenous peoples in relation to the global Indigenous movement (see more Minde, 2008).



Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, of how new categories of *identity* can be created under politics, and of how “[...] *identity* can be a political resource” (Siddle, 2006, p. 114)<sup>43</sup>.

Within the Japanese context, the government took a position that Ainu had already been assimilated into Japanese society, and it was not until 1991 that the government recognized Ainu as a *minority* ethnic group (*shōsūminzoku* in Japanese) in a report to the UN (Siddle, 2006, p. 114). In 1997, the Nibutani court verdict changed the historical understanding of the settlement of Hokkaido (Siddle, 2006, p. 121). Later, in 2008, Ainu were recognized as Indigenous people by the Japanese government, and in 2019, the recognition was legally registered in the New Ainu law. Thus, it is fair to state that Ainu politics have taken some time to make progress. However, there has been no progress at all when it comes to land rights issues. To my knowledge, there has not been any major land rights claims until recently<sup>44</sup>, with the exception of a land claim in Hokkaido known as *Chikabumi Land Dispute*<sup>45</sup> at the beginning of 20th century.

Here, I want to clarify two different points that may have a bearing on an Ainu homeland discourse as well as implications for the associated rights discourse. First is the importance of understanding the relation that Ainu had to their land: Ainu used to have a different way of associating with the land. It is generally known that Ainu did not traditionally have a concept of individual land ownership in the modern sense. Ainu have rather used a concept called *iwor*, referring to land and geographical space in nature, which Ainu used daily for hunting, fishing, and gathering edible plants (Oono, 2017).

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<sup>43</sup> Siddle (2006) also remarks on the Ainu accession to the movement as a clear benefit.

<sup>44</sup> There is a claim by Kotan Association this year regarding the New Ainu law. The statement heavily criticizes the law and calls for a reconsideration of current conditions and rights provided to Ainu by the law in line with the international legal standard. The statement covers a range of issues such as land, usage of natural resources, environment, the return of human remains, and the introduction of a social support system (see more Kotan Kotan Association, 2019).

<sup>45</sup> After the enactment of the Hokkaido Former Aborigines Protection Act (HFAPA) in 1899, Ainu were entitled to limited rights of land ownership. However, the local authorities ignored the HFAPA due to vested interests in the lands, leading to Ainu lands coming under the control of Wajin. Ainu leaders, supported by neighboring Wajin, made petitions to the Hokkaido local government concerning the relocation of Ainu proposed under a military building project, which was ultimately cancelled. However, unfair treatment over the land – contrary to the tenets of the HFAPA – continued. (Siddle, 1996, pp. 116–119).

Second is to look for reasons why land claims have not yet been a main focus in Ainu politics. The reason why there has not been many claims on the land is obviously disputable, but my general observation is that Ainu in Hokkaido, perhaps because of their geographical location and strong ties to the land of Hokkaido, seem to focus more on the rights to access natural resources.

The New Ainu law gives the presumption that the law applies everywhere in Japan (Ministry of Land Infrastructure Transport and Tourism, 2019). This implies that all Ainu living outside Hokkaido are to be included in the national system and policy. Yet, the New Ainu law in 2019 does not mention any specifics regarding the right to land (see more in Chapter 1; 1.6). I understand this as the result of the Ainu having sought the basic survival of their culture and recognition rather than a claim under the name of *Indigenous people*. This is to say that a general understanding of what a legal recognition of Indigenous people implies under international law is not yet widely shared by the Japanese public. My analysis is that Ainu in general are perhaps afraid of pushing for Indigenous rights claims, which would have further political implications, such as land rights, collective rights, and the rights to self-determination, for the Japanese government.

My observation indicates that the only tension that has surfaced between Hokkaido Ainu and Ainu outside Hokkaido including Ainu in Tokyo is when Ainu outside Hokkaido were excluded from the national policy and survey (Uzawa, 2018). The exclusion brought about by this development may have strengthened the nostalgic idea about Ainu as a people of the north, with the result of challenging the *authenticity* of Ainu who live outside Hokkaido. This may raise the question of who is a *genuine* Ainu, and thus of who is able to claim for their rights and culture as Indigenous people of Japan.

What seems to be clear is that Ainu appear to make different claims depending on their place of abode. For Ainu in Hokkaido, they seem to place more emphasis on access to natural resources, while Ainu outside Hokkaido seem to focus more on creating shared arenas to foster Ainu culture, language, and people. This can be understood by the fact that many Hokkaido Ainu already have cultural spaces, but no liberty to exercise their Indigenous rights, or to access natural resources. As presented

earlier in the dissertation, those rights are restricted by the local government. For Ainu outside Hokkaido, a first step seems to be the creation of a space where they can foster people, culture, and language in their current and given environments.

#### 2.1.4 Indigeneity and becoming Ainu

Following Cobo's *working* definition of Indigenous peoples (See more in Chapter 1; 1.8) and the global Indigenous discussion presented earlier, I understand the concept of *Indigenous* as being contested and political. Henry Minde, for example, discusses the term: "The term "indigenous" can have different uses, the understanding of the term has developed over time and the interpretation of how it should be defined has been (and is) an ongoing political struggle" (2008, p. 83). Thus, the term *Indigenous* seems to be linked to a categorization of Indigenous peoples by implying political and legal relation. On the other hand, the discussion around *Indigeneity* enables a possibility of exploring what *Indigeneity* means in different national contexts.

Within the academic discourse, Watson proposes the more adaptable *Indigeneity*, emphasizing the importance of separating "lived experience from its essentialized representation," by questioning claims to authenticity based on essentialist linkages to ancestral lands, and arguing in the process for a more adaptable discourse of *Indigeneity* open to all forms of Indigenous experience, including life lived in urban centers (Watson, 2014a, p. 32). His point is crucial since the approach is more inclusive than exclusive. Furthermore, Harvey and Thompson state, "Indigeneity could be defined as 'belonging *in* a place', but many indigenous people demonstrate that a better definition is 'belonging *to* a place,' they may or may not live in it" (Thompson Jr & Harvey, 2005, p. 10). This categorization of belonging *to* a place may be better suited to Ainu living in cities who may not necessarily live *in* a place, but belong *to* the place. The interpretations of *Indigeneity* by Watson and by Harvey and Thompson introduce a more flexible way of understanding the contemporary lifestyle of urban Indigenous peoples.

From an Ainu context, my understanding of the term *Indigeneity* is that *Indigeneity* is an Ainu way of being or doing Ainu: *Aynupuri* in the Ainu language. *Aynupuri* is generally interpreted among the Ainu as an act of doing or practicing the Ainu traditional way. However, I use it differently. I interpret *Aynupuri* as something

that connotes self-determination where one decides how one wishes to express one's being and experiences without external interference. If I apply *Aynupuri* to the urban and contemporary Japanese context, it allows Ainu in cities to free themselves from essentialized representations by *becoming Ainu*.

A dynamic interpretation of *Indigeneity* creates space for various expressions and characteristics of *urban* Indigenous identity. ann-elise lewallen<sup>46</sup> interprets the model of Indigenous modernity from Ainu approaches in contemporary Japan, discussing what the distinction between “being Ainu” and “becoming Ainu” means. She writes:

Recognition that one can learn to “become Ainu” helps to break down essentialist notions of identity as fixed or blood-borne and dispel the myth that a person born of Ainu ancestry (or who “possesses Ainu blood”) is necessarily Ainu, rather than self-consciously forging that identity through active negotiation. (lewallen, 2016, p. 58)

The notion of *becoming Ainu* as a mode of one's active choice is also discussed by John Maher (2005), who proposes a new way of looking at minority politics in Japan, including some individual interviews with those who have minority background, including Ainu. He introduces an example of one Ainu youth experiencing two very different reactions from people when he made his Ainu identity public: One, in a small city in Hokkaido, was very negative, while the other, in Tokyo, was *cool* (2005, pp. 87–88). He illustrates how one's ethnicity can be perceived differently depending on place and people. The term Maher uses here is *metroethnic*, defined as: “[...] an ethnicity that is urban(e), ambiguous and lightly worn. Metroethnicity involves a decentering of the traditional agency of ‘ethnicity’. No longer can ethnic orthodoxy be assumed to have sole power, authority and causal force” (2005, p. 86).

My understanding of Maher's work is that one's heritage can play different roles depending on one's choice in a big city like Tokyo. It is generally known that many who live and work in Tokyo are not from Tokyo. They may live *in* Tokyo, but not belong *to* Tokyo. As a metropolitan city, Tokyo offers an opportunity for them to choose how to explore and *recast* their heritage and identity. As discussed in this dissertation, Ainu in

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<sup>46</sup> As mentioned earlier, this scholar chooses to write her name entirely in the lowercase, so I do the same throughout this dissertation.

Tokyo do not have access to financial gain by proclaiming Ainu heritage. Thus, this is more of a social and cultural benefit, one in which an active choice is made to *become* Ainu in Tokyo. Based on my personal observation of the Ainu community in Tokyo, it seems to be the case that one proclaims Ainu heritage because it harmonizes one's being, and expresses one's belonging in the company of others by acknowledging one's difference from others. If I apply this to Urespa club or any other Ainu cultural organizations in Tokyo, both Wajin and Ainu individuals find their own cultural position based on the shared acknowledgement of who is Ainu and who is not. This cultural positioning creates a certain tension and an unspoken rule when Wajin individuals take part in the cultural practices: Although one may practice and enjoy learning Ainu language and culture, one may not author Ainu culture, nor proclaim Ainu heritage without having actual Ainu heritage or the acceptance of the Ainu community<sup>47</sup>.

*Identity* within the diasporic context is discussed by Stuart Hall (1994), among others, who uses the term *cultural identity*. Hall's perspective on cultural identity is useful and relevant to my case studies. He first interprets cultural identity as "a sort of collective 'one true self'" under enforced selves when one shares common history, culture and ancestry, and "[...] our cultural identities reflect the common historical experiences and shared cultural codes which provide us, as 'one people', with stable, unchanging and continuous frames of reference and meaning, beneath the shifting divisions and vicissitudes of our actual history" (Hall, 1994, p. 393). These essences can be reflected within cultural and social organizations such as Rera Cise and the Urespa club. Could it be, then, that for Urespa students, *being together* means acknowledging some shared history, heritage, and culture, and *becoming* means finding one's cultural

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<sup>47</sup> It is generally known that in the past, Ainu communities accepted the concept of adoption; adoption of Wajin into the community as a full-fledged Ainu member was accepted with community recognition. Additionally, Kitahara (2019) has noted that adult outsiders were also accepted into the Ainu community of their spouse so long as the newcomer adopted and agreed to live by the norms of his/her new host community. These days, however, recognition as of outsiders occurs before a much more complex backdrop of Wajin-Ainu relations, and can entail financial benefit in the case of someone joining, for example, a cultural preservation society whose members sometimes perform for small honorariums, or receive travel allowances to visit far-away places. Alternatively, when it comes to Ainu membership in the Ainu Association of Hokkaido, anyone who is married to an Ainu can be considered as Ainu in the statistics, which presumably affects budgets and the like (Gayman, 2019).

position and vision for the future in the presence of others? This dissertation attempts to explore those questions.

### 2.1.5 Indigenous Cultural Revitalization

Contact in urban environments can also promote cultural divergence and reinforce cross-cultural ethnic boundaries. This section looks into an interpretation of Indigenous cultural revitalization following the previous discussion of urban space, diasporic Indigeneity, social encounters, and homeland relations: How do Ainu contribute to Ainu cultural revitalization by using such urban space? I have argued in Article 3 (Uzawa, 2019b) that the usage of *Ainu cultural revitalization* connotes either cultural preservation—keeping what remains; or restoration—recovering what has been lost within the context of Japanese law. The Ainu Cultural Promotion Act (The House of Representatives Japan, 1997) displays some of these elements. Sidle, for example, explains that the government enacted the CPA in 1997 in an attempt to embrace multiculturalism, at the same time as Ainu activists were claiming that “of particular concern is the power of the state to define and legitimate one particular version of Ainu culture—the ‘traditional’— as authentic” (2003, p. 455).

Within the Japanese context, I argue in Article 3 (Uzawa, 2019b) that Ainu cultural *revitalization* is framed more as something reproducing and recapturing the past within the context of policy and law. The political framework of the Ainu cultural revitalization can be illustrated by the Law, the CPA, or the 2008 resolution on the Ainu. This is because I see them as failing to recognize the present cultural development and everyday lives of Ainu individuals. More specifically, they do not address future-oriented measures to assess priorities and needs set out by the Ainu. Both the CPA and the 2008 resolution recognize neither the right to self-determination nor collective rights, both of which are fundamental rights in establishing social and cultural grounds to practice and develop Ainu culture.

I have used both *revitalization* and *resurgence* in the dissertation. I use *revitalization* in order to understand Ainu culture within the context of Japanese policy and law, while I use *resurgence* when I discuss the concept of the term *revitalization*: How can the term *revitalization* go beyond the static understanding of Ainu culture set

by such policy and law? I find the term *resurgence* useful in this regard, suggesting alternatives to describe cultural *revitalization*. I refer to Jeff Corntassel's use of "everyday acts of resurgence," which embraces placed-based cultural practices more than a right-based discourse (2012, pp. 88–89).

Furthermore, Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (2011) uses the term *resurgence* in taking a more decolonial approach, explaining the word *Biskaabiiyang* in relation to *resurgence* within the Nishinaabeg cultural context:

Within Nishinaabeg theoretical foundations, Biskaabiiyang does not literally mean returning to the past, but rather re-creating the cultural and political flourishing of the past to support the well-being of our contemporary citizens. It means reclaiming the fluidity around our traditions, not the rigidity of colonialism; it means encouraging the self-determination of individuals within our national and community-based contexts; and it means re-creating an artistic and intellectual renaissance within a larger political and cultural resurgence (Simpson, 2011, p. 51).

Simpson's interpretation of *Biskaabiiyang* offers space for a new and present cultural flourishing of Indigenous peoples in contemporary society. I understand this interpretation of *tradition* as more dynamic and in flux, embracing each individual's desire and future vision. Time and place do not limit the potential flourishing of Indigenous culture. They provide more possibilities for Indigenous culture to grow into something flexible and suitable for contemporary society, as James Clifford (2013) outlines about *being* Indigenous as translating the Indigenous way of living in the twenty-first century. Thus, in sum, I find that the term *resurgence* creates space for critical thinking: What does *revitalization* mean within an urban Indigenous context?

With this in mind, the dissertation examines everyday lives of urban Ainu and Wajin youth, and investigates how Ainu and Wajin youth find their own ways of *revitalizing* Ainu culture in cities. The discussion is mainly built around an article by Jeff Corntassel (2012) in which he explores Indigenous resurgence and decolonization, and a second article by Jeff Corntassel and Bryce Cheryl (2012) in which they discuss Indigenous cultural restoration and revitalization.

Firstly, I find the concept of *everyday acts of resurgence* (Corntassel, 2012) applicable to the Ainu case. *Everyday acts of resurgence* can be understood as something that embraces everyday life of Indigenous individuals, eventually

contributing to a decolonization process as “by focusing on ‘everyday’ acts of resurgence, one disrupts the colonial physical, social and political boundaries designed to impede our actions to restore our nationhood” (Corntassel, 2012, p. 88).

“Placed-based cultural practices” (Corntassel, 2012, p. 89) can be any features in their life: food, ceremonies, social gatherings, dances, songs, and so forth. These daily features reconnect and bond human relations and culture. Within the context of Ainu in cities, such spaces in which each individual enjoys and practices cultural attributes bring Ainu culture back to life (see more Uzawa, 2018, 2019b; Uzawa & Watson, 2020). This is about embracing the everyday act of resurgence, which produces an innovative form of *revitalization* through dynamism networks, and mobility in urban space.

The second point referring to Corntassel’s work returns to the discussion on homeland and urban Indigenous peoples. According to Corntassel and Bryce, reconnecting with homelands is a central aspect of Indigenous resurgence. This restoration of homeland relationships also means reconnecting with cultural practices and communities (Corntassel & Bryce, 2012, p. 153).

Here, I disagree with Corntassel and Bryce’s point that Indigenous resurgence should necessarily imply a reconnection to ancestral homelands. In these terms, urban Indigenous peoples—who may not have a connection with their homeland—become *out of place*. The assumption that Indigenous resurgence should be done in relation to *homelands* limits further opportunities for urban Indigenous peoples’ creativity in their Indigenous expression in cities. Furthermore, Clifford states that “Urban populations may or may not return to rural places for family gatherings, ceremonial events, subsistence activities, dance festivals, and pow wows” (2013, p. 76); one needs to acknowledge the fact that circular migration depends on each individual. Peters and Andersen also make the point that “[...] a connection to Indigenous homelands as the primary marker of Indigenous identities creates particular challenges for urban Indigenous communities and identities” (2013, p. 8). This emphasis on reconnecting Indigenous peoples to homelands as the basis of their identities limits creative thinking, instead of envisioning an Indigenous lifestyle and cultural expression beyond homelands.



Furthermore, Peters and Andersen identify a fundamental challenge when it comes to the discourse of urban Indigenous experiences and identities: the shortcomings of a colonial history that neglects to acknowledge cities as originally Indigenous territory. As Peters and Andersen state, “The creation of Indigenous ‘homelands’ outside of cities is in itself a colonial invention” (2013, pp. 7–8). I support Peters and Andersen’s point here that attention should be paid to the colonial history of so-called *cities*. Sapporo city is one of those examples. Written as *Satporo*, Sapporo means *dry and big* (Oono, 2018) in the Ainu language. It is widely known that there are many other examples of geographical sites in Hokkaido named in the Ainu language, as Ainu communities were scattered everywhere in Hokkaido. Thus, this demonstrates the importance of being conscious of the ground on which one discusses urban Indigenous discourse.

Lastly, I claim that a central focus on *revitalization*, which only comes within communities, could possibly widen the gap between Indigenous peoples and the majority of people within the national society. Instead, I propose to reframe the terms: Could *cultural revitalization* be reframed as a future-forming, pedagogical process that is used to foster a space in which Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples can “grow together” in actions of learning, embodying, sharing, discussing, and developing cultural practices? That is to say, what if *the everyday acts of resurgence* that Corntassel and Bryce (2012) discuss were not oriented towards homeland communities, but were to become foundational to the process of strengthening relations of respect and dignity between Ainu in cities and the majority society? (see more Uzawa, 2019b; Uzawa & Watson, 2020).



## Chapter 3: Methodology and Research Reflection

As argued in Chapter 1, what inspired my initial research interest was the absence of Ainu perspectives within the field of Ainu Studies. This raised the question of how to conduct and approach my research in a way that is also beneficial for Ainu communities. What needed to be prioritized to make my research more relevant? Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln make a critical point of Western academia, stating that “nonindigenous scholars have yet to learn from it, to learn that it is time to dismantle, deconstruct, and decolonize Western epistemologies from within, to learn that research does not have to be a dirty word, to learn that research is always already moral and political” (2008, p. 9). Linda Tuhiwai Smith, furthermore, states “the word itself, ‘research’, is probably one of the dirtiest words in the indigenous world’s vocabulary” (1999, p. 1). These statements awoke my consciousness, invoking past memories and feelings of how I perceived academic research on the Ainu: How unethically research on the Ainu was conducted in the name of science in the twentieth century (See more details in Chapter 1; 1.5). Discussions presented within Indigenous methodologies were appealing to me and have guided me to find a research path where I see my work as relevant and useful to the Ainu communities and academia.

### 3.1 Indigenous Methodologies

How can my research be relevant for both the Ainu communities and academia? How do I position Indigenous methodologies within social sciences to ground my research? My research contributes to the re-production of an image of the Ainu by illustrating contemporary Ainu livelihood in an urban setting. This contrasts with the presentation of the Ainu by most previous work in Ainu Studies. In this way, it breaks up the academic power structure of the past by providing a new image or worldview of the Ainu in the twenty-first century.

### 3.1.1 Indigenous Methodologies: contributions and challenges

In the 1970s, Edward W. Said, the author of *Orientalism*, gave a powerful critique of Western representations of the Other wherein an image of the East was portrayed through the eyes of the West (2003 [1978]). Said's critique is something I find of relevance to my research. According to my research participants, such *Otherness* is something that can apply within Ainu-Wajin relations, where the image of the Ainu has often been portrayed negatively within the public and academic discourse. Such a notion of Otherness continues to exist not only within the contemporary public or academic discourse, but within individuals: the ways in which Ainu and Wajin individuals can feel distant to Ainu culture and its heritage.

Indigenous methodologies have grown out of Western academic discourse as well as of grassroots activism. From the 1960s to the 1970s, essential questions about knowledge and power were raised both through academic discourse and social movements in which Indigenous peoples across the globe also took part (Smith, 2012, p. 167). Smith refers to feminism and its approach to research that contributed greatly to the social sciences. She explains, "significant spaces have been opened up within the academy and within some disciplines to talk more creatively about research with particular groups and communities – women, the economically oppressed, ethnic minorities and indigenous peoples" (Smith, 2012, pp. 9–10). Therefore, Indigenous methodologies can be perceived as a parallel to post-colonial studies, feminist studies, and African-American studies.

Moreover, Smith gives a general overview of social science following the critique of positivism, where discussions over what frames *good* research within social sciences has been disputed, and therefore, "method is important because it is regarded as the way in which knowledge is acquired or discovered and as a way in which we can 'know' what is real" (Smith, 2012, p. 166).

My research approach has been inspired by Indigenous methodologies, especially perspectives on decolonization, re-telling, and valuing Indigenous local knowledge (Chilisa, 2012; Porsanger, 2004; Smith, 1999, 2012); by Indigenous autoethnography (Whitinui, 2014); and finally by the concept of the cultural interface (Nakata, 1993;

Nakata, 2007; Nakata, Nakata, Keech, & Bolt, 2012). Jelena Porsanger defines Indigenous methodology as

[...] a body of indigenous and theoretical approaches and methods, rules and postulates employed by indigenous research in the study of indigenous peoples. The main aim of indigenous methodologies is to ensure that research on indigenous issues can be carried out in a more respectful, ethical, correct, sympathetic, useful and beneficial fashion, seen from the point of view of indigenous peoples. (Porsanger, 2004, pp. 107–108)

My understanding of Indigenous methodologies, therefore, is to conduct research in a respectful way for all parties, research participants, researchers, and anyone who may be involved with the research. Indigenous methodologies invite participants as a co-producer of research. The work should be reciprocal to Indigenous communities, and finally, it should reflect the views of Indigenous peoples.

Within Ainu Studies, the issue of Ainu being silenced in academia is broadly discussed in the book *Beyond Ainu Studies* (Hudson et al., 2014), to which I contributed one chapter. This, as well as my doctorate education, made me realize how rarely literature on Ainu is available from an Ainu perspective, and how little of this is shared among other Indigenous peoples in the world. The use of Indigenous methodologies allows me to take a local starting point of urban Ainu, from which I develop a discussion of Ainu and Wajin relations through the analysis of the Ainu cultural revitalization in Tokyo and Sapporo. The analysis includes both Ainu and Wajin students' voices by illustrating similarities and differences. By this, the dissertation suggests which priorities should be focused upon within Ainu Studies today.

### 3.1.2 Indigenous Methodologies and their Critiques

The discourse surrounding Indigenous methodologies is discussed in various ways. Walter and Anderson describe how dynamically and actively the field produces knowledge, regardless of its rather slender literature (2013, p. 58). They shed light on differences in Indigenous methodologies, and emphasize the importance of the strengths and qualities each methodology offers, stating “Categorizing Indigenous methodologies

as a homogenous group risks essentializing Indigenous peoples even more than we do now” (Walter & Andersen, 2013, p. 63).

Many scholars contribute to the field of Indigenous methodologies, but here I will refer only to a handful whose work is directly relevant to this dissertation. The ground-breaking work by Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999, 2012) explores and discusses how colonialist research affects Indigenous peoples by emphasizing the importance of Indigenous voices and priorities within research. Martin Nakata (2007) takes another approach, which can be understood as a critique of the exclusivist approach. He sheds light on contested knowledge systems and the spaces they occupy, stating “[...] things are not clearly black or white, Indigenous or Western” (2007, p. 9). Nakata’s point about living in and between different ethnicities and identities raises a potential challenge that may be encountered: Who is eligible to use Indigenous methodologies, and are there any limitations on choosing research participants, Indigenous, or non-Indigenous? This is in line with Porsanger’s emphasis on the importance of a shift in Indigenous research paradigms. She argues that practice of Indigenous methodologies are fit for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers (Porsanger, 2004, p. 109). This point becomes critical when a researcher considers collaborative work.

My main case study, Urespa, is a good example suited to illustrating complex relations embedded in an Indigenous research paradigm, since the Urespa context is grounded within a cross-cultural urban space. How does one make sense of one’s world in the urban environment one lives in? My research required me to include both Ainu and Wajin research participants, since their social and cultural relations are inseparable. Through this process, I learned three important lessons. First, it is for me as an Ainu researcher to recognize the relation between Ainu and Wajin as living people and culture, which has been little discussed in the past. Second is to establish the grounds for the further development of Ainu culture. Third is to identify ongoing challenges of ethnic identities, and to suggest further dialogue on reconciliation between Ainu and Wajin. I consider this as my contribution to the Indigenous research discourse. Without Wajin participants, I would not have come to realize how important it is to understand Ainu issues in a broader context. This has helped to identify and conceptualize ongoing challenges of Ainu-Wajin relations by making *our* reality and world more visible.

In addition, what is significant about the Urespa case study is that it has presented a new way to practice Ainu knowledge in an urban space. As demonstrated in Article 3 (Uzawa, 2019b), Ainu knowledge practice was positioned differently than a traditional practice. Notably, within Japanese cultural and social settings, it is generally seen that Japanese traditions and culture dominate over those of the Ainu. Within Urespa, this hierarchy was reversed: Those who know Ainu culture seem to have more power than those who do not. My research shows that Ainu knowledge practice has been disrupted by assimilation and colonization, resulting in a situation where most Ainu and Wajin youth do not know much about Ainu culture. This can be seen in my findings on Ainu and Wajin youth who expressed distance to their heritage and both Ainu and Wajin cultures. Thus, it is fair to state that both student groups are in the process of forming their new epistemological ground: learning how to ground their ethnic identities and cultural connections, and how they come to know what Ainu knowledge is to them. Through this, they attempt to understand their cross-cultural space and shared history by making sense of their world and realities in which they live. This is another example in which I have learned from working with Ainu and Wajin research participants.

Lastly, when it comes to critiques of Indigenous methodologies, Aileen Moreton-Robinson introduces her perspective: “Critique of Indigenous research methodologies is usually made on the grounds that they are considered to be metaphysical and, by implication, lacking rationality” (2017, p. 74). She makes a comparison to the Western methodological presupposition, stating “The challenge for Indigenous research is undoing the Western methodological presupposition of nature as servant to humanity and humanity as master of nature [...] for humans are worth no more or no less than all living things” (2017, p. 75). She urges a new Indigenous way of understanding our complex relations with the earth (Moreton-Robinson, 2017, p. 75). Moreton-Robinson’s point here sheds light on what is considered as *rationality*, and by *whom*.

With this in mind, I reflect on my own research and process. My understanding of what this means is that the perception of being *rational* in the world differs vastly. As Walter and Anderson state above, diverse Indigenous methodologies provide a hint on how one can be creative in grounding one’s ethnicity, identity and culture in contemporary society. My research is a good example. My research discusses urban

communities in relation to people and different cultures. It demonstrates a cross-cultural dynamism rather than a homogenous presentation of Ainu culture. Thus, I have attempted to reflect upon the potential to recast a new way of understanding and engaging with Indigenous methodologies within an Ainu context.

### 3.1.3 Decolonization

A main concern for Indigenous peoples, whether when drafting a law or carrying out research, seems to be the right to self-determination. Elaine Coburn, Aileen Moreton-Robinson, George Sefa Dei, and Makere Stewart-Harawira give a critical view, stating, “[...] we affirm that dominant research no longer sets the terms of debate around Indigenous research [...] this is part of much broader processes of Indigenous self-determination” (2013, p. 333). Setting Indigenous people’s own terms and priorities in research raises a broader agenda within the research process. Smith articulates the point that the search for self-determination surpasses a political goal, which then becomes a search for social justice in various psychological, social, cultural and economic areas (1999, p. 116). This emphasizes the importance of Indigenous participation in research, which goes beyond a political goal where research and its process have an influence on various aspects of Indigenous peoples’ livelihood. I, therefore, interpret the right to self-determination as a key element in the process of decolonization. Smith explains the term:

Decolonization, however, does not mean and has not meant a total rejection of all theory or research or Western knowledge. Rather, it is about centring our concerns and world views and then coming to know and understand theory and research from our own perspectives and for our own purposes (Smith, 1999, p. 39).

I support Smith’s interpretation of decolonization, where decolonization does not mean a rejection of Western academia, but rather bringing in a different worldview and interpretation of research by Indigenous peoples.

When it comes to Ainu Studies in Japan, the book *Beyond Ainu Studies* shows how the Ainu were used in the name of Ainu Studies to the state’s ends:

In general terms, scientific inquiry into and knowledge of Ainu people, collated under the



nomenclature of Ainu Studies, were employed to develop state and prefectural policy directives for colonizing and modernizing Ainu people (Hudson et al., 2014, p. 3 ).

How can my research go beyond this colonial history of Ainu Studies? During the process of writing the dissertation, I have searched for my own understanding and relevance between decolonization and my research within the context of Japan. My contribution is to be critical towards previous research by stating that my own research plays a part in the decolonization process.

The case of Japan, which used the academic discourse of “race” to categorize the Ainu as an inferior race under the guise of Ainu Studies (Siddle, 1996), is not an isolated case in the world. Bagele Chilisa writes in regard to postcolonial theory that “[...] it exposes how academic discourse uses Othering ideologies to make sense of the world along binary opposites, which devalue indigenous knowledge and marginalize the voices of the colonized Other” (2012, p. 49). This also applies to the Ainu, whose culture, language, and knowledge have been devalued and socially positioned as an inferior race through the academic discourse of “race.” This similarity was intriguing and motivated me to investigate how Ainu and Wajin youth in contemporary society perceive their reality and life in relation to Ainu cultural revitalization through the context of decolonization in Japan.

The next step was to think critically about how my research can contribute to the decolonization process. Here I refer to an aspect of *re-telling* from not only Ainu perspectives, but also from those of Wajin whose social relations and culture are deeply interrelated with the Ainu. Within the Japanese context, the Wajin and Ainu live side by side, and both cultures are intertwined in contemporary Japanese society in such a way that one is inseparable from the other. Therefore, it is necessary to include the Wajin in the discussion in order to understand the relationship of the Ainu and Wajin youth living in contemporary Japanese society. I have focused particularly on how they come to terms with who they are, instead of how to articulate their identities.

### 3.1.4 Indigenous Autoethnography

In addition to decolonization, I have weaved in my life stories and experiences in Article 1 (Uzawa, 2018) in order to bring in my living experiences in Tokyo and Nibutani. My

stories serve as a starting point for further discussion of urban Ainu cultural revitalization and diasporic Indigeneity.

I was inspired by Paul Whitinui from Aotearoa New Zealand, who describes Indigenous autoethnography as culturally informed research practice, or the art of storytelling (2014, p. 456). Whitinui states “To understand how others are affected, we must create appropriate spaces, approaches, and methods for others’ voices to be heard” (2014, p. 458). I support Whitinui’s idea of making spaces, approaches, and methods for other *voices* to be heard. I interpret this as creating spaces in academia by *re-telling* one’s own story to validate Indigenous knowledge and ways of life. Furthermore, Whitinui articulates the importance of Indigenous autoethnography:

Indigenous autoethnography seeks to strengthen and clarify how we as indigenous peoples want to live in the world today. Ultimately, this means speaking about “self” creates new knowledge; meanings and possibilities that inform how being Māori, “Native,” or indigenous is different (Whitinui, 2014, p. 481)

I understand Whitinui’s description as linking to the right to self-determination, where speaking about *self* is an active choice one makes by *re-telling* priorities and choices of Indigenous peoples. Applying Indigenous autoethnography to my research helps me to clarify the reasons why the first-hand narrative is important and different from most Ainu studies in the past. It raises a whole set of new questions. According to Smith, these are: “[W]hose research is it? Who owns it? Whose interests does it serve? Who will benefit from it? Who has designed its questions and framed its scope? Who will carry it out? Who will write it up? How will its results be disseminated?” (1999, p. 10).

These questions have guided me through a process of writing the dissertation, especially when it comes to my role as an Ainu researcher in which I have questioned my reasoning and the effect of the research.

Applying Indigenous autoethnography to the dissertation has required me to be aware and critical of my role, consciousness, observations, surroundings, and implications for research in the future. I have experienced doubt, questions, confusion,

struggles, and challenges about my own responsibility and role as an Ainu researcher to the extent that I did not know if I was right or wrong or, perhaps, both.

One may question, though, what the differences between Indigenous autoethnography and Indigenous methodologies are. My interpretation is that they complement each other. Indigenous autoethnography takes its starting point from a focus on individual narrative, while Indigenous methodologies takes a more community-based approach. More specifically, Indigenous autoethnography is not only about telling one's story or describing one's life; it has a different starting point—in my case, in my position as an Ainu researcher. Indigenous autoethnography enables the Indigenous researcher to make a choice in deciding how they wish to be positioned in the world. Indigenous methodologies place this into a wider context in which it is helpful to understand why such positioning becomes critical in the research process.

### 3.1.5 My Role as Researcher

I identify myself as an Ainu researcher with both Ainu and Wajin heritage and upbringing. I conducted my research at *home* with *my people*. Those people might have considered me as *an insider* because of my background, while some might have considered me as *an outsider*. I have, therefore, attempted to be critical towards my own positioning as an Ainu researcher by referring to Torjer A. Olsen, who states “No matter how close you are to the field of study or community, a critical distance will make your research more trust-worthy” (Olsen, 2016, p. 25). Furthermore, Kim TallBear explains that *insiderness* is complex:

While we sometimes foreground *reciprocity*, Indigenous researchers are also likely to emphasize caring for our relations with home communities [...] Sometimes those relationships can feel undermined by the protocols and foundational assumptions of academic research [...] (TallBear, 2017, p. 79)

I myself identify with such struggles of the Indigenous research paradigm, which I will discuss further in the next section.

During the process, I came to realize that my positioning in my research is neither black nor white, but somewhere in between. For the Urespa students, for example, they

may see me as an *insider* or *outsider* as I came into the group as a researcher having lived in Norway for a long period of time. Martin Nakata's term *cultural interface* (2007) helps me to position my *insider-outsider* aspects in my research. In regard to the knowledge systems being contested in space, Nakata's view is that the contemporary world, and how we operate in it, is of significant complexity. According to him, the world cannot be clearly divided into Indigenous and Western, but it should be seen through multiple lenses of history, politics, economics, discourses, social practices, and knowledge technologies. Ultimately, all of these factors condition our worldview, and how we apply this view in our daily lives (Nakata, 2007, p. 9). I understand this to mean that both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples are living at the boundary between different identities and realities.

This concept is useful in understanding an ethnically mixed Japanese society and the relations between the Ainu and Wajin living side by side, sharing the same language in the same education system, yet having a different relationship to each culture. How we operationalize our daily lives clearly varies from person to person. If I applied this to myself with the Urespa students, my understanding of the world could be very different from the students on many levels. For example, my assumption about the fact that my identity and heritage could bring the students and me closer, contrasted with the fact that I am a researcher with a foreign affiliation and thus potentially creating more distance. How I engage with the Ainu culture may be also different: I often depend on recalling my own memories of the past with elders, while the Urespa students seem to make use of technology to facilitate the process, as argued in Article 3 (Uzawa, 2019b).

Bob Peace discusses the importance of all researchers in being critical about their own positions through the term *privileged position* (Pease, 2010). I have taken my privileged position into account as someone living in a safe community with a middle-class lifestyle. This has opened up many opportunities: having a dialogue with many Indigenous or non-Indigenous people from all over the world, or receiving a higher education. On the other hand, in a world where I am an Asian and Indigenous woman, which is often considered as less powerful in both Japanese and Western societies, I am less privileged. The fact that I am removed from Ainu culture by living in Norway and

Europe may also be considered as less privileged by the Urespa students or Ainu community members.

Another challenge I have faced in the dissertation is how to use personal pronouns. This also connects to the term *cultural interface* (2007), raised above, about how I position myself in this research and the world. Adam Gaudry makes an important remark through an analysis of insurgent research in his work on producing readable scholarly work for Indigenous readers written by Indigenous author by stating that “its strategic use of ‘we’ and ‘us’ goes beyond simple rhetoric and comes to symbolize commonality, solidarity, and a respect for our common situations” (2011, p. 120). I support Gaudry’s positioning in research where I also aim to produce readable and reachable work for a wider audience. My challenge was a dilemma between wishing to express myself as “we” as part of the Ainu community, while it seemed necessary to write “they” whenever I referred to the Urespa students with whom I partly shared commonality due to my Ainu heritage—although due to my position as researcher, this commonality could never be total. I also had a wish to express myself as “we” as part of the global Indigenous community. Thus, in the end, I used them all in different ways for each Article. I used “we” for Article 1 when I discussed myself as Tokyo Ainu, since this constitutes who I am today. For Article 2, I used “they” whenever I refer to the Urespa students due to the fact that Article 2 was written with my co-author, Mark Watson, a cultural anthropologist at a Canadian university. In Article 3, I also used “they” to differentiate my position and the Urespa students.

### 3.1.6 Ethical aspects

Suki Ali and Moira Kelly write that it was in the 1960s and 1970s that subjects on inequalities of ethnicity, gender, and sexuality became more focused, alongside the wider social movements of the period. Traditional social research, with a focus on value-free and neutral observation, became more and more challenged (Ali & Kelly, 2012, pp. 59–60). This was a time for social researchers to adopt new research models that were more suitable for a diverse society, challenging researchers to “[...] consider not only *what* they know, but also *how* they come to know it” (Ali & Kelly, 2012, p. 60).

Within the field of Indigenous Studies, Anna-Lill Drugge describes that ethics in Indigenous-related research has been discussed internationally to a greater degree over recent decades:

Decolonizing theories and methods have gained legitimacy and prestige, and Indigenous scholarship has challenged mainstream research by adding novel perspectives and critical standpoints that encourage researchers of all origins to reflect upon their own positions within the colonial academic and social structures in which they work (Drugge, 2016, p. 9).

As presented above, through the work of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars with a focus on centering Indigenous perspectives and priorities in research, it is evident that Indigenous scholarship has gained its position within academia. However, my experience in this research is that a challenge still remains: How to make sense of the research in ways that can be relevant and useful to both Ainu community and academia. This level of challenge may also depend on which country one conducts research in. For example, I see this as more challenging in Japanese academia concerning Indigenous peoples. Iewallen further explains:

Japanese universities have not developed an institutional framework to evaluate and monitor human subjects research conducted by their students and faculty to ensure that vulnerable subject populations are not exploited. While certain academic societies have been proactive in developing standards for ethical research and professional practice [...] these organizations remain in the minority (Iewallen, 2007, p. 525).

This is in contrast to the Norwegian system, which has a strong focus on the ethical aspects in research in general. This illustrates that Japan still has some distance to go in establishing an ethical research platform concerning Indigenous peoples in general, and the Ainu in Japan in particular. During my research stay in Japan in 2016, my experience was that the Research Faculty of Media and Communication at Hokkaido University where I was affiliated as a visiting researcher required a detailed ethical review process. A contradiction is that while the Research Faculty of Media and Communication at Hokkaido University put their effort into processing the ethical review, Hokkaido University itself still retains Ainu human remains on the University

campus site at the Hokkaido University Ossuary for Ainu Ancestral Remains. This results in a double standard (see more Uzawa & Ding-Everson, 2017, pp. 304–307).

The ethical review process took nearly two months and required submitting a consent form for interviews, photos, and videos, in addition to an interview guide, all of which encompassed all aspects of human rights, privacy, data analysis, and the consequences of the research. Moreover, I also registered my research with the Norwegian Centre for Research Data in Norway<sup>48</sup>.

I contacted the Urespa students several months before my arrival in Japan, writing a long letter explaining why I would like to conduct research with them, its importance, and their rights and protections in the process. This was also discussed at a monthly meeting in Urespa, and I was finally granted approval for my research. It is important to remark that this was the first time that Urespa had accepted a researcher to conduct research with them.

Within my research, I have considered five key factors as important: Firstly, to be *transparent* with research participants about who I am, what I do, and how my research can contribute to the Ainu community in general. Secondly, to have *informed consent* with research participants in such a way that, as Ali and Kelly explain, “Individuals are felt to have the right to know what is happening to them” (2012, p. 66). I mentioned this to the Urespa students in the interviews, informing them that their participation was voluntary and that they were free to ask any questions regarding my research or interview, and that they were able to withdraw at any time they wished. I also paid attention to locations where I interviewed the students so that all could feel safe and free to talk without any external interference. Thirdly, to *respect* the students, making sure that their involvement in my research would not cause any negative repercussions or effects on power relations in the group to which they belong (Urespa). Fourthly, to be *responsible* in safeguarding gathered data, particularly during the data analysis process. Having spent much time deciding which empirical data to use for my Articles, I decided not to use the most sensitive data. This was my decision to respect students’ wishes not to be identified in any way. Regardless of my personal view on the

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<sup>48</sup> Due to a misunderstanding in the process of Norwegian Centre for Research Data, the project was only registered after the fieldwork had been conducted.

data as valuable, I concluded that I would not use it. Here I referred to Shawn Wilson, who writes that “The analysis must be true to the voices of all the participants and reflect an understanding of the topic that is shared by researcher and participants alike” (2008, p. 101). Even though I did not use the data, what the students shared with me helped and gave me an opportunity to reflect further upon how much power and how many implications the research could hold over the students, or even potentially work against them.

I have focused on anonymity in my data analysis to reduce any chance of the students being exposed to uncomfortable or negative situations, even though some students wished for their names to appear in the text. I have rendered all names pseudonymous, except, with their approval, for Honda Yuko, the founder of Urespa, and Okada Yuki, a teacher and administrator. All full quotes in the dissertation were discussed with and consented to by the students. Fifthly and finally, to *be reciprocal*. TallBear raises a critical point on how the notion of *reciprocity* is insufficient, addressing that she and other researchers “[...] do not, in simpler terms, exchange data for aid or service to the communities we study” (2017, p. 80). TallBear further states that “[i]t is also helpful to think about the research process as a relationship-building process” (2017, p. 80) instead of a goal of research being to *give back* to research participants. I agree with TallBear. My research with the Urespa students has taught me that the Indigenous research framework can be more communicative and responsive to the Ainu communities. Carrying out research with the students is a process of its own in which the students and I are able to continue a dialogue into the future. It has raised the question: If I support TallBear’s idea of the research process as a relationship-building process, could the boundary between researchers and research participants also be more open in a way that we are allowed to have different roles simultaneously, such as mother, teacher, learner, friend, and so forth?

My relationship with the students meant very much to me. I have enjoyed our moments together, while I also struggled to find a balance between what I should have done before, what I should do now, and what I should be doing in the future. I found myself being nervous because I was occupied with my own presumption that students may feel *over-researched* or at least feel *uncomfortable* being around a researcher. This



was based on my own previous experiences as an Ainu individual being interviewed many times, and how much unethical research has been conducted on Ainu in the past. This might have limited my own behavior and position as an Ainu researcher. At the same time, I realized that many of the students did not seem to have any reference point to the colonial history of the Ainu Studies. The next step was to imagine how I would have liked to be around a researcher if I were student. This meant not talking about my research. I instead focused on being silent, and rather observing the students' behavior and communication with others. In this way, I gradually understood what was necessary: for me to listen to their voices as someone who shares their passion and interest in the Ainu culture.

## **3.2 Fieldwork**

Barbara Harrison (2001) has developed a typology of cross-cultural researchers in which I would be categorized as the Indigenous insider. Harrison describes the Indigenous insider as someone who “endorses the unique values, perspectives, behaviors, beliefs, and knowledge of his or her indigenous community and culture and is perceived by people within the community as a legitimate community member who can speak with authority about it” (2001, p. 48). However, as argued above, positioning myself solely as Indigenous insider limits my understanding of the complex social and cultural relations that the Ainu and Wajin have in contemporary Japanese society. Therefore, I have attempted to be critical towards my own position as an Ainu researcher who belongs to Norwegian academia: To consider possibilities of being regarded as insider, outsider, or both by research participants.

Nevertheless, my central focus in my research is to prioritize local perspectives of Ainu and Wajin youth in cities. To have a greater understanding of the research participants, conducting fieldwork where I would be able to be part of their daily life activities by observing, learning, sharing experiences together, was necessary.

### **3.2.1 My personal life journeys**

In this section, I share some of my life stories in order to be able to present more about the fieldwork and method as they are all related to one another. In 1997, I experienced

two life-changing events. The first one was the Nibutani Dam Case<sup>49</sup>, in which the Sapporo District Court recognized that “[...] the Ainu have a right guaranteed under both Article 13 of the Japanese Constitution (respect for the individual) and Article 27 of the ICCPR<sup>50</sup> to enjoy their own minority culture” (Stevens, 2014, p. 205). This judicial decision stirred up the public consciousness of Ainu as a *dying race*, and an awareness of the term *Indigenous peoples*, which began to be discussed more in the public discourse. The decision became a landmark event in the Ainu community, and a personal issue for me as my family was one of the plaintiffs in the case. On March 27, 1997, the day the decision was announced, I was working as a student secretary for the office of the first Ainu politician, Kayano Shigeru<sup>51</sup> in Tokyo, and received a number of phone calls from journalists about this case. Everybody seemed to be overwhelmed with joy and surprise by this decision, saying “They won the case! They won the case!” The court decision became known internationally, and pushed the Ainu political movement forward. Later on, I had the opportunity to present this case at the Nineteenth Session of the UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations in Geneva, United Nations (The Ainu Association of RERA, 2001).

The second event, in the same year, was when I was introduced to the Tokyo Ainu community. On the recommendation of a friend, I began working as a university student part-time worker at the Ainu restaurant Rera Cise in Tokyo. Rera Cise was more than a restaurant. Since it was run by the Ainu Association of Rera, one of the Ainu cultural associations in Tokyo established in 1983 (see The Association of Rera, 1997; Uzawa, 2018), Rera Cise became an urban hub for me to learn about Ainu culture, and to get together with other Ainu in cities. This changed everything for me as up until this period, I did not have any such place in Tokyo. I learned Ainu songs, dances, food, and most importantly, what it means to be part of the Tokyo Ainu community. It was all about people I shared my life experiences with, and what they shared with me. During

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<sup>49</sup> Along with the central government’s nation-wide development project in 1960s as part of an economic growth effort, the dam was planned and launched by the Hokkaido Development Agency over Saru River, where the sacred Ainu community, Nibutani, is located. The dam’s purpose was to supply water to an industrial development area. The development project was later cancelled, while the dam continued to be built (see Sonohara, 1997; Stevens, 2014).

<sup>50</sup> International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

<sup>51</sup> Kayano Shigeru was the first Ainu politician in the Diet of Japan, serving from 1994 to 1998.

this time, I was also recruited, together with some of my friends, by Japanese experts on Ainu politics and international law. We met regularly at a café and at the Ainu Culture Center in Tokyo, which eventually gave me the opportunity to present the Ainu situation and conditions in Kanto region at the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues at the UN in New York (see more Ainu Resource Centre and Shimin Gaikou Centre, 2007). Such experiences affected me greatly, making me realize how important it is for Ainu to tell stories from an Ainu perspective.

This encouraged me to pursue further education abroad, which gave me an opportunity to work overseas, working for non-profit organizations with and about Indigenous peoples in Boston and Thailand, enrolling in an MA in Indigenous Studies in Norway, which then led to an internship at the International Labour Organization in Geneva, and finally enrolling in a PhD program in Norway. All these overseas experiences helped me to understand Ainu issues in a broader context.

### 3.2.2 Ainu presence in the United Nations

Participation at the UN and transnational meetings has given me a new way to understand the social and political conditions of the Ainu, placing them into the broader picture of Indigenous politics, as well as apprehending which issues are at stake in other nation states, and how other Indigenous peoples struggle with their conditions. While there are both similarities and differences, this helped me to understand what needs to be prioritized for the further development of Ainu politics in Japan.

First is to be recognized as Indigenous people by international law or the system to which they belong. In order to do so, the implications of the term *Indigenous people* also need to be clarified. Second is to find an instrument to exercise their rights as Indigenous peoples within the nation state in which they reside. Such an instrument could be their own educational institution, physical space, network, and so forth. The instrument helps in the exercise of the set of Indigenous rights such as human rights, land rights, collective rights, and the rights to self-determination. Third is to work on the reconciliation process with other members of society, if there are unsolved issues that need to be addressed. Lastly is to establish a constructive dialogue with and among Indigenous communities in order to solidify their standing in contemporary society.

My observations indicate that what is especially pressing in the Ainu case is the initiation of a constructive dialogue among themselves. If I take myself and experience as an example, in the Ainu community I have observed that many are highly aware of their daily challenges, but struggle to make them relevant to issues discussed in national and international arenas. As mentioned above, some Japanese experts who have been supportive of the Ainu invited me and others to become involved with the UN movement. I have learned, to some degree, technical UN terminologies and international laws in English. For Ainu, language is the biggest barrier. To my knowledge, there are only a handful of people identifying as Ainu who can read and write in English. This has raised a question of how Ainu can make their issues, priorities, and future vision more visible in a way that enables them to understand their challenges in a larger context. I saw this – finding a language and concepts that anyone can understand, regardless of their background – as challenging. We, – those of us who attended the UN meeting – put our efforts into disseminating information about UN activities widely by writing a report and holding workshops after every UN meeting. Yet, most participants in the workshop were Wajin individuals. Many Ainu individuals seemed to be overwhelmed by financial pressure and heavy work schedules, which leads to them having no space for something that does not bring direct results. It clarified the fact that discussions in the UN meetings were clearly distant to many Ainu individuals.

These frustrations were somehow amplified when I realized that there are not many Ainu voices present within either Western or Japanese academia. As explained in Chapter 1; 1.5, there are too few scholars writing about Ainu from Ainu perspectives. Thus, it seems that Ainu are generally not part of academic, public, or international discussions. This has motivated me and shaped my approach to the dissertation, in order to bring in new knowledge about Ainu, which I hope it eventually bridges a missing linkage between Ainu everyday life and the national as well as international discourse of Indigenous peoples. How can we make better policies and laws when we do not know what underlines our everyday lives?

Learning about the Sámi situation in my life in Norway has also triggered me to think forward about what are the most effective and strategic ways to approach the issues Ainu face. My Master thesis, *A comparison between Japan and Norway regarding ILO*

*Convention No. 169*, taught me that the Sámi, generally known as champions of Indigenous politics, have also suffered from weak linkages between the grassroots level of understanding of Sámi politics and global Indigenous politics (Uzawa, 2007). Over the years, I have absorbed those experiences and have searched for a way to channel this inspiration into something positive for the future of Ainu politics.

I understand that the UN Indigenous movement<sup>52</sup> has become a symbol and manifestation of a new global Indigenous identity. My experience indicates that it strengthens a sense of collectivity as part of a global Indigenous community by acknowledging shared histories and experiences.

Returning to my research, is there any relevance between the UN context and the Urespa case? Simply put, the Indigenous movement is politically driven, while Urespa is not. Sidle categorizes people into those who make a choice not to reveal their identities, those who use identity as an instrument of financial gain, and those who voluntarily choose Ainu identity with pride (2006, p. 113). If I apply this categorization to Urespa, Urespa are people who associate themselves positively with their identity, whether as Ainu or as Wajin. The Urespa club is a student-driven organization, and initially motivated by Ainu cultural revitalization. However, the future may be different. It might extend an initial goal, and develop into a political resource for the Ainu movement, which could eventually help Ainu identity making. My research gives me an inkling that all graduates from Urespa likely have a strong sense of who they are and how they want to engage with the Ainu discourse in contemporary Japanese society upon their graduation. This is a powerful and enduring tool, and something similar to what I have experienced through my UN and translational experiences.

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<sup>52</sup> I refer to a movement before and after the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

### 3.2.3 Urespa as my main case study

My first encounter with Urespa students was in the summer of 2013 during their international excursion to Tromsø and Mandalen, Norway. Because of my previous contact with the Urespa founder, Professor Honda Yuko, who once lived in Nibutani, I spent some time with them and learned a little about Urespa. As I left Japan in my early twenties for further education and work, Urespa students somehow mirrored my past in the way that they were in search of their own connection with Ainu culture and their own expression of Ainu culture. The Urespa club and the youth appealed to me and became the main case study in my doctorate project.

Focusing on the youth in my research seems to be an obvious choice, since they are our future. I have attempted to put Urespa students' everyday lives and experiences into a broader context in the hope that it brings a better picture of contemporary Ainu livelihood. On the other hand, there are numerous examples that I do not feel comfortable discussing; for example, I have not touched upon the specifics of discrimination, or Ainu communities having *social problems*. What I have sought to do was rather to discuss ongoing challenges Ainu and Wajin face, and a way to overcome these challenges. The approach I take in my research is to look forward into the future rather than seeking for reasons why Ainu are positioned as they are now in society. This is my research commitment – to seek out what is constructive and useful for future research

### 3.2.4 Multi-sited Ethnography

My fieldwork conducted in 2016<sup>53</sup> may be categorized as *thick description* (Geertz, 1973) which explicitly focuses on describing the surroundings and people by interpreting meanings of people, culture and places. However, my approach and method to both fieldwork and research differ from Geertz's concept. It adds a sense of oneself in the role of researcher while the focus remains on the specific group in the context of the research. The research becomes relational and a process of its own. All my previous

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<sup>53</sup> While I was affiliated as a visiting researcher at the Research Faculty of Media and Communication at Hokkaido University, I began participating in Urespa activities mainly in the evenings as a preparation for the fieldwork from the end of April for a few months before the actual data collection, and continued the participation up until December 2016. This was to show my presence in order to be accepted by the Urespa group, and was necessary in order to be able to establish trust and grounds for my being there.

life experiences and encounters with Urespa students in 2013 in Norway are relational and relevant. Therefore, the Urespa case study is not only a description of people or culture “in search of meaning” (Geertz, 1973, p. 5), it also helps to connect each event by providing the larger context of the Ainu issues in my research.

To frame this, I chose multi-sited ethnography as my main research method. Ulf Hannerz shares his own experience of a transitional period in the 1990s, from a traditional way of conducting fieldwork on foot as an anthropologist, to multi-sited ethnography at multiple geographical locations (2009, p. 271). George E. Marcus further explains an emergent methodological trend: “The emergence of multi-sited ethnography is located within new spheres of interdisciplinary work, including media studies, science and technology studies, and cultural studies broadly” (1995, p. 95). This applies to my case as well through my learning, experiences, and impressions in different geographical locations from Tokyo, Hokkaido, Thailand, Greenland, United States, Canada, Geneva, Mandalen, Tromsø, where all experiences are relational and intertwined.

Within the main framework of multi-sited ethnography, I share many inductive ethnographic features in my research, where “Unlike grounded theory, ethnography does not represent a coherent and clearly prescribed methodology; rather, it indicates a general research orientation, which can then assume a variety of forms” (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009, p. 85). Moreover, Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson explain the general five features of ethnographic work. I briefly summarize these points: (1) to study everyday acts and descriptions of people within a context, rather than the researcher creating certain conditions; (2) data gathering is based on participatory observation, documentary evidence, and informal conversations; (3) data collection is not based on a specific fixed design of the research, and categories are not pre-defined; (4) in order to acquire a deep understanding, it focuses on a few cases that are smaller in scale with a cluster of people and a single setting; and (5) the data analysis is based on an understanding of meanings of human behaviors, and is applied to a local or wider context. Statistical and quantification analyses are secondary (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p. 3). I share most of these features in my research method: following students’ everyday life, and gathering data based on participatory observation, conversations, and interviews.

Multi-sited ethnography challenges the most common ethnographic approaches, which focus on single-sited ethnography with a specific group of people. In contrast, the multi-sited ethnography in my research is an approach towards understanding the single case within a larger context, using multiple lenses of my own experiences at various geographical locations. Multi-sited ethnography allowed me to follow a different mode of Ainu cultural practice through various geographical locations. Marcus explains the emergence of multi-sited ethnography: “[...]it arises in response to empirical changes in the world and therefore to transformed locations of cultural productions” (1995, p. 97). He also points out that by following people, things, metaphors, plot, story, allegory, life, biography, or conflict, there are several different techniques for conducting multi-sited ethnography (Marcus, 1995, pp. 106–110). Within my own research, I have followed many of these techniques, starting from people, food, geographical locations, cultural practices, technology, and even generational transition, and all of these modes have enriched the research process.



### 3.2.5 Research Methods and participatory observation

In my multi-sited ethnographical approach, I focused on participatory observation. I participated in various Urespa activities run by students, including an Ainu embroidery course, and the theatre production Urespa festa<sup>54</sup>. At the beginning, I focused only on listening to and observing the daily routines of the Urespa members. I paid particular attention to how they communicated with each other by observing if there was anything that was not expressed verbally that would teach me more about students and Urespa. I found that listening silently was most challenging, since I share much of their interest and culture. I then approached each student in order to have a moment together: taking a bus or train together after evening study group, sharing a meal, or walking to the nearest convenience store before the study group. I enjoyed these brief moments of learning about each other with each student. Such small conversations kept coming back to me during the data analysis process as a reminder not to overlook each student's voice, but rather trying to grasp what the voice tells me about their everyday life and their relationship to Urespa students and Ainu culture.

### 3.2.6 Interviews

I conducted semi-structured interviews with all Urespa students, except for one who was on temporary leave: 21 students in total; 9 female and 12 male students (13 of whom identified predominantly as Ainu), and an additional two employees, one female and one male. The interview guide consisted of 15 questions with the main theme of how the interviewees saw themselves and how they engaged with Ainu culture in Sapporo. In a certain regard, it was surprising that all of them willingly accepted my request for the interview. I believe taking some time to learn about each other worked well for both sides; for the students to know who I am and what the research is about, and for me to have a better understanding of their reality and worldview.

The questions were organized in a semi-structured form as a general guideline to follow, giving the students some free space to reflect. During the interview process, I was sometimes asked to explain what each question meant. Here, I always shared my

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<sup>54</sup> During the Urespa festa, students produce their own theatre performance with a different theme every year. In side events they present what they have learned and achieved to other Urespa members and the public. The play is produced and performed in the Ainu language.

personal stories as a way to explain my questions. This seemed to make more sense to students than written questions prompting them to share their stories and experiences. The interviews often extended to one-and-a-half hours, and sometimes it took an hour before the actual interview started. I focused on listening to students, as Karen O'Reilly also explains this type of interview as “[t]here are also things that are better learned from simply listening rather than asking directly [...]” (2012, p. 117). My challenge was what to say, and what not to say; being careful not to say much so that it did not disturb the student’s answer and story. Overall, the interview developed more into a dialogue rather than a one-sided interview. It was encouraging to hear a comment from one student that he had enjoyed the interview, and thought it was fun.

I intentionally chose quiet locations, considering students’ need and my determination to keep the interview private. Locations ranged from the university library, to a café, to Sapporo train station café. The interview setting was very casual, such as eating night snacks together after an evening study group. Many students seemed to be expecting a more structured interview and therefore seemed surprised to see my collaborative approach, beginning with my own stories or impressions of Urespa. However, this worked as an ice-breaker, making students more relaxed. They started sharing so many of their personal stories and feelings about Ainu culture and identities, more than during the time together in group activities. There were also a number of emotional moments for students and myself, where they both laughed and cried. Students who appeared to be quiet or shy and did not say much in the group activities suddenly had lots to say about who she/he is and what they experienced. I was honored to listen to their personal life stories and experiences, especially when some of them said, “you are someone who supports us, and are our role model.” However, this was also a moment when I realized my position as an Ainu researcher might have some influence on the way students responded or engaged with the interview.

The interviews were recorded with the consent of the students, and transcribed directly. I translated them all from Japanese to English, and asked students to check the accuracy of my translation for the parts used in two articles by providing them with both English and Japanese texts. In some cases, students wanted to make small changes, which I corrected accordingly.

Upon returning to Norway, I began coding the empirical data using the *conventional content analysis* approach, starting research with observation and “codes are defined during data analysis” (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1286). I began my fieldwork with an explorative design without having a specific theory or code, but rather searched for new findings, phenomena, and recurring themes through observation and interview data. Hsieh and Shannon explain that *conventional content analysis* is suitable when actual literature or theory on a phenomena are limited (2005, p. 1279). Thus, I found *conventional content analysis* most relevant to my research.

I coded the empirical data into three codes: (1) identity; (2) mobility; and (3) cultural revitalization. I coded those by identifying similarities and differences in sequences based on nonverbal gestures and my own observation.

### 3.2.7 Limitation and challenges

My initial commitment in my fieldwork was to spend a great deal of time establishing trust and my grounds for being there. I spent some months in preparation before collecting actual data. However, I encountered one challenge; the process of an ethical approval at Hokkaido University took more time than I anticipated and it affected how much empirical data I could gather, specifically regarding micro-relations and social encounters. This is one hard lesson I have learned through my fieldwork – not being able to use the whole set of data and experiences, which could potentially enrich my empirical data. However, I tried instead to focus on what I learned from the social encounters and exchanges with Urespa students in order to formulate the interview guide and my approach to students during the interviews. Thus, I have attempted to reflect all micro-relations in my research process, even though these may not be clearly presented in the dissertation. By doing so, it helped me to look into the depth of the intersubjective aspects of each student. This process has deepened my understanding of Ainu, what it means to be Ainu and in touch with Ainu culture in the twenty-first century. Their worldview and sense of who they are were so similar to my own experiences, but at the same time very different. This experience confirmed my motivation and objective of my research, to bring in their inner voices and thoughts, which may not often surface within Ainu Studies. I saw this as being of great importance. The focus on individual narratives,

of course, has its own limitations. It may lack a general overview of dynamism within the group. People generally behave and act differently depending on their surroundings. Thus, small nuances and signs of individual narratives may have been supported or clarified if I presented more of social relations and exchanges with students.

### 3.2.8 Silent data

Karen O'Reilly explains that participatory observation is the main method in ethnographic work (2012, p. 116), achieved by “gaining access, taking time, learning the language, participation and observation, and taking notes; it then goes on to look at the dialectic relationship between participation and observation in the practice of fieldwork” (O'reilly, 2012, p. 86). In addition to the participatory observations, my fieldwork observation includes *silent data* by Tea Bengtsson (2014). What are data in ethnographic stories, and how is it possible to comprehend the empirical data gathered in my fieldwork? In her work, she asserts that much of recent constructionist ethnographic literature pays attention to the role of researcher, while she believes it is important to pay attention to how data are constructed, and to focus on field interaction and relational experiences. She also values non-verbal experiences as valuable data. Bengtsson also refers to detailed observations, which I valued in my fieldwork, as *silent data* (2014). As Bengtsson writes, “‘Silent data’ constitute both the little details that may never make it to the written page and the larger structural patterns that manifest not in single observations or interviews but in the entire experience” (2014, p. 739).

During the process of coding all empirical data, I realized that I had found *silent data*. It was the moment when I realized that none of the students mentioned the word *decolonization*, while I see their activity as contributing to a process of decolonization. This raised the question of why such consciousness was not present, and I began to look for the reason during my research. Bengtsson (2014) further highlights that what makes the most insightful qualitative analyses is the researcher's relational experiences. I agree with Bengtsson's point of view to pay more attention to *silent data* and consider the entire sum of experiences as a whole set of data. The entire data would be analyzed carefully through my whole relational experiences in the field and experiences with

people with whom I interacted and was involved. Having such an approach allows me to be more flexible and reflective during the research process.

### 3.2.9 An excursion and study trip outside of Sapporo University

Because of the geographical location and design of Urespa, there are limitations on the degree to which students can practice hands-on learning. Urespa fills the gap by arranging various field trips to Ainu communities, museums, or into the mountains. Students are in charge of arranging all activities and divide responsibility among themselves. Students take a few months to prepare and study subjects—for example, Ainu traditional artifacts when visiting an Ainu museum, or edible plants and herbs when going on a trip to the mountains. Such activities give the students opportunities to be in touch with nature and to acquire knowledge about traditional artifacts and locals in Ainu communities. In this way, textbook-based learning is transformed into something real and relevant for the students. Additionally, it provides an opportunity for the students to encounter Ainu elders and cultural practitioners in the communities. These face-to-face encounters allow the students to enrich their knowledge about Ainu culture as a whole through generational and cultural transition. Upon returning, the students continue in a co-learning process in which each student shares their experiences and impressions of those field trips with others Urespa students. This strengthens the learning dynamic. For Wajin students, it is often the first time to experience how it is to learn Ainu culture in Ainu communities. For Ainu-identified students, it presents a chance to learn about the diversity of Ainu culture in the different regions of Hokkaido.

Those activities are often open for individual members and Urespa company members,<sup>55</sup> where both parties learn about each other and share their experiences of Ainu culture. This sometimes leads to potential employment opportunities for students upon graduation where students get to learn about Urespa companies.

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<sup>55</sup> Urespa has a membership system whereby any companies and individuals are welcomed to join Urespa as a member in exchange an annual fee (sponsorship). They are invited to participate in many Urespa activities.

### 3.2.10 Secondary documentary sources

Besides my empirical data, I have used a smartphone application, called LINE, which allowed me to follow Urespa activities and dialogues between the students. Study reports presented on a weekly basis and any related materials produced by students are important additional resources that helped me understand students' commitment and efforts in the study group. I have also used governmental reports and UN documents that are available on the Internet as background data. Moreover, daily newspapers, and several of my personal and continuous conversations with friends from all over the world, helped me to understand the Urespa case in a larger context.

## Chapter 4: Summary of Thesis Articles

### 4.1 Article 1

*Everyday Acts of Resurgence and Diasporic Indigeneity among the Ainu of Tokyo*  
(book chapter)

Author: Kanako Uzawa

Published in Australia by Australian National University Press, December 2018

This article looks at Tokyo as a site for cultural resurgence among the Ainu living in and around the greater Tokyo and Kanto region in the final decades of the twentieth century. I raise the question: *What does it mean to be Ainu in Tokyo?* The article explores the question by weaving my stories and living experiences from my youth as a Tokyo Ainu. I take a local standpoint with the example of an Ainu restaurant, a meeting place for both Ainu and Wajin in Tokyo, which I call an *Ainu hub* and *urban kotan* (meaning “community” in the Ainu language) in the article. It illustrates the disparity between a modern Ainu lifestyle and the stereotype of the Ainu as living in a fixed place (see Chapter 1; 1.5 *previous research on Ainu Studies and Urban Ainu Studies*). I use Indigenous autoethnography (Whitinui, 2014) to position myself as an Ainu researcher challenging the previous academic discourse of the Ainu in the hope that this article provides a greater understanding of Tokyo Ainu and, moreover, Ainu living experiences and voices in contemporary Japanese society.

One of the article’s findings is how Tokyo Ainu<sup>56</sup> and Ainu outside Hokkaido have been positioned as *out of place* within the national context. The article illustrates some of the political movement in the Tokyo Ainu community, and furthermore, Ainu participation in the global Indigenous movement. It explores how Tokyo Ainu began to participate in UN meetings in the final decades of the twentieth century.

As a way to understand the social and cultural position of urban Ainu, I use the concept of *diasporic indigeneity* (Watson, 2014a). In order to broaden the discussion, I discuss *diasporic indigeneity* in the analysis of the working definition of *Indigenous people and peoples* by the UN special rapporteur, José R. Martínez Cobo (1987). The

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<sup>56</sup> In the article, I refer to *Tokyo Ainu* as those who live in and around the greater Tokyo and Kanto region.

discussion illustrates how Ainu culture can be presented in an urban context dynamically and flexibly as an accepted form of cultural identity. Through an analytical discussion with my personal stories and experiences, I use the concept of *everyday acts of resurgence* by Jeff Cornassel (2012) as a way to look at the everyday lives of Tokyo Ainu through food, music, and memory by way of my personal relationship with Rera Cise (House of Wind). The article concludes that a geographical boundary does not limit opportunities to practice and develop Ainu culture, suggesting that Ainu identity in cities, which I have called *Aynupuri* (being or practicing in the Ainu way), is an innovative and creative process born in Tokyo.



## 4.2 Article 2

*Urespa (“Growing Together”): the remaking of Ainu-Wajin relations in Japan through an innovative social venture*

Author: Kanako Uzawa  
Mark K. Watson

Accepted for publication by *Asian Anthropology*

This article explores Ainu and Wajin *relations* through a transcultural form of social encounter. The Urespa club is an innovative social venture for Ainu<sup>57</sup> and Wajin students in Sapporo city founded by Professor Honda Yuko at Sapporo University. The article draws on my fieldwork with Urespa in Sapporo, Hokkaido in 2016. Urespa means “growing together” in the Ainu language. It provides a new space of interdependence that challenges, at the same time as it reworks, normalized expectations of inter-ethnic encounters in the public sphere.

In order to give a general overview of relations between the Ainu and Wajin, the article introduces the hate speech incident in 2014 in Sapporo City. A city council member, Kaneko Yasuyuki, published on Twitter that Ainu people no longer existed and that Ainu people were taking advantage of the social welfare system based on their ethnicity (lewallen, 2015). This triggered xenophobic phenomena and increased online hate speech towards the Ainu through social media. At the same time, it was met with criticism and outrage from the Ainu community and other members of Japanese society.

Set against this backdrop is the Urespa club. The Urespa club is designed as a study group run independently by students themselves in order to study Ainu-related subjects. It is also an urban place where both Ainu and Wajin students find their mutual ground to share experiences through co-learning. This raises the question of *to what extent it succeeds in creating a meaningful space of social transformation*. In the article, we refer to Ash Amin’s (2002) concept “micropublics” as those ordinary spaces of organized group activity in which Amin argues that social relations between people from different

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<sup>57</sup> Here, “Ainu students” means students who have Ainu heritage, and are self-identified as such. It also follows criteria given by Urespa. See the article for further detail.

backgrounds can disrupt individual behaviors (2002, p. 970). We also draw on Valentine, who seeks to identify what contributes to “meaningful contact”; that is, what contributes to changing contact into something more positive that is beyond the mere tolerance of others (2008, p. 325).

Urespa provides a unique opportunity for each student to explore their own identities, ethnicities, relation to others, or future vision on their own terms. Urespa activities and encounters with others enable them to have a personal journey of transformation *to grow together*. Urespa offers an organic urban transcultural space for both Ainu and Wajin students to self-craft who they are, and who they want to become. In other words, self-crafting through such activities and encounters helps both Ainu and Wajin students to go beyond the dominant public image of the Ainu as an extinct race, or by-gone, inherently inferior, and Other to the modern nation-state (Siddle, 1996). By doing so, it enhances the effect of strengthening respect for others, and leads to a more inclusive society. With reference to John Maher (2005), who argues for a new way of looking at minorities, we conclude that there is no single way of being Ainu, or just one way of understanding the Ainu and Ainu culture. I am the co-author Mark K. Watson suggest the term *creative relationality*, where students’ experiences and relations to culture and people around them are interconnected and negotiated. This helps to form one’s identity, and strengthen a sense of collectivity.

### 4.3 Article 3

*What does Ainu cultural revitalization mean to Ainu and Wajin youth in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?*

– Case study of Urespa as a place to learn Ainu culture in the city of Sapporo, Japan –

Author: Kanako Uzawa

Published by *AlterNative* in New Zealand

This article explores the currently evolving way of practicing and revitalizing Ainu culture: how Ainu culture is practiced daily and interpreted by both Ainu and Wajin youth through the activities of Urespa.

The article uses Indigenous methodologies (Nakata, 2007; Smith, 2012), the participatory research method, and observation to emphasize three points: (1) bringing in absent voices of the Ainu, who have been marginalized in the past both within and outside academia; (2) framing the concept of decolonization to emphasize Indigenous perspectives within a Japanese context; and (3) reflecting upon my own position as an Ainu researcher. In order to conceptualize the complexity of the relations between the Ainu and Wajin, I use the term *cultural interface* (Nakata, 2007) to illustrate how both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples live at the boundary of different identities and realities. Furthermore, I reflect upon my position as an Ainu researcher, referring to Bob Pease's (2010) term *privileged position* in order to be critical towards my position.

To give a comparative side view of Urespa, I use an experimental cross-cultural pedagogical case study introduced by Alison Jones (2001) in which she discusses the psychological positioning of Maori and Pakeha (white) students in a university classroom in Aotearoa New Zealand. Her study examines the pedagogical ideal of increasing cross-cultural knowledge to show that, in Jones's case, the cultural clash and tension that occurred in cross-cultural pedagogy between Pakeha students and Maori teachers as well as Maori students was exacerbated, while, in contrast, Urespa seems to reduce the tension between Ainu and Wajin students. The article discusses both differences and similarities of these cases.

The main discussion narrows down to contemporary Ainu life in cities with a focus on an alternative way of practicing Ainu cultural revitalization. The term *metroethnicity*

(Maher, 2005) is used as a way to interpret diverse ways of perceiving Ainu identity and practicing Ainu culture. Moreover, I illustrate and argue that cultural practices of the Urespa students are a new phenomenon, going beyond Jeff Corntassel and Cheryl Bryce's description of *Indigenous resurgence*, which is more of an *Indigenous community-based resurgence* (Corntassel, 2012; Corntassel & Bryce, 2012).

The article concludes that Urespa is an organic and creative entity that generates further possibilities to form a new way of cultural *revitalization* in contemporary Japanese society.

## Chapter 5: Discussions and findings

All three articles explore the current evolving Ainu cultural revitalization in cities through analyses of urban diasporic Indigeneity and social encounters between Ainu and Wajin. Within this framework, the articles challenge the notion of Ainu *Indigeneity* in cities, and how Ainu culture is perceived and practiced in the urban context in Japan. The general findings in my research are:

(1) *Ainu cultural revitalization goes beyond the boundary between the Ainu and Wajin relations*, and (2) *geographical locations do not limit the possibilities for Ainu cultural revitalization*.

Article 1 suggests that urban space provide possibilities for Ainu cultural revitalization. As an example, I introduce Rera Cise, an Ainu restaurant in Tokyo, as a transformative space, referred to as a *hub*, to explore possibilities of further development of Ainu culture through the sharing of Ainu experiences together. This is similar to what some Urespa students expressed about the role of Urespa as a social transformative space that enables them to discover themselves through relationships to others.

Article 1 discusses the relationship between the homeland, Hokkaido, and the Tokyo Ainu within the national and international contexts, which clarifies Tokyo Ainu as being viewed as *out of place*. With this in mind, Article 1 further asks why Tokyo Ainu are regarded as *out of place* in national policy. This is explored through the lens of Indigenous autoethnography in which I use my personal life stories and experiences as a Tokyo Ainu to ask the question *what does it mean to be Ainu in Tokyo?* I have chosen Indigenous autoethnography in order to explore a new way to look at Ainu research in academia. I was inspired by Indigenous methodologies (Nakata, 2007; Smith, 2012; Whittinui, 2014) where the importance of Indigenous perspectives and voices are kept at the center of research.

Setting this as a starting point, Article 1 further explores possibilities of an Ainu cultural flourishing in Tokyo. This is illustrated by my own experiences with Rera Cise and its social and cultural activities. Thus, it projects a holistic representation of urban *home* through people, food, place, material objects, and rights of Ainu as Indigenous peoples in Japan. It also makes the point that these attributes are something that is individually initiated. Here I refer to the term *diasporic Indigeneity* (Watson, 2014a) as

an accepted form of cultural identity. In this way I have used two analytical concepts: *everyday acts of resurgence* (Corntassel, 2012) and *diasporic Indigeneity* to narrow down the focus to: how Tokyo Ainu revitalize and practice Ainu culture in their daily lives through usage of urban space. I see this as exercising rights to cultural sovereignty and self-determination, which links to Article 3, where the Urespa students also take a proactive choice to practice and revitalize Ainu culture in an urban setting.

There are three findings in Article 1:

- (1) Tokyo Ainu are viewed as *out of place* within the national context;
- (2) geographical location does not necessarily determine one's identity and culture;
- (3) an urban self-driven *kotan* (community) can offer a way to re-establish a better foundation for a more inclusive social model between the Ainu and non-Ainu.

A dynamic urban space such as Rera Cise provides different possibilities, which Article 2 also argues with an example of Ainu and Wajin youth finding their own ways to learn and express their experiences. One finds one's own way of being, *Aynupuri*, through a relationship to the people, food, language, rituals, and ceremonies. My interpretation of *Aynupuri* is an innovative and creative process born in Tokyo, and this can also be understood as Ainu Indigeneity. These findings answer the main research question: *How does urban space provide challenges and opportunities for the expression of Ainu indigeneity in contemporary Japanese society?* By discussing how Tokyo Ainu are viewed as *out of place*, Article 1 demonstrates the challenges of Ainu Indigeneity in cities, while urban places such as Rera Cise also provide different opportunities.

Article 2 changes the geographical location from Tokyo to Sapporo city, and the discussion also shifts its focus from the everyday lives of Tokyo Ainu to Ainu and Wajin relations as social encounters through Urespa. This is to expand and explore the field of urban Ainu Studies in different geographical locations across generations (in comparison to my generation). It focuses on how Urespa affects both the individual and collective level as a social venture by raising the question: *To what extent does Urespa succeed in creating a meaningful space of social transformation?* With this in mind, it analyzes students' individual interview excerpts, illustrating personal dilemmas,

challenges, and transformations through participation in Urespa. Empirical data indicate that there is some degree of cultural and social gap between Ainu and Wajin persons, mainly due to having no information or encounter with Ainu people or culture. The role of Urespa fills the gap between the Ainu and Wajin. There are four main findings in Article 2:

- (1) *a personal journey of transformation enables students to explore not only Ainu culture, but also their own;*
- (2) *there is a cultural and social gap between the Ainu and Wajin;*
- (3) *the Urespa model facilitates the closing of the social and cultural gap between the Ainu and Wajin by engaging students with group organized activities;*
- (4) *the presence of Wajin in the club increases the effect of mutual respect, which leads to an appreciation of Ainu people and culture.*

Finding 1 is similar to my own experience in Tokyo, as argued in Article 1, where Rera Cise offered the opportunity to discover who I am and who I want to become through a relationship with people, food, language, dance, and ceremony.

In contrast, challenges discussed both in Article 2 and 3 include the fact that both Ainu and Wajin students find it difficult to position or identify themselves as Ainu or Wajin persons within contemporary Japanese society. In Article 3, some students seem to struggle with being in and between two cultures and identities, what Nakata calls *cultural interface* (Nakata, 2007). Students are in the process of searching for their own way of being. Based on my observations and empirical data in Article 2 and 3, Urespa facilitates a transcultural form of social encounter. In addition, most Urespa students expressed the club as having a positive effect rather than a negative one. Co-learning about Ainu culture seems to strengthen the confidence and self-esteem of both Ainu and Wajin students. What students cherish most is their friendship with other Urespa students and members, having someone to talk to, and sharing their experiences, knowledge, doubts, and passions. This sense of collectivity solidifies their common ground through students confirming their motivation as to why learning Ainu culture *together* becomes meaningful. Cheshire Calhoun (1995) states that people's experiences in self-improvement or achievement is only truly meaningful when one recognizes

oneself as part of an evaluating community. In this regard, Urespa enhances the effect of self-development, regardless of ethnicities—the act of *growing together*.

*Urespa* offers an organic transcultural urban space for both Ainu and Wajin students to self-craft who they are and who they want to become. In other words, self-crafting through cultural activities and encounters with others enables them to go beyond negative notions or the public discourse about the Ainu. This was indicated through students' voices in the interviews as well as through my own observations in the fieldwork. To be able to discuss a transcultural form of social encounter, Article 2 refers to *micropublics* (Amin, 2002), the term used to describe ordinary spaces of organized group activity such as sports or music clubs, communal gardens or drama groups. The Urespa model fits with the concept of *micropublics* as it brings people from different backgrounds together in a new context for a common activity. The Urespa club, where students of various backgrounds come together, aligns with Amin's (2002) idea of *micropublics*; however, it is important to pay attention to the interactions and meaning-making that occur within Urespa. My research demonstrates that students create and constitute their own *place*, which is made more meaningful by daily acts of co-learning through social interactions, the sharing of information across technological devices, and available knowledge. I see this as a process of Ramirez's (2007) *hub*-making through which a sense of belonging is produced.

Article 2 concludes that the Urespa model puts a strong emphasis on the act of co-learning, which strengthens a sense of integrity: to feel free to express who they are regardless of public opinion. Urespa students indicate different ways of making or remaking one's Ainu and Wajin identity, with which they are able to engage and disengage on their own terms (Maher, 2005, p. 88). Urespa encourages individuals to explore and embrace what feels right. By understanding oneself and one's needs, Urespa bridges a social gap between Ainu and Wajin students.

Moreover, the experiences of Urespa students speak to Stuart Hall's (1994) concept of *cultural identity*. Urespa provides a space for students to discover their *one true self* (Hall 1994), and eventually a new group identity, regardless of their past experiences in acknowledging their shared history, heritage, and culture. It points towards a new way of engaging with culture and identity that goes beyond the fixed



norm of understanding and practicing Ainu culture in Japanese contemporary society. Urespa is about fostering respect for Ainu in society, but is grounded in mutual recognition between Wajin and Ainu: Group relations between the participants were mediated through creative activities that foster a form of togetherness and solidarity. This is what Mark K. Watson and I call *creative relationality*: One's experiences and relations to culture and people are interconnected and negotiated, which fosters a new sense of collectivity as a group through practicing Ainu culture. Through this, Urespa facilitates the process of what Hall refers to as the second element of *cultural identity*, "[...] a matter of 'becoming' as well as 'being'. It belongs to the future as much as to the past" (Hall 1994, p. 394).

When it comes to similarities and differences between Tokyo Ainu experiences in Article 1 and the case of Urespa, what differs is the direct daily contact with Ainu elders. Urespa students have limited contact with Ainu elders in their daily lives in Sapporo, while I had it on a daily basis in Tokyo. Instead, students have to depend on books, videos, information from the Internet, and certain limited contact with community members or elders. What is similar is that we both share the same need to have a safe *place* to rest our mind, and share our experiences.

Beyond a transcultural form of social encounter within Urespa, I was inspired by how Urespa students contributed to place-making through the Ainu cultural revitalization. This led me to write another article about Urespa. Article 3 starts with a critical view on how Ainu cultural *revitalization* is viewed and presented in national policy and law. This differs from my understanding of Ainu culture among Tokyo Ainu and the realities of the Urespa youth. Therefore, Article 3 focuses on living experiences of Ainu culture by the Urespa students.

Article 3 raises the questions: *Is it possible that the Ainu Indigenous resurgence can play out within Urespa in a context of decolonization?* This is followed up by two sub-questions: (1) *How does Urespa perform Ainu culture?* (2) *Which tools do Ainu and Wajin youth use to learn and perform Ainu culture in the city?*

I have used Indigenous methodologies (Nakata, 2007; Smith, 2012) in Article 3 to bring in absent voices of Ainu and to illustrate how my role as researcher and Ainu

play differently in my research. The concept of decolonization regarding the Ainu case is also discussed.

Article 3 starts with a discussion between decolonization and Indigenous resurgence in which Corntassel argues that decolonization and resurgence can be interconnected, while scholarly analysis treats them separately (2012, p. 89). Corntassel furthermore addresses the importance of shifting from a focus on a rights-based discourse to embracing place-based cultural practices to a greater degree (Corntassel, 2012, p. 89). Article 3 illustrates the reason why focusing on everyday place-based practices among Urespa youth is important, and how it contributes to the process of decolonization. To give a comparative view of Urespa, I used the experimental pedagogical case study introduced by Alison Jones (2001).

There are six findings in this article. All these findings relate to my research sub-question—*How is the Ainu cultural revitalization received and processed within Urespa?*—in one way or another. The findings are:

- (1) *what bonds Ainu and Wajin students together are having fun, togetherness, sharing, recognition, and practical usage of the culture;*
- (2) *Urespa creates a wider understanding of Ainu cultural revitalization that goes beyond a pre-existing state-based and institutionalized social model that shapes how to do Ainu culture;*
- (3) *the Urespa design enables participants to revitalize Ainu culture in the city;*
- (4) *Urespa contributes to a decolonization process that embraces the everyday cultural practices emphasized by Corntassel (2012), even though none of the students discussed the term decolonization;*
- (5) *the Urespa model creates opportunities to exercise cultural sovereignty;*
- (6) *the power relationship between Ainu and Wajin students shifts depending on how intimately one knows Ainu culture.*

Through my observations and interviews with students, Article 3 demonstrates that they begin to feel the Ainu language *becoming* part of their daily lives. It even changes their impression of the Ainu language. Urespa becomes a safe place to rest their mind—a sense of *home*—and to explore new possibilities in the Ainu culture. This is my understanding of an everyday act of resurgence, where they embrace what they *have*

and *do* in their daily lives. What they do becomes who they are. An active and everyday practice of language and culture bonds them together, and enables them to become part of the Ainu culture.

In terms of how they practice and revitalize Ainu culture, technological devices play a big role, through, for example, listening to and watching Ainu songs and dances. Students watch YouTube videos and use the Internet, smartphones, and DVDs to access information. What was intriguing is that they were occupied with articulating what is considered as *traditional*, or *authentic*. Moreover, as they learned various styles of dances and songs from different regions in Hokkaido, YouTube was crucial. It was interesting to listen to students' discussions of how to express and master what is considered a *traditional* performance, while they search for their own way of *doing* culture. This creates a certain tension among students: who knows the Ainu culture best? Those who know a little more about Ainu traditions gain a strong presence in the group.

What was surprising was that none of the students used the term *decolonization*—at least to my knowledge—during the time we spent together. However, I consider their group activities as a contribution to the decolonization process through place-based cultural practices suggested by Corntassel (2012, p. 89). This forced me to find a new way of thinking about *decolonization* within a cultural context.

Overall, I conclude that the Urespa design enables students to *revitalize* Ainu culture in a city. This goes beyond Corntassel and Bryce's description of Indigenous resurgence, which is focused more on Indigenous community-based resurgence (2012, p. 153). Therefore, following the argument in Article 2, I understand Urespa as an innovative social model for both Ainu and Wajin youth to foster greater understanding of Ainu and Wajin relations in the city. Article 3 highlights the future possibility where such a social model can be used for innovative Ainu cultural revitalization, decolonization, and even reconciliation between the Ainu and Wajin. I see Urespa as an organic, creative entity in an urban space that provides unique opportunities to (re)establish the foundation that brings positive social changes, as discussed in Article 2 and 3. Maher describes how in the twenty-first century Japan is experiencing a new-old culture wave in which cultural difference is considered *cool* (2005, p. 90). I find that

Urespa represents coolness in contemporary Japanese society. It manifests Indigenous self-determination in the presence of a majority.

Finally, does Urespa work? Yes, it does. It contributes to the Ainu cultural revitalization. It brings positive changes in society by offering a place to co-learn Ainu culture by embracing each other's differences. It builds on a new transcultural platform on which both the Ainu and the Wajin cherish their presence and cultures. It is a practical exercise rather than a theoretical one. Urespa is a place for *an everyday act of resurgence* in which both Ainu traditions and contemporary Ainu culture are merged. As argued in Article 1, the Ainu restaurant Rera Cise shares a similar role in which Ainu tradition and contemporary Ainu culture also merged for Ainu cultural resurgence in Tokyo. What differs in this case of the Urespa club is that Urespa focuses on both Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth. Urespa is a critical intervention and social venture that positively aims to re-define Indigeneity in an urban space. Most importantly, it is an inclusive social model that gives students courage, pride, and dignity, which improves their fundamental well-being. It is unique and significantly different from any other cultural organizations in Japan. It brings in self-directed changes by engaging students with Ainu culture. Both Urespa and Rera Cise, therefore, bring in opportunities where Ainu or Wajin can enjoy and develop Ainu culture: the Ainu cultural resurgence is born.

## Chapter 6: Conclusion

One analytical contribution of this dissertation is to bring in an alternative way to investigate the formation of ethnic identity making in cities through social relations between Ainu and Wajin and place making. This is illustrated through the concept *creative relationality*, referring to a new way of enacting ethnic identities through Ainu creative activities. This also enriches a sense of collectivity and togetherness. Another analytical contribution is to create space for an alternative interpretation of Ainu cultural revitalization, which goes beyond an essentialistic understanding of Ainu culture. I do so by highlighting differences to Cornthassel and Bryce (2012) and not insisting on the connection to a physical “homeland”. My research shows that such examples of cultural revitalization—either by the Tokyo Ainu community or by Urespa in Sapporo—provide more opportunities than challenges where both Ainu and Wajin feel safe to negotiate their identities and cultural heritage. This opens up further possibilities for reconciliation between the Ainu and Wajin in Japan. By this, my research contributes not only to the field of Ainu Studies, but also to the field of Indigenous Studies by bringing in new and little-discussed contemporary Ainu livelihoods and their relations to the Wajin. Additionally, since I understand that there is generally limited information available about present Ainu conditions both in Hokkaido and in cities, it is also my hope that my research will contribute to a process of policy and law making regarding the Ainu issues.

The dissertation demonstrates how Ainu Indigeneity in cities seem to exist under the umbrella concept of urban diasporic Indigeneity and cultural revitalization. Moreover, the dissertation contributes to the process of decolonization by introducing Ainu perspectives and their living experiences in academia. Indigenous methodologies have enabled this work to contribute to previous scholarship by going beyond the fixed images that have thus far been characteristic of Ainu Studies. The findings in my research present the reality of contemporary Japanese society in which the concept of *decolonization* is not yet widely discussed, neither in the educational arena nor among the general public. Younger generations seem to have a distant relationship to colonial history, a situation that challenges them to position themselves within a larger historical context and resulting in them rarely being able to draw a continuous line between the

past, the present, and the future of the social structure. It will be a worthwhile future quest to search for the reasons behind such a disconnect.

The work for this Ph.D. made me realize many aspects of research and life. For myself and many other Ainu, research is mainly considered as *distant* to our everyday lives. I had the same relationship to research before, more specifically to the field of Ainu Studies. However, this has also raised an important question. Where does this feeling of *distance* come from, and why? Growing up mainly as a Tokyo Ainu girl, the choice to focus the research on urban Ainu seemed to be a natural one. The question, thus, is how I can introduce a new approach to a field of urban or Ainu Studies in general.

The choice of Indigenous autoethnography and Indigenous methodologies have guided me to start the process of finding some answers to this question. In my research, I have aimed to go beyond the notion of the Ainu as primitive, as a social problem, or as victims of Japanese society. This is not to downplay the history of colonization or assimilation, but rather to introduce new aspects of Ainu contemporary life in Japanese society. My research shows that the relationship that the Ainu and Wajin have to Ainu culture varies very much according to each individual and whether one has experienced discrimination because of one's Ainu heritage or not. Since the youth have grown up in an extremely fast-paced technological world, the relations appear different from that of my generation. The prosperity of the world is changing. One thing that became clear in the process of this research is that they do not wish to be looked upon as victims of history or society. They are looking towards the future.

Japan has been on a prosperous path since the end of World War II. The method Urespa students use to *revitalize* Ainu culture is unique, and it gives a different dynamic to what cultural *revitalization* means. Moreover, it eventually creates space for understanding what reconciliation between the Ainu and Wajin means in contemporary Japanese society.

I have learned that research is a dynamic process, which enables me to discuss findings, to reconceptualize concepts and theories. I am no longer a *stranger* to the field of Ainu Studies. By focusing on grassroots activities, my research shows that urban space is able to produce opportunities for an Ainu cultural flourishing. I have also attempted to demonstrate that the Ainu are now taking part in the global Indigenous

community, and it is time to re-evaluate the possibilities of what Ainu Studies can offer to the Ainu community and academia. Adam Gaudry states that “By instead focusing primarily on what our cultures have to offer in terms of creative and anticolonial alternatives, we can work toward something new and positive” (Gaudry, 2011, p. 124). I hope my research will contribute something new and positive, looking forward with regard to the past, and how the two connect to the present-day lives of the Ainu.





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# Appendix 1 Translated sample of interview guide

<b>Position Title:</b>	
<b>Interviewer's Name:</b>	
<b>Date of Interview:</b>	<b>Location of Interview:</b>

1. How do you identify yourself?
  - a) Japanese
  - b) Ainu
  - c) both
  - d) other
  - e) do not know
  - f) none of above
2. How long have you lived in Sapporo?
3. How does the way you identify yourself influence the way you see yourself in Sapporo? What about the way you see yourself in your hometown?
4. How do you feel expressing yourself as X?
5. What makes you who you are?
  - a) Environment and home, etc.
  - b) Language, culture, or group you belong to.
6. Do you have many friends in town? Are they also Ainu, or Japanese?
7. How do you meet your friends? Venues, arenas, frequency of contact, or online?
8. Ainu togetherness among youth.
  - a) What are the typical meeting places for Ainu youth in town? Do you have your own place(s), or do you go wherever Japanese youth are present?
9. Do you speak Ainu with each other when you meet? In what situations do you use the Ainu language?

10. Which Ainu events do you attend?

- Concerts/festivals
- Sports events
- Cafés and nightclubs
- Important associations, clubs, societies
- Parties
- Religious events

11. Ainu symbols. Which Ainu symbols do you use to mark up your identity?

Ainu dress, when and how often?

- Other types of Ainu clothing
- Small accessories
- Others

12. Recreation. Which activities do you do in your spare time?

13. As a member of Urespa, what have been the most influential experiences in Uresipa and why?

14. Are there any positive and negative aspects of being a member of Urespa?

## Article 1

# 20

## Everyday Acts of Resurgence and Diasporic Indigeneity among the Ainu of Tokyo

Kanako Uzawa

### Introduction

‘To stand on the same platform as *Wajin*, we need an education.’ These words were spoken to me by Tadashi Kaizawa, who fought for Ainu rights as an activist, farmer, writer and one of the leaders of the Nibutani Ainu community in Hokkaidō. He was not only my grandfather, but also an educator who taught us important values in life. Sadly, he was not able to receive the education he wished for, so his determination to provide a good education for his children led all three of them to pursue a university education. Later, his youngest daughter, my mother, became a school teacher in Tokyo, and married my *Wajin* father. During my teenage years, I understood how important it was for me to receive a higher education in order to become an independent Ainu woman. Through my difficult years in a strict Japanese education system, I always thought of my grandfather, and held on to all my living memories of nature, the smell of the forest and the vivid life of the Nibutani community where I spent all the school holidays with my family. Even though I did not live permanently in Nibutani, I felt it was my home, and considered it so. Tokyo gave me a feeling of disconnection from Ainu culture—that was until I encountered the Tokyo Ainu community.

This article is a reflection on stories from my youth, when I became aware of what it means to be Ainu in Tokyo, and how my experiences of living in both Nibutani and Tokyo affect my daily life as an urban Indigenous person. From the outset, I would like to thank all members of the Ainu Association of Rera<sup>1</sup> in Tokyo who accepted me for who I am and supported me in pursuit of my own path as an urban Ainu. All the experiences I have shared with the Ainu community in Tokyo made me realise how important it is to document and share our life stories and events as urban Ainu, for the further development of Indigenous studies. I perceive this to be my Indigenous pathway, where I can contribute my Ainu perspective for both academic audiences and Indigenous communities of the world.

In this article I use the term *Wajin* to refer to the ethnic Japanese or non-Ainu, to clarify the point that having Japanese citizenship does not define our ethnicity. Ainu today have the same lifestyle as other Japanese citizens, both in cities and rural areas. They have Japanese as a mother tongue and are enrolled in Japanese public schools. Many Ainu migrate to cities for better employment opportunities, and sometimes to escape from discrimination. Given these similarities, the issues identifying how many Ainu there are in Japan, and how many of them live in cities, are complex, partly because Japan does not collect data on ethnicity in the national census. However, a number of surveys help to fill this gap.

According to the Advisory Council for Future Ainu Policy (2009: 16), the Hokkaidō prefectural government has conducted a survey of the Ainu population of Hokkaido almost every seven years since 1972. The aim of the survey has been to have a better understanding of the living and educational conditions of Ainu in Hokkaidō (Advisory Council for Future Ainu Policy 2009: 16).<sup>2</sup> In terms of Ainu living outside of Hokkaidō, the most recent *Ainu Living Conditions outside of Hokkaidō Survey* was conducted nationwide in 2011 by the Japanese central government (Council for Ainu Policy Promotion Working Group 2011). There have been two other surveys on Ainu people living outside of Hokkaidō—in 1974 and 1988 (Watson 2014a: 69)—though these surveys, by the Tokyo Metropolitan Government, focused only on the Tokyo metropolitan area. According to the latest report from the *Hokkaidō Ainu Living Conditions*

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1 *Rera* means wind in Ainu.

2 The 2009 report states that the *Hokkaidō Ainu Living Conditions Survey* was also conducted by the Hokkaidō University Center for Ainu and Indigenous Studies in 2008 (Advisory Council for Future Ainu Policy 2009: 16).

*Survey* in 2017, the Ainu population in Hokkaidō consisted of 13,118 individuals in 5,571 households across 63 municipalities (Department of Hokkaidō Environment and Lifestyle 2017: 3). Ainu in Tokyo suggest there could be as many as 10,000 living in and around the capital region (Watson 2014a: 69). Although a significantly high number, Ainu use this figure to compensate for undercounting in existing statistics from metropolitan government surveys, which reported a population of 679 in 1974, and 2,699 in 1988 (Watson 2014a: 69).

This article looks at the city as a site for cultural resurgence and revitalisation amongst the Ainu in the final decades of the twentieth century. In writing of these phenomena I position myself as an Ainu researcher and include my own experiences as a member of the Tokyo Ainu community. I refer to those who live around the greater Tokyo and Kantō region as ‘Tokyo Ainu’.

Many Indigenous people now define urban space as home. A report by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2014: 2) projects that 66 per cent of the world’s population will be living in urban areas by 2050. If one considers the situation of Indigenous people in this overwhelmingly urban future, it may no longer be feasible to define us solely as remaining in our rural ancestral homelands. In urban contexts, social spaces such as schools, community centres, exhibition halls and public institutions may symbolise Indigenous culture and become transformative spaces that provide opportunities for expressing and developing Indigenous culture.

For some, a focus on Indigenous people in cities may seem inappropriate. City people who identify as Indigenous might be perceived as ‘out of place’ in the urban context. Yet Indigenous migration to cities has become more common in recent years. In this article, I investigate the disparity between modern Indigenous lifestyles and stereotypes of Indigenous people that are fixed in place. I explain how this disparity deeply affects the identity formation of Indigenous people in urban settings. Mark Watson (2014b) uses the term ‘diasporic indigeneity’ to suggest that Indigenous people often remake their identities in cities through processes of reterritorialisation, bringing lived relationships with ancestral homelands and community members into urban contexts. In considering these issues, I offer a detailed case study of one particular cultural organisation in Tokyo and explore how, within a diasporic context, self-fashioning operates within urban Ainu life.

The analysis for this article is based on auto-ethnography. I reflect upon my own life experiences both in Tokyo, and in the rural Ainu community of Nibutani, in Hokkaidō. Paul Whitinui (2014: 458) argues that an individual's ability to explore, discover and narrate oneself as an Indigenous person is significant, and that such narrations help articulate some of the reasons why Indigenous worlds are culturally and politically different. In my case, positioning myself as an Ainu researcher and using auto-ethnography helps me to locate myself within academia and assists me in the ongoing process of negotiating how my culture should be presented to the academy and to society. In addition, auto-ethnography allows me to recognise and reconnect my past to the present and to the future by enabling me to share my experiences and knowledge as an Indigenous person who is trying to position herself in the world. What I share in this article is not Ainu traditional knowledge, but rather my memories, daily acts and experiences that have taught me to reconnect myself to Ainu culture. This is my interpretation of diasporic indigeneity and everyday acts of resurgence. By focusing on these aspects of Ainu life, I hope to provide a more current interpretation of Ainu culture, history and politics.

There are three main sections in this chapter. In the first, the enforced resettlement of Ainu from Hokkaidō to the Tokyo region and our involvement in international Indigenous politics are explored. In the second section I describe historical events leading up to the resurgence of Ainu cultural identity in the late-twentieth century. In this section, the analytical concept of 'diasporic indigeneity' comes to life through an examination of the literature. The concept of 'everyday acts of resurgence' (Cornassel 2012) is also discussed, in the context of the Tokyo Ainu community. This is followed in the third section by a more detailed enquiry of the recent historical emergence of Ainu cultural organisations in Tokyo, which, I argue, has led to the development of 'diasporic indigeneity' as an accepted form of cultural identity amongst the Ainu. In my conclusion I briefly speculate on a possible future for Ainu cultural identity.



## Tokyo Ainu: Indigenous people in a Japanese city

Watson (2014a: 76) traces the origins of the Tokyo Ainu community to the early 1950s, when Ainu migration to cities became more common. As stated above, an estimated population of Kantō-region Ainu was about 10,000 people in 2014. According to the *Ainu Living Conditions outside of Hokkaidō Survey* in 2011, which had 210 respondents, 50 per cent answered that they had moved away from Hokkaidō to find work, and 11.4 per cent stated that their relocation was because of discrimination (Council for Ainu Policy Promotion Working Group 2011: 27).

For most of my childhood I was raised around Tokyo. I always had a feeling of loneliness and isolation because I was not able to share who I was and where my family came from. I was often seeking a safer place to rest my mind. At the age of 20, two significant events changed my life. The first was the start of my involvement in international Indigenous politics, which I discuss below. The second was that I was introduced to Tokyo's 'Ainu hub'—an Ainu restaurant in the city. This became a place where I could feel 'at home' or in a 'resting place'. It also became my cultural place of learning. By becoming more involved with the Ainu community in Tokyo, I also began to take a more active role in international Indigenous politics. Spending time with Tokyo Ainu opened my eyes and made me realise how much some of them suffered financially and sometimes psychologically. But, at the same time, I also saw how they generously welcomed new members into their community, as well as people who were interested in Ainu culture. What was most striking about my encounter with Tokyo Ainu was to learn that they still passed on and learnt Ainu culture, even though many of them had kept their Ainu identity private for many years. This raised many questions within me, and helped me to become who I am now.

It is generally known within the Tokyo Ainu community that we Ainu have migrated from Hokkaidō to cities more or less out of necessity, to pursue better employment or educational opportunities, or to escape from severe discrimination in Hokkaidō. Ainu have faced many challenges in establishing ourselves in Tokyo. Migration to Tokyo might entail a person securing a job and financial security for their family, but that does not necessarily mean they earn a high income. Through my experiences with Tokyo Ainu, I have observed that the social gap between most Ainu and

*Wajin* in Tokyo is more noticeable than between *Wajin*, especially in the older generation. Identity is a sensitive topic, both at home and in public. These sensitivities around identity, and the social distance between Ainu and *Wajin* in Tokyo emerge from the Japanese state's assimilationist past and continued refusal to recognise the Ainu people as Indigenous.

In 1899, the Hokkaidō Former Aborigines Protection Act was enacted by the Japanese Government. Its aim was to assimilate Ainu into modern Japanese imperial subjects by eliminating Ainu language, values and customs (Siddle 1996: 70). In 1997, this law was replaced by the Ainu Cultural Promotion Act (CPA), which many Ainu were dissatisfied with, as it was limited only to the promotion of Ainu culture and language, and did not include recognition of our status as Indigenous people. In September 2007, when the government of Japan voted 'yes' to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), it still continued to refuse recognition for the Ainu as an Indigenous people of Japan according to the standards of international law. On 6 June the following year there was a major political shift within Indigenous politics in Japan. Both houses of the Japanese Diet passed a resolution calling for the recognition of the Ainu as an Indigenous people of Japan. Despite this, the government has still not, at the time of writing, included recognition of Ainu rights as an Indigenous people of Japan.

The Ainu political movement to redress this situation goes beyond the nation. Since the 1980s, Ainu organisations have been active in international Indigenous conferences such as those held by the United Nations.<sup>3</sup> Tokyo Ainu organisations have also played a role in international Indigenous politics, aiming to present the situations and struggles of Tokyo Ainu, especially because the general public in Japan seems to know very little about the Ainu in Tokyo, and assume that Ainu reside only in Hokkaidō. This limited understanding of Tokyo Ainu could be part of the reason why there have been so few government surveys on Ainu living outside of Hokkaidō. However, as I am Tokyo Ainu myself, I know that there is a Tokyo Ainu population, and that there is an Ainu community in Tokyo.

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3 The first time an Ainu organisation participated at a United Nations conference was in 1987. The organisation was the Ainu Association of Hokkaidō, the most politically involved and largest Ainu organisation in Japan (Ainu Association of Hokkaidō 2018).

My involvement in international Indigenous politics started in 2001 when I participated in the 19th session of the UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations in Geneva, Switzerland (Ainu Association of Rera 2001) where I presented the Nibutani Dam case as a community member. This was my first attendance at a UN meeting. To be able to present at the UN, other Ainu friends in Tokyo and I were encouraged and trained by Japanese experts specialising in international law and politics. I was about 20 years old at the time. We met frequently for study groups at a café and at the Ainu Culture Center in Tokyo.<sup>4</sup> As I was quite young and inexperienced and did not know anything about international Indigenous politics, this study was overwhelming. In the beginning, all those UN systems, terms and international laws seemed so far away from my reality that I did not grasp what I was doing. Slowly but surely, I began to understand how I might be able to contribute this knowledge to my Ainu community. This encouraged me to take an active role in international Indigenous politics later on.

On 21 May 2007, some members of the Ainu Resource Centre and I presented a joint statement together with the Shimin Gaikou Centre—a Japanese NGO and long-term supporter of the Ainu political movement—at the 6th session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in New York (Ainu Resource Centre and Shimin Gaikou Centre 2007).<sup>5</sup> This was only a year before the Japanese Government adopted the Resolution on Recognition of Ainu as Indigenous People on 6 June 2008 (Advisory Council for Future Ainu Policy 2009: 1). The item of the day was urban Indigenous peoples and migration. The statement (Ainu Resource Centre and Shimin Gaikou Centre 2007) described the situation for Tokyo Ainu living in the large and densely populated Kantō region, explaining how they had begun to organise themselves, and discussed how different Ainu organisations started to appear. As of 2007, there were four active Ainu associations in the Kantō region, who worked collectively under the name of Ainu Utari Renrakukai (Ainu Companions Liaison Group) when shared political agendas were in need of further discussion with the Tokyo Metropolitan Government. On this occasion,

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4 The Ainu Culture Center is run by The Foundation for Research and Promotion of Ainu Culture, see [www.frpac.or.jp/web/english/details/history-of-the-foundations-establishment.html](http://www.frpac.or.jp/web/english/details/history-of-the-foundations-establishment.html) (accessed 8 August 2018).

5 6th session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, *Special Theme: Territories, Lands and Natural Resources*, 14–25 May 2007.

four of the requests to the Tokyo Government raised by those associations since 1970s were presented (Ainu Resource Centre and Shimin Gaikou Centre 2007: 1–2). They were:

1. to create a place where Ainu could gather and transmit culture such as an Ainu community centre;
2. to set up social welfare support for Ainu;
3. to have an Ainu social counsellor;
4. to conduct a survey on Ainu social and economic conditions in order to have a comprehensive understanding of the Ainu.

Furthermore, the *Ainu Living Conditions outside of Hokkaidō Survey* in 2011 shows three major needs raised by survey participants in response to what needs to be done to increase participation in and practise of Ainu culture and traditions:

1. to establish a place where we can learn;
2. to be informed about any Ainu related activities;
3. to be able to feel more relaxed about our financial situation (Council for Ainu Policy Promotion Working Group 2011: 24).

This survey indicates that Tokyo Ainu could benefit from having a common place. This would ideally be run by the Ainu ourselves with Ainu participation in all aspects of its development. The Ainu Culture Center in Tokyo provides space for activities, but participation is limited because it is managed by the state.

Another challenge that Tokyo Ainu face is that we have to take any available jobs to make a living. Often such jobs require so much time and physical effort that it is nearly impossible to engage in any Ainu cultural activities in the evening or on weekends. I remember wondering, ‘How can we learn and develop our culture freely when our day jobs limit our capacity both psychologically and physically?’ Tokyo Ainu are in a great need of a place and space where everybody is welcomed to participate in Ainu activities, and such a place should be run on our terms. As discussed below, the Ainu restaurant, Rera Cise (now closed), previously provided such possibilities, but the existence of such an institution is tied to its financial success, and such an institution therefore does not provide a sustainable alternative such as a nonprofit self-driven organisation.

In 1974, 33 years before the UN statement by the Tokyo Ainu group, a similar demand for a community centre was made by Tokyo Ainu. Watson describes that Ainu activist Shizue Ukaji and other members of the Tokyo Utari Association conducted the first survey on Tokyo Ainu, officially entitled *Survey of the Socio-economic Conditions of Ainu Residents in Tokyo between 1974–1975* (Watson 2014b: 73). It was funded by the Tokyo Metropolitan Government (Watson 2014b: 73–74). He states that this survey had three purposes:

1. to determine the size of the Ainu population in the capital region;
2. to clarify the problems Ainu faced with a focus on employment, income, culture, education, marriage, and housing;
3. to use these findings to acquire special financial measures and support from the Tokyo Government in order to establish a *seikatsukan* (community center) for Ainu in the city (ibid.).

It is therefore worth noting that the Tokyo Ainu had been demanding exactly the same things for 33 years.

Overall, it is obvious that the Ainu are in need of a periodical nationwide survey to obtain further understanding of Ainu in general in Japan. In order to gain an overview of the social and economic conditions of the Ainu in Japan, the survey should include Ainu living outside Hokkaidō. Tokyo Ainu are in need of a more autonomous institution, like a community centre, where we can be in charge. If the Japanese Government met this fundamental need, it would imply that they recognise Tokyo Ainu's existence as an Indigenous people with collective rights to self-determination in an urban context. The community centre could be used as a place where we as Tokyo Ainu could share our life experiences and challenges in the process of the further development and restoration of our culture. Here, the most important factor that needs to be supported by the government is the recognition that we as Indigenous people are empowered to manage our projects and set our own agendas. Such a community centre in Tokyo would have a similar role as the *kotan* (in the Ainu language), which means a village, or place where people live, and where we gather for various activities to share experiences. I perceive this urban *kotan* as our diaspora. In the next section, I discuss an interpretation of diasporic indigeneity and 'resurgence of Indigenous culture' from my Tokyo Ainu perspective.

## Diasporic indigeneity and everyday acts of resurgence

As I spent most of my youth in Tokyo, the concept of ‘diaspora’ is something that is familiar and relevant to my environment and the people I relate to. For example, migrating to cities to seek better employment or commuting from Hokkaidō to Tokyo is considered part of the Ainu urban lifestyle in both Hokkaidō and Tokyo. Our memories of our food, language and culture, and even experiences with family and friends, travel with us wherever we go, and eventually become part of our identities.

So then, what do Tokyo Ainu carry with us in Tokyo? In my experience, we live just like *Wajin* in Tokyo—wearing modern clothing, eating Japanese food, and so on. Our life is very much integrated into modern Japanese society. The difference is how and when we practise Ainu culture in Tokyo, and how we carry ourselves as Ainu individuals.

First, we still carry our Ainu food culture with us, especially whenever we are able to get hold of ingredients from Hokkaidō. Unfortunately, from Tokyo we cannot easily go to the mountains to harvest the ingredients we need to make Ainu food, or collect bark from trees to make the Ainu traditional robe called *attus*. All those materials and ingredients are only available in Hokkaidō.

Second, our way of being Ainu needs to be initiated individually. Since we live like *Wajin* in Tokyo, our consciousness and way of understanding the world is what distinguishes Ainu from non-Ainu persons. Thus, Tokyo Ainu need to be creative about how they use urban space in order to hold traditional ceremonies for special occasions, such as a marriage, or how they will conduct a ceremony for the opening of a new restaurant. Nevertheless, the Ainu Culture Center is used daily by Tokyo Ainu for various activities, like song and dance lessons or for doing embroidery. So, in a way, we still share many cultural practices, just like Hokkaidō Ainu, by using urban space and place to practise and revitalise Ainu culture.

Interpretations of space and place differ in various parts of the world. David Gegeo from the Indigenous groups of Kwara’ae and Lau in the Solomon Islands introduces a more flexible way of understanding such concepts based on his Indigenous background. Gegeo writes:

Space (*kula ni tua*, literally, ‘place situated in dwell[ing]’): that is, place not of one’s existential being but rather of temporary or even long-term staying) refers to a space that is not of one’s identity or origin. Space has to do with the *location* where a Kwara’ae person may be at any given time as necessitated by contemporary conditions (such as going to an urban area to get a job to meet basic needs or going overseas in pursuit of an education) (2001: 494).

This approach to ‘space’ provides a new possibility for us as Indigenous migrants to reroot or relocate ourselves in a new place and environment. What matters is how you position and relate yourself within the environment around you. I share Gegeo’s point of view that one can identify with one’s place of origin while residing beyond the borders of that place.

Indigenous identities are flexible and changing and reflect, instead of resist, a borderless world. I use and interpret the terminology of Indigenous identity from my Ainu background. For me, Indigenous identity means a way of being myself, the Ainu way—*Aynupuri* in the Ainu language. Each person has his or her own Ainu way of being, and each person explores his or her world on his or her own terms. Following Gegeo’s suggestions concerning how Indigenous people make our own places and spaces in the world, I suggest that we need to work towards a framework where we as Indigenous people can decide our own identities and our position in society without these being externally assigned. In case this extended approach to special relations and Indigenous identity sounds unclear, I will introduce the concept of ‘diasporic indigeneity’ to support this idea.

Our borderless, urban, westernised contemporary world somehow gives us an impression of living in one big machine with advanced technology, shared customs and sense of being. This entails our rapid mobility and dislocation from our homeland to places where a mainstream culture dominates other cultures. In Tokyo, Ainu culture is not readily visible to the general public. Because of our integration into Japanese society, we are almost invisible. However, our consciousness and identity still remain within us. The term ‘diasporic’ is therefore a useful term to situate our environment and lived experiences as urban Ainu.

Mark Watson, who has worked with Tokyo Ainu for many years, explains the major motivation he had for writing his book *Japan's Ainu Minority in Tokyo*, stating:

This book has been the opportunity to think about how the inherent complexities of Ainu sociality in and around Tokyo intersect with the more general discussion of urban indigeneity as a focus for research at an international level. Diaspora, for example, is a mainstream theoretical concept that contrary to popular opinion is being used by scholars in a variety of ways to describe and better understand the lived experiences of indigenous people outside of traditional lands (2014b: 147).

I very much share his motivation to look into the complexities of Tokyo Ainu sociality, and believe that many of the challenges Tokyo Ainu face in our daily lives are shared by other urban Indigenous people across the globe. The term 'diaspora' has given me a new direction from which to reflect upon our lived experiences as part of an urban Indigenous community. The term 'diaspora' in the context of our borderless urban world is suggestive of Indigenous mobility and the unique characteristics of urban Indigenous conditions, and contains implications for Indigenous understandings of space and place. Living diasporically has become a necessity for many Indigenous people so we can survive and maintain our culture and identity. This new perspective also underlines the importance of urban Indigenous studies in illustrating and explaining the complexity of urban migration for urban Indigenous communities. It also sheds light on the new cultural formation of Indigenous people in cities, something that I have experienced in my youth in Tokyo.

Another example of how this concept has come to life, besides my own experience, is given by Andrea Avaria Saavedra (2005). Saavedra describes how new Indigenous mobilities transform native understandings of space and place. In drawing on a case study of urban Mapuche migration in Chile, Saavedra states:

How do we all live here together, arriving from different places, and with distinct indigenous cultures still intact, within the larger Mapuche whole? Evidence for this new shared identity—with all its social, symbolic and cultural implications—can be found in Mapuche practices, individual experiences, new forms of communication, self-reference and self-description. All of these illustrate how the very meaning of being Mapuche can change within the context of an urban and often hostile environment (2005: 54).



How I interpret Saavedra's analysis of shared identity is that one can still find a shared Indigenous identity through one's experiences, new forms of communication, self-reference and self-description. This supports Watson's (2014b) analysis, presented earlier, about the term 'diasporic indigeneity', which posits that Indigenous people remake their identities in cities through processes of reterritorialisation, bringing lived relationships with ancestral homelands and community members into the urban context.

This perspective of 'diasporic indigeneity' goes beyond the influential working definition of 'Indigenous' in José R. Martínez Cobo's important *Study of the Problem of Discrimination against Indigenous Populations* (1987), which emphasises connection with ancestral territories. Although there are no fixed definitions of the concept of 'Indigenous people' within the United Nations' system, Cobo's working definition is internationally recognised and is still widely used. Here, I present two factors relating to the traditional land of Indigenous people summarised by the Secretariat of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. These two factors specify that: ancestral lands are occupied, or at least of part of them; and that there is shared common ancestry with the original inhabitants of these lands (Secretariat of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues 2004: 2). Cobo's report, which focuses more on ancestral land, highlights how significant social, economic and political changes occurred in Indigenous communities from the 1980s to the present.

In 2018, defining Indigenous people is now even more complex and politicised, and must take into account an ever-expanding variety of political, cultural and economic conditions in various countries around the world. This working definition was provided for practical purposes, but as stated by Saavedra (2005), Indigenous people have come to a point, through globalisation and modernisation, where we are urged to incorporate social relations that extend beyond geographical boundaries. This means that we should examine Indigenous mobility and Indigenous social and cultural expressions on our own terms, which may bring new understandings of the ontological status of Indigenous people.

One may wonder, then, what kind of experiences, new forms of communication, self-reference and self-description from the shared Indigenous identity might be relevant, especially in cities? Jeff Corntassel (2012) in his article, 'Re-envisioning resurgence: Indigenous pathways to decolonisation and sustainable self-determination', discusses the

concept of Indigenous resurgence, which I find useful in thinking about how Indigenous people construct diasporic indigeneity away from their ancestral homelands. Corntassel explains Indigenous resurgence as people having the bravery and imagination to visualise life beyond the state. He explains:

If one thinks of peoplehood as the interlocking features of language, homeland, ceremonial cycle, and sacred living histories, a disruption to any one of these practices threatens all aspects of everyday life. The complex spiritual, political and social relationships that hold peoplehood together are continuously renewed. These daily acts of renewal, whether through prayer, speaking your language, honouring your ancestors, etc., are the foundation of resurgence (2012: 89).

I share his view and interpretation of ‘resurgence’, which acknowledges that the various interlocking features of indigeneity are always in flux. Daily acts constitute the foundation of resurgence, and are the substantive content of shared indigeneity based on new forms of communication, self-reference and self-description. Corntassel also emphasises that, within a context of decolonisation practice, it is important to accept daily conditions, and engage oneself with place-based cultural practices (2012: 89). Although I agree with Corntassel in this regard, I think it is important to modulate this place-based emphasis in order to take into account the experience of urban Indigenous people, and look at how acts of resurgence create greater possibilities of new Indigenous pathways in cities. The concept of ‘resurgence’ can thus be contrasted with Cobo’s working definition of indigeneity. Furthermore, if one combines Gegeo’s view on the ontological status of Indigenous people, Watson’s interpretation of diasporic indigeneities and Corntassel’s view on ‘everyday acts of resurgence’, an important point is clarified—that a person’s geographical location does not limit the possibilities of pursuing and developing Indigenous identity and culture.

In the next section, I introduce a detailed case study of the recent historical emergence of Ainu cultural organisations in Tokyo, as an auto-ethnographic story which touches upon my previous discussion of ‘space and place’ in relation to an expression of Indigenous identity, diasporic indigeneity and the resurgence of Indigenous culture.

## Rera Cise (the ‘House of Wind’) in Tokyo

How one’s identity and culture are expressed in society depends on one’s relationship to the environment and to other people. To be able to express one’s identity and culture, several factors are needed. I roughly categorise these into:

1. people, place and space;
2. food and material objects;
3. rights to decide one’s own identities and position in society without them being externally assigned.

As we are collective beings, the connection and association we have with other people, and even material objects, strengthen and determine our motivation and meaning in life regardless of our origins. As discussed earlier, Indigenous people are often forced to move to areas other than our homeland to seek work or education. We often need to adapt ourselves and to associate with others to be able to express our identities and culture in new settings. The concept of everyday acts of resurgence confirms the importance of such acts to the maintenance of identity in an urban setting. To share such a connection and association with others and other things requires us to have a certain place and space where we can exercise our daily routines, rituals and associated activities. As explained earlier, the place and space cannot be traditional land when it comes to an urban Indigenous context. What matters is how we make the most of the place and space available. This is often the reality for urban Indigenous people, where we have no choice other than to make our own present and future in cities. This is what I discussed above as diasporic indigeneity. Lastly, it is most important that we as Indigenous people should have the right to express our culture freely and to define what ‘Indigenous culture’ is for ourselves, regardless of our geographical location and without external interference. I would now like to bring in my own experiences as a Tokyo Ainu woman to illustrate these concepts.

I identify as Indigenous, mixed Japanese–Ainu. I am a typical urban Ainu, insofar as I did not have the possibility of learning the Ainu language and culture fully, either in school or at home. Thus, my personal learning arena for Ainu culture and the place where I could have a feeling of ‘belonging’ as part of the Ainu people were spaces, like the Rera Cise restaurant in Tokyo, where I was able to meet other Ainu, including Ainu Elders.

I was 20 years old when I was introduced to the Ainu restaurant called Rera Cise, and the Ainu Association of Rera, which was an Ainu cultural association established in 1983. Its membership was made up of all Ainu members who worked in or were involved with the Ainu restaurant and other Tokyo Ainu activities. Established in 1994, Rera Cise was the first Ainu restaurant in Tokyo. It was built after a successful national fundraising campaign. Both Japanese and Ainu supporters were involved in the process, which made it possible for Tokyo Ainu to have a place to bring Ainu food culture to Tokyo.

Rera Cise, which literally means ‘House of Wind’ in the Ainu language, opened in a basement suite in Waseda, Tokyo, opposite Waseda University (Nishi-Waseda campus). It was located in a typical university campus area where many college students passed by every day. The Rera Cise sign was so small that customers could easily miss it. The small entrance to the restaurant may have looked a little mysterious, as there was a long and narrow, dimly lit stairway down to the restaurant. However, when you entered the restaurant, there was, suddenly, quite a different atmosphere.

Ainu music, wooden furniture and *cikoro-inaw* (Ainu ritual wood-shaving stick)—after having been used for the house ceremony—decorated the corners of the ceilings for the protection of the space. The restaurant space was quite small, about 50 square metres, with a tiny kitchen only big enough for two people to work together. Despite the location and limited space in the restaurant, many students and teachers came for a cheap, quick, healthy and fulfilling lunch and dinner. Half of the customers were activists and supporters of Rera Cise; the other half were those who had read or heard rumours about the restaurant, and wanted to taste exotic Ainu food. The menu was based on the memories of the Ainu Elders who worked at the restaurant. Some dishes were traditional Ainu food and some were modern food created after the Meiji period (1868–1912). For example, salmon, which was one of the most important staple foods for Ainu, was a much-used ingredient in the menu. A chopped mixture of the salmon head and milt were used to make pickles—*citatap* in the Ainu language—with roasted seaweed and salt. The head and bones were used as basic bouillon for vegetable soup, which takes two days to make. Salmon eggs were used to make a rice bowl dish called *cipor don*—rice bowl with salmon eggs (a modern food). The fillet was used for making grilled fish with salt. The fillet was also served as *ru-i-be*—a form of frozen sashimi—and it was also dried out with the skin on and served as a snack with beer or sake.

Ainu practise animism, which is a belief that nonhuman entities (plants, animals and other objects) around human beings possess spiritual essences. Ainu have various names for animals and nature, which are sometimes referred to as Kamuy; the closest term we might use is 'gods', but not in the same sense as the Christian God. Salmon is called Kamuy-cep in the Ainu language and is considered one of the most important of the fish species. An aspect of Ainu philosophy concerning food culture is that Ainu are appreciative of all food they receive from nature. Our use of all parts of the salmon reflects this philosophy. Nature and human beings are equal, and therefore, Ainu live in a sustainable way by sharing all food received by nature, and by leaving some food behind when they have finished hunting for other animals in the mountains.

The Rera Cise restaurant provided space and place for urban Ainu and for those who had an interest in Ainu food and culture, and wanted to share and experience them. It was also a bridge between Elders and youth, where we could transmit our knowledge through various activities. The Ainu Association of Rera, the organisation that ran the restaurant, also had political aims, such as the dissemination and promotion of Ainu culture, and of disseminating political messages, by performing dances and songs at public events, schools and concerts.

I became involved in the Tokyo Ainu community through the Ainu Association of Rera and Rera Cise. I was immediately welcomed and considered to be a member of the Tokyo Ainu community. One reason could be that my grandfather was an Ainu leader and activist who everybody knew. Emotionally speaking, I became very passionate about learning Ainu dances and songs and I appreciated the fact that we could have our own style, voice and expression. As a child, I had been trained very strictly to sing in a Japanese choir where everybody had to be perfectly in tune. In comparison to that experience, the Ainu performance group associated with the Ainu Association of Rera encouraged a much freer style of dancing, to the extent that they looked upon what I thought of as mistakes as expressions of my being a 'knower'—someone who (almost) knew how to dance. On one occasion, the training I received from the Ainu Association of Rera led me to perform as part of a music concert in Ebisu, Tokyo, with professional Indigenous musicians from Japan and Australia (the band from Australia was called Waak Waak Jungi). The most inspiring part of their performance was their mixing of traditional Ainu and contemporary music with the didjeridu, a traditional Australian Aboriginal instrument. The deep, strong sound of the didjeridu created

a very smooth harmony with the soft and sensitive sounds of the Ainu traditional instrument *tonkori*, played by the world's most prominent *tonkori* musician, Oki Kano.

My part involved five minutes of Ainu traditional dancing before the main concert, and I also performed in the chorus together with other female Ainu performers. We rehearsed for several hours, and I was very nervous, especially knowing that the audience had paid a lot of money to attend the concert. There were about 100 people in the audience. The performance took place in the basement of a tall concrete building. I heard the audience whispering to each other before the concert and I became more and more nervous.

Our group dance opened the show. I made a big mistake with my part in the performance. The dance is called *fu-ta-re-cui*, and expresses the movement of pine trees shaken by a strong wind, so you bend your whole head and upper body to the front and back to express this movement. It is a quite an intense dance and we were all supposed to do the dance movements simultaneously, but I made a mistake by doing it completely opposite to the other performers. I was not able to focus after that. When the show was over, I ran to my dear friend, Takumi Ikabe, a senior Ainu sculptor, with my eyes filled with tears. I said, 'Did you see that I made a big mistake in the group dance!? I feel so ashamed and sad'. He replied, 'Yes, I saw it, but Kanako, that is you. Your mistake is part of you and part of your quality—nothing to be ashamed of'. I was saved by his words. This was unexpected and it surprised me that I was still accepted even with my mistakes. Probably none of my *Wajin* friends would have said such a thing to me. This perception of accepting whoever you are, with or without mistakes, made me realise how my values were deeply influenced by the *Wajin* way of thinking, which is that everybody is expected to perform and behave the same as others, without exception. All the pressure and stress I carried with me immediately seemed to evaporate. This sense of being different appealed to me, and not just because it forgave mistakes. I could see that it accepted creativity. This perception of how to look at, interpret, and be in the world made me feel more confident about myself and gave me a chance to think deeply about who I would like to become.

Up until the time I joined the Ainu Association of Rera in Tokyo, Ainu culture had only existed for me in my memories from Hokkaidō, where I spent my childhood with my grandparents. It brought back memories of my struggles to distinguish between two completely different cultures—

Ainu and Japanese—and I even wondered why I should think and behave differently depending on where I was. I still remember myself as a small child being puzzled by my dual life. Whenever I returned to Tokyo, I acted as a *Wajin* girl who never talked about Ainu culture. It was not conscious, but, as a child, I quickly realised that no one would understand what I was referring to if I spoke about the Ainu. This continued until I encountered the Tokyo Ainu community. Until then, I would never have imagined that I could find such an Ainu community in the middle of Tokyo. Such a space and social sphere eventually became my emotional home where there is a feeling of ‘belonging’ and ‘home’ in my heart.

A dynamic urban space provides different possibilities. It fills an economic need, and it attracts many Indigenous peoples, especially Indigenous youth. It is a space where we can experiment with our future and our possibilities. The anonymous part of city life somehow gives us the freedom to be who we are and who we want to become. Urban life can even provide the flexibility and possibility of having complex identities, and allow us to negotiate those identities and find ways to express ourselves that are most comfortable for us. I agree with Watson’s description of how Tokyo has become a new geographical place since the 1960s (2014b: 70). For the Tokyo Ainu, it represents the possibility of reflecting upon one’s sense of self, despite all the hardships related to our living and negotiating the political conditions in Tokyo.

My Ainu identity in my early 20s was confirmed and strengthened by associating with other Ainu friends and in social spaces such as Rera Cise in Tokyo, without being in my so-called ‘homeland’. Such social spaces became something that symbolised my Ainu culture and became a transformative space for me. They helped me to identify myself as an Indigenous person. The curiosity that grew created many opportunities for me to visit and study overseas. Such overseas experiences, together with the collective recognition from others, have triggered my Indigenous identity and made me proud to be an Ainu. The experiences I have had due to my involvement with Rera Cise support the argument that one’s geographical location does not necessarily determine one’s identity and culture. Rather, it is through relationships to people and places that experiences are constructed through food culture, language, rituals and ceremonies. These are everyday acts of resurgence in diasporic indigeneity.

Finally, when we consider what cities can offer Indigenous people in terms of practical solutions, or agonise over what urban Indigenous people can do to improve our situations, it is critically important that Indigenous people are included in all decision-making by legitimising their participation in all related matters. This could support Indigenous people to decide our own identity and our position in society without this being externally assigned. I would like to introduce Gerald Taiaiake Alfred's suggestion of five measurements or guidelines to fulfil Indigenous regeneration for both individuals and communities:

1. The restoration of Indigenous presence on the land and the revitalisation of land-based practices;
2. An increased reliance on traditional diets among Indigenous people;
3. The transmission of Indigenous culture, spiritual teachings and knowledge of the land between Elders and youth;
4. The strengthening of familial activities and re-emergence of Indigenous cultural and social institutions as governing authorities within First Nations; and,
5. Short-term and long-term initiatives and improvements in sustainable land-based economies as the primary economies of reserve based First Nations communities and as supplemental economies for urban Indigenous communities (2009: 56).

I would argue that measurements 2 to 5 are quite suitable for Tokyo Ainu. All of these points manifest the idea that it is of critical importance for us, as Indigenous people, to have our own place and space to regenerate a flow of Indigenous cultural development, especially through a bridge between Elders and youth, regardless of geographic location. For Indigenous people, to eat a traditional diet brings back all the memories and food habits, and the communication that takes place during the process of making food. Eating traditional food constitutes an 'everyday act of resurgence'. To transmit Indigenous culture, spiritual teachings and knowledge of the land between Elders and youth is obviously important. However, what could be added here from an urban perspective is to teach Indigenous youth about alternative ways of expressing one's identity beyond geographical boundaries, and also to provide strategies for relating to the land or homeland without actually being on the land or in the homeland. Strengthening familiar activities and the reemergence of Indigenous cultural and social institutions as governing authorities



could, of course, raise more awareness among Indigenous people and could reinforce their shared identity. This approach could particularly strengthen the Tokyo Ainu community for two reasons:

1. focusing on collective activities could be more effective since we are prone to organising ourselves and thinking collectively;
2. paying more attention to the reemergence of Indigenous cultural and social institutions could reaffirm that we are as important as political and economic institutions.

Short-term and long-term initiatives and improvements in sustainable land-based economies for providing supplemental economies for urban Indigenous communities could also be relevant in many ways.

A place like Rera Cise was capable of supporting most of the elements mentioned above. It was the place where a traditional diet was revitalised, where Ainu culture, language and spirituality were transmitted across generations, and most importantly, it was a cultural and social institution which was independently run by the Ainu. The role of the cultural and social institution of course helped to inform political activities as well. It led to the translation of political messages that were conveyed to Japanese society—voicing our claims as well as describing future possibilities. Rera Cise became the place for everybody to gather together with youth and Elders, to eat Ainu food, to discuss the future and to share Ainu culture. It was definitely a central Ainu organisation in Tokyo from 1994 to 2009. A small urban space like Rera Cise can thus be a foundation for resurgence, where it produces Indigenous knowledge through food, music, art and interactions between Elders and youth. It creates a ‘home’ where it is possible to feel free to express one’s sense of being with both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.

## Conclusion

I consider myself a Tokyo Ainu, yet I fully acknowledge my complex identity as someone who grew up in Japanese society just like any other *Wajin*. What I consider ‘home’ is where I have an emotional attachment and through which some of my ‘being as Ainu’ was formed. For example, Nibutani Village, one of the Ainu sacred places of Hokkaidō, where I spent all my school holidays with my grandparents and cousins, is ‘home’, as is that particular time and place in Tokyo when I became Ainu

with the Ainu community there. But, what does this tell us about how resurgence is intertwined with urban Indigenous life? My memories and experiences are embedded in my body, which influences my daily actions and behaviour, wherever I am. I cannot deny the fact that I am part of the huge machinery of globalisation, and that globalisation has given me so many opportunities to explore the world. All these years of living abroad and in cities has raised a question of how I can position myself and find my own Indigenous pathway as an Ainu person, regardless of geographical location and without being actually at 'home'. It is true that all the memories are embedded in my body, but these memories need to be performed and activated to be able to be part of my real life. What has been helpful for me to reconnect myself to the Ainu culture is to play *mukkuri* (the Ainu traditional mouth harp), which can be played alone, and anywhere in the world. Singing Ainu songs, which I learned from my time in Tokyo, also helps me to reconnect myself to Ainu culture. However, what seems to be most important for me is to be able to share my daily stories and struggles with Ainu friends who accept who I am.

I consider my experiences with the Tokyo Ainu community to consist of many 'everyday acts of resurgence' in a framework of diasporic indigeneity. What we did within the community was to reconnect ourselves with memories from Hokkaidō through food, music, ceremony and even our own consciousness. We revitalised and strengthened our culture and consciousness by securing our urban space and place, without actually being in our 'homeland'. Rera Cise was a good example of such a space and place. It was unique in Tokyo. It fostered our minds to be creative and think critically, and enabled us to explore Ainu culture together. The door of Rera Cise was always open to *Wajin* or anyone who was interested in Ainu culture. Having such an Ainu-driven urban *kotan* (community) provided opportunities for the revitalisation of Ainu culture in urban space. Furthermore, it provided an opportunity for both Ainu and non-Ainu persons to share and discover Ainu culture and, in the process, even to discover themselves. As we are faced with increasing numbers of Indigenous people migrating to cities in the future, such urban *kotan* could offer a way to reestablish a better foundation for a more inclusive social model.

## Acknowledgements

Numbers of experienced scholars and friends from all over the world supported and encouraged me to write this article. First, I wish to thank Tetuhito Oono, who helped me with the Ainu language and Ainu tradition. From Arctic Norway, my supervisors, Torill Nyseth and Torjer Andreas Olsen, as well as Helen Verran from Australia, helped me to conceptualise my life stories in academic discussions. Hiroshi Maruyama from Japan and Gerald Roche, as well as Åsa Viridi Kroik, as editors of the article also followed and supported me throughout the process. Mark Watson from Canada, who is my long-term friend, encouraged me to write about the urban Ainu by introducing me to various related theories and discussions. The Sami scholar from the United States, Troy Storfjell, supported me in the last phase of writing the article by providing comments and perspectives of Indigenous studies from North America.

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This text is taken from *Indigenous Efflorescence: Beyond Revitalisation in Sapmi and Ainu Mosir*, edited by Gerald Roche, Hiroshi Maruyama and Åsa Viridi Kroik, published 2018 by ANU Press, The Australian National University, Canberra, Australia.

[doi.org/10.22459/IE.2018.20](https://doi.org/10.22459/IE.2018.20)

## Article 2

*Asian Anthropology*, 2019

**ARTICLE**

***Urespa* (“Growing Together”): the remaking of Ainu-Wajin relations in Japan through an innovative social venture**

Kanako Uzawa <sup>a</sup> and Mark K. Watson <sup>b</sup>

*<sup>a</sup>Department of Social Sciences, UiT the Arctic University of Norway, Tromsø, Norway; <sup>b</sup>Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Concordia University, Montreal, Canada*

*Urespa*, meaning “to grow together” in the Ainu language, is a social venture founded at Sapporo University in 2010. The *Urespa* club brings Indigenous Ainu and Wajin (i.e. non-Ainu) students together in a curriculum-based environment to co-learn the Ainu language and Ainu cultural practice. The initiative’s aim is to restory the conventional narrative of Otherness in Japan by creating a transformative space or “micropublic” in which students can work collaboratively across ethnic difference. In this paper, we argue that *Urespa* succeeds in effecting an inclusive social setting for both Ainu and Wajin students through the design and implementation of a process which promotes and, recursively, is shaped by, a transcultural form of social encounter. The challenge this makes to the promotion of multicultural programming within Japan in recent decades is important although not without controversy.

**Keywords:** Ainu; Japan; ethnic relations; critical pedagogy; indigeneity

\* Corresponding author. Email: kanakouzawa@me.com



***Urespa* (“Growing Together”): the remaking of Ainu-Wajin relations in Japan through an innovative social venture**

**Introduction**

In 2010, Honda Yuko<sup>1</sup>, then vice-president of Sapporo University, founded a non-profit social club called *Urespa*. Although it was, and remains, a relatively small-scale venture, the establishment of the *Urespa* club in affiliation with the university set in motion a bold and innovative interventionist project. *Urespa*, meaning “to grow together” in the native language of the Indigenous Ainu people of Japan, brings Indigenous Ainu and Wajin (ethnic Japanese)<sup>2</sup> students together in a curriculum-based environment to co-learn the Ainu language and Ainu cultural practices<sup>3</sup>. In doing so, it provides a new space of interdependence that challenges, at the same time as it reworks, normalized expectations of inter-ethnic encounters in the public sphere. The general aim of *Urespa* is to create a transformative space in which Ainu students can flourish alongside Wajin. To achieve this, the venture structures a kind of “micropublic,” to use Amin’s (2002) terminology, that changes the values of individual students through extended interpersonal contact and the co-learning of Ainu cultural practices.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, as Honda (2013) explains, the aim of the group over the long term is to scale up and effect a fairer and more inclusive society in Japan for both Ainu and Wajin people.

From the perspective of the anthropology of Japan, the everyday realities of Ainu-Wajin relations has generated little sustained interest and have mostly been overlooked in favor of political analysis of the contemporary situation of Ainu within the Japanese nation-state (Lie 2001; Siddle 2002; cf. Peng, Ricketts & Imamura 1974). It was only in 2008 that the Japanese government formally recognized the Ainu people

as Indigenous “to the northern Japanese archipelago and its environs” (Advisory Council for Future Ainu Policy 2009, 1), a momentous decision that – notwithstanding criticism of its actual significance (Stevens 2014, 2008) – marked a distinct departure from over one hundred years of governmental assimilationist policy and thinking. Indeed, as we write this in 2018, it is the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the colonization of Hokkaido, an important chapter in the historical process of racialization and colonial dispossession of Ainu lifeways by the Japanese state (*Hokkaido Shimbun* 17 July 2018; Hokkaido 150 years Business Executive Committee Secretariat 2019). Rather than reproduce a description of that history here, we encourage readers to explore for themselves writings on Ainu history (e.g. Howell 2004, 2005; Morris-Suzuki 1994; Oguma 2002; Siddle 1996; Strong 2011; Sugawara 1968; Walker 2001; Watson 2014a), particularly Ainu efforts during the twentieth century to self-organize and re-establish ethnic pride as an Indigenous people seeking self-determination over Ainu affairs at local and national levels (for example, see Hatozawa 1972; lewallen 2016; Nishiura 1997; Sasaki 1973; Sunazawa 1989; Ukaji 2003; Yūki 1980, 1997).

Set against the backdrop of important changes to the national government’s Ainu policy prior to but also since 2008 (see Stevens 2014; Uzawa and Ding-Everson 2017; Uzawa 2019),<sup>5</sup> it is a fact that the Ainu continue to have to negotiate the lingering suspicion within majority society of (collective) Ainu claims to an Indigenous heritage. A prominent and public instance of this questioning of Ainu existence – and an event that several Urespa students spoke about during the research for this article – occurred just a couple of years after Urespa was founded. In

2014, two councillors from Hokkaido, Kaneko Yasuyuki and Onodera Masaru, used social media to attack the national government's recognition of the Ainu as Indigenous to Northern Japan. Kaneko, a parliamentarian in the Sapporo City legislature, tweeted that the Ainu people "no longer exist now" and went on to complain that Ainu individuals claiming welfare or public monies for cultural activities based on their ethnic difference were abusing taxpayers' funds and should be stopped. His tweet triggered a rash of anti-Ainu cyber-rhetoric and displays of racism. A couple of months later, Onodera, a Hokkaido prefectural legislator, stepped into the debate on Twitter to declare that Ainu-specific programs should either be re-evaluated or revoked (see lewallen 2015).

Some six weeks after his first tweet, Kaneko was expelled by his political party, having already been censured by senior political figures.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, the fact that both politicians lost their seats soon after, in the 2015 general election, was an outcome that civic coalition groups interpreted as an important victory. Although the fate of these two politicians at the ballot box may have provided some hope for Ainu and their supporters, the way in which the episode played out shone a light on the troubling breadth of quiet support for Kaneko's main premise that equated Ainu claims to Indigeneity with an illegitimate challenge to the political sovereignty of the Japanese people.

For Ainu, the xenophobic nature of this "hate speech" event, as anti-racist campaigners and Ainu activists labelled it, returned attention to the difficulties minority-identified individuals face in negotiating the deep divisions of difference within Japanese society (Willis and Murphy-Shigematsu 2008a). Notwithstanding the perception of progress at the

level of public policy, the event underscored for activists the importance of continuing efforts to resist the still-dominant public image in Japanese society of Ainu as a bygone or extinct race (*horobiyuku minzoku*), inferior and other to the modern nation-state (Siddle 1996). It also highlighted the anxieties that Ainu, both young and old, can experience in identifying as Ainu in everyday life. After all, what it means to identify as Ainu in twenty-first century Japan can often be challenging and emotionally fraught, especially given that individuals are raised speaking Japanese and socialized and educated within the Japanese school system. Although cultural and linguistic revitalization movements play important roles within Ainu communities across Hokkaido and elsewhere (see Watson 2014a, 2014b) one cannot overstate the impact that the history of colonization has had on Ainu life.

Our ambition in this report is to examine the actions of the Urespa group, and in response to the Kaneko episode, to ask to what extent this initiative succeeds in creating a meaningful space of social transformation. More specifically, in situating this case study in relation to the work on how difference is discussed and managed in multiethnic liberal societies (Valentine 2008; Amin 2002; Wilson 2013), we wish to think through what this analysis has to offer an Indigenous context of reconciliation within Japan and, through dialogue with some of the group's Ainu and Wajin participants, assess the extent to which Urespa is achieving "meaningful contact" across social differences (Valentine 2008).

***On Authorship and Structure***

Before continuing, we wish to clarify the authorship of this report. The lead author, Kanako Uzawa, is an Ainu woman from the village of Nibutani in Hokkaido. Having mostly grown up in Tokyo, she has personally experienced the difficulties of negotiating a sense of Ainu and yet also Wajin selfhood. As the granddaughter of a widely respected Ainu leader and activist, she identifies with the need for the Ainu to gain, through education, the social and political capital to succeed in society and to self-mobilize and flourish as Ainu. Uzawa is now a PhD candidate at the UiT Arctic University in Norway.

The second author, Mark Watson, is an anthropologist at a Canadian university. He undertook research for several years with the Ainu movement in Tokyo in the early 2000s (Watson 2014a, 2014b, 2010). While his main research interests encompass Indigenous urban mobilities and self-organization, he is an action researcher inspired by the capacity of human inquiry to transform individual understandings of social relations.

The research for this paper derives primarily from doctoral fieldwork conducted with the Urespa group in 2016 by Uzawa. She conducted participant observation and completed semi-structured interviews with 21 individual students (9 female and 12 male), 13 of whom identified predominately as Ainu, and 2 Urespa employees (1 female and 1 male). After Uzawa finished her fieldwork, she analyzed, coded, and translated the interviews using conventional content analysis. Uzawa then contacted Watson in order to discuss ideas about the significance of Urespa from both comparative and theoretical perspectives. The authors' attentions in those discussions moved on to

examining how the encounter between self and the other that Amin (2002), among others (see Mayblin et al 2015; Valentine 2008; Wilson 2013), refers to as the foundational dynamic for meaningful social change, is, in the context of Urespa, as much to do with what happens *within* individuals as between them. This topic, which we refer to as self-creation, is something to which we will return.

We divide this paper into four sections. First, we provide a brief history of the Urespa project's structure, aims, and ambition. Secondly, Uzawa highlights the voices of Urespa participants (both Ainu and Wajin) to explore how Urespa enables its participants to negotiate social differences through Ainu cultural practices and the creation of shared understandings. Uzawa also highlights what consequences this process has for the individuals involved. In the third section, Watson identifies and critically engages with three ways that the Urespa model promotes a transcultural model of social encounter. In conclusion, we think through how Urespa bridges socio-cultural difference by drawing on the literature discussing "the encounter" in urban diversity.

### **The Foundations of Urespa**

As mentioned above, the Urespa club was properly established in 2010, but to understand the context of its development we have to go back to Honda Yuko's first involvement with the Ainu community in 1983. It was in that year that Honda graduated from university and made the decision to move to the predominately Ainu community of Nibutani in southwestern Hokkaido, having been inspired by the Ainu language movement. She joined the movement as a staff member of a private Ainu language class, a project led by the Ainu leader, and later parliamentarian, Kayano

Shigeru. Within four years, the language class gained a positive reputation and received prefectural government support to become the Biratori-Nibutani Ainu Language Class (Honda 2013, 126). The language classroom became a key hub of action-oriented learning and community development for the growing Ainu-language revitalization movement. Honda describes the effect of being in Nibutani at that time, and how she perceived the educational opportunities for Ainu students, in the following way:

From my time in Nibutani, I was hoping that children could go to universities. It was painful to see some children dropping out of school halfway through their studies. It seemed that some parents who were in financial difficulty thought there was no reason to send their children to universities; it was better that children got a job to support their family. (Interview, 2016)

The limitations of educational opportunities for Ainu children as Honda understood them are still borne out in present-day statistics. According to the most recent Survey of Hokkaido Ainu Living Conditions conducted by the Hokkaido Government (Department of Hokkaido Environment & Lifestyle 2017, 7), only 33.3% of Ainu-identified youth continue into further education after high school, a statistic that is significantly lower than the 45.8% for Wajin youth.<sup>7</sup> Faced with the fact that 47.8% of Ainu start working straight after high school, while for Wajin students this figure is only 22.2%, the expectation within Ainu households that youth should gain employment as soon as possible can be seen as an obstacle to social mobility while also being reflective of

the challenges associated with the lower socio-economic circumstances that Ainu families face.

In an interview with Uzawa, Honda described how this formative experience in Nibutani stayed with her. Before her appointment as an assistant professor of Ainu Culture and Language at Sapporo University in 2005, she had already approached different academics to ask if they could draw on their resources to help the situation, but nothing happened. Then, in 2009, the year following her election as vice-president of Sapporo University, Honda decided to use her leverage to enact the change that she had wanted to see, and so initiated the Urespa venture.

### *The 'Urespa Club' Model*

The Urespa club was formally established within Sapporo University in April 2010. In 2013 Urespa became a non-profit organization, allowing its employees to administer its own operations and financial management external to the university. At the time of this writing, the Urespa group rents office space from Sapporo University as well as other rooms to conduct its activities. Irrespective of this independent administrative status, Urespa remains an integral part of the university structure and is, in fact, one of four curriculum-based “action programs” that Sapporo University promotes as part of its strategic plan to provide experience-based learning opportunities for students.<sup>8</sup>

From the very beginning, Honda proposed three core principles for the Urespa venture. The first is its annual quota system of six entry scholarships on average for Ainu students. Honda’s proposal for this Ainu-specific program gained official approval from the university in May 2009. Before being passed, however, Honda had to respond to a



number of lengthy and at times heated discussions criticizing its reasoning (Honda 2013, 129–130). A major point of concern was that it discriminated unfairly against Wajin students based on the fact that those students face the same financial pressures as Ainu, especially in times of economic recession, and are also sometimes forced to leave the university for these reasons (Honda 2013, 129). In response, Honda was adamant that the day-to-day operation of the Urespa club would be fully inclusive of Wajin students. Indeed, in interviews for this research, Wajin students did not raise any concerns with the quota system, on the contrary, some spoke reflexively and at times very movingly about their acknowledged ignorance of Ainu life and history and how this motivated them to explore the Urespa program; some expressed their deep curiosity about Ainu culture as their reason for joining; then others simply talked about not wanting to miss out on the unique opportunity of learning Ainu culture alongside Ainu students in a university setting. Further, Honda argued that securing an Ainu quota system was not about providing welfare assistance to a vulnerable population, but rather a vital strategy for ensuring Ainu participation in the venture. The overarching aim of Urespa was about creating a new kind of practical, multiethnic community training model that would benefit all students and wider society in the long term (Honda 2013, 129; Honda 2016).

The terms of the scholarship are, in fact, quite modest. They cover the tuition for the duration of the student's degree (that is, an annual fee of ¥770,000 [approx. US\$6,950]), and the Sapporo University mandatory entry fee of ¥200,000 (approx. US\$1,800) (Honda 2013, 128). To qualify for this scholarship, a student must identify as Ainu by meeting one of the two following criteria: (1) be recognized as an Ainu

person either by the Ainu Association of Hokkaido (the major Ainu organization in Japan) or by a locally established Ainu cultural organization (of which there are many in cities and villages across Hokkaido and in the capital region of Tokyo); or (2) be recognized as Ainu in the national family registration system (Okada Yuki, personal communication, 2018). Ainu-identified students must also meet a high-school grade standard; if this standard is not met, then an eligible student is asked to write an essay stating their motivation to join Urespa and their future goals (Honda 2016). To retain their scholarship status, students are expected to maintain a good level of study of Ainu-related subjects and to attend all Urespa activities.

The Urespa model's second principle is its "company system." This invites private companies and individuals to become "Urespa company members" of the club via payment of a membership fee. This system encourages company representatives to participate in Urespa activities, meet students face to face, and provide opportunities for mutual learning.<sup>9</sup> As most Ainu report that they are not able to make reference to their heritage for fear of discrimination when they are looking for employment, Honda has spoken of this "company system" as an important initiative (Honda 2013, 130).

The final principle of Urespa is the movement itself. This refers to the broad intention to help create a bi-cultural environment in which not only Ainu, but anyone who is interested in Ainu culture is encouraged to participate in club activities. It also aims to have the students share their experiences with the general public in settings outside the university environment (Honda 2013, 128). A main example of this is the Urespa Festa, an annual theatrical production and a capstone event of the

student's academic year that the Urespa group performs in front of a public audience.

As a non-profit organization, the club holds monthly meetings and an annual assembly where the organizers report on ongoing activities and the financial status of the club. In terms of its social and academic operations, Urespa is a co-operative, meaning that regardless of ethnic affiliation, students are expected to take full responsibility for the planning and arrangement of all group activities by working together. As Uzawa witnessed over the course of her fieldwork with the Urespa club, this responsibility is taken seriously by all students. In spite of or perhaps because of this dynamic, the peer-driven expectations of such work can often be the source of intra-group tensions. If such problems do arise, then students are ultimately left to resolve them themselves. The kind of work that students do as part of Urespa includes the arrangement of twice-weekly study groups with a focus on Ainu history, language, art, storytelling, songs, dance, or any other related topics that students think relevant.<sup>10</sup> Students are also expected to take responsibility for a range of other group functions or "sub-committee" work. These include updating the Urespa website and related social media profiles; organizing an annual Urespa publication; daily cleaning of the Urespa office space; fulfilment of public relations and the invitation of guest lecturers to speak to the group; and the holding of a monthly general meeting to update each other on the work of the sub-committees and to discuss the challenges individuals may be facing within the club. Additionally, there is a half-hour weekly timeslot dedicated to Ainu performance, often in preparation for any upcoming public performances or for the annual Urespa Festa.

### **Growing within, growing together: individual reflections on the urespa club**

The emphasis that the Urespa project places on group-centric organization and decision-making reflects its foundational commitment to co-learning. Indeed, it can be characterized as a profoundly collaborative project in as much as it realizes a process in which individuals negotiate their differences and “grow together” (to use the language of Urespa) to redefine themselves as a group. However, to move beyond this rather superficial analysis, the point we want to make and develop below is that when listening to the Urespa participants discuss their own experiences, we realize that Urespa only works at a group level because of the work of self-reflection that individual participants exercise. Furthermore, this interrogation of difference is experienced differently by Ainu participants. Contrary to how Wajin students process their involvement in the Urespa club, Ainu students are more likely to recast the oppositional self-other (Ainu-Wajin) binary as a processual and existential relation generative of their sense of self – i.e. Ainu but also Wajin. Therefore, while the progressive vision of Urespa challenges the social norms it seeks to change by refusing to put Ainu and Wajin in hierarchical relation to each other, it nevertheless highlights without necessarily helping to resolve the complex interrelation between cosmopolitanism and indigeneity, the transcultural and the traditional that Ainu youth find themselves negotiating on a daily basis.

Below, Uzawa presents brief conversational snapshots of five students, 3 Ainu and 2 Wajin.<sup>11</sup> Attentive to the limitations of space, this conversational style seeks to integrate the voices of the participants with

interpretation of the main points raised in the interviews. We will then use and analyze those points in the subsequent section.

***Taro***<sup>12</sup>

Taro is a young Ainu man around 20 years old who also identifies with his Wajin heritage and upbringing in Hokkaido. Although he is one of the youngest students in the Urespa club, his strong demeanor and personality is often something that other students draw inspiration from, especially when looking to lighten each other's mood or encourage each other after a long day. Taro is enthusiastic about learning and using the Ainu language and takes every chance he can during Urespa classes and events to practice with others. This pride in the language reflects a strong and positive attitude about Ainu culture that he recognizes not all Ainu share: "Maybe it's because I don't have any experience of being discriminated against," he says in an interview, "but I have no inferiority of being Ainu." Yet Taro readily admits the limits of everyday life, saying he knows to be careful about what he says and to whom. He talks about how little people understand the Ainu –in public, he explains, the old, prejudiced stereotypes about the Ainu continue to circulate, "of us living with bears or as hunter-gatherers living in houses made of marsh reeds." But it isn't just in public that he is careful with his words, explaining that even in more intimate social settings such as with friends in the Urespa club, "there are things I find it difficult to say, or choose not to say."

Coming from a family that identifies with its Ainu heritage, Taro is somewhat different from other Ainu students in Urespa. The realities of living in a Wajin society mean that for the majority of Ainu it is quite rare to have the chance to grow up with Ainu culture. That said, and in spite of

the pride he currently expresses, his Urespa experience has been an important learning opportunity for him. Before joining Urespa, he says, he considered himself as much Wajin as Ainu; indeed, his decision to enter Urespa was not so much because of his Ainu identity than his affinity for his father and grandfather's efforts to keep the culture alive. When the time came to think about a university exam, he explains, "I suddenly came to think that Ainu culture may disappear," stating how sad he felt knowing how much his family had done to try to change the situation. He heard about Urespa "as a place for Ainu to come together," so he decided to apply. But as he became more involved in the club, he realized that something started to change within him. The move to the city from his rural Hokkaido community did not really affect him, he says, but when he began his Urespa activities, "my thinking changed a lot." He continues:

Thoughts I had before have changed. I did not think I would ever become someone who inherits Ainu culture..... we have a *Cise* (Ainu house) behind our main house at home, and there are *Cisekor kamuy* (guardians of the house) and several *Sintoko* (treasure containers used for ceremonial purposes). When I went back home this summer, I noticed them for the first time, though they must have been there all these years. There were many *Sintoko* there. My thinking about Ainu has changed; I feel I am on the Ainu side now. (Interview, 2016)

For Taro, the communal design and feel of the Urespa club is something that he likes, finding it "stimulating to study with others...I get envious,

or something triggers me when I see others doing their best.” As for his own ambitions, Taro is not shy to discuss his intention to become “a cultural messenger” who can communicate Ainu affairs to the public at large: “I want Urespa to become a club that impresses people,” he explains, “It would be great if each [student] becomes knowledgeable and influential [in their area].” (Interview, 2016)

### ***Aiko***

Aiko is a Wajin student. She chose to enter Urespa based on studies she had undertaken abroad. Having learned about the politics of nationality and ethnicity on those exchange programs, she began to think more deeply about ethnic diversity within Japan and her ignorance of it. Getting involved in Urespa, she began to appreciate what she describes as the club’s “really rare attempt in today’s society” to relate and collaborate across differences, and Honda’s creation of a special environment where the Ainu and Wajin can learn as equals. “One Urespa student told me,” she says, “that there was no one close by who could transmit Ainu culture to them. I do not have anything traditional in my daily life, so I envied them for that. I wanted them to take care of that kind of connection.”

Aiko takes a proactive approach to her participation in Urespa. She thinks about her lack of knowledge about Ainu culture and connections to local regions as potentially something positive, saying “since I am new to all this, I can look at things differently and more objectively. That is something others [i.e. Ainu] cannot do, coming with ideas that others do not have.” Aiko is honest about her feelings and openly wonders if she herself has an Ainu ancestor based on the long history of the colonization of Hokkaido. Because of Urespa, she expresses her strong feelings for Ainu culture, stating her admiration for “Ainu

[who] are proud of themselves” and how Urespa has influenced her: “taking part in such a process has gradually changed my thoughts and views.” She goes on to say: “I can concentrate more when I wear Ainu robes and *matanpusi*.<sup>13</sup> It straightens me up. It feels different from when I studied another subject. I did not think I would study this so hard. When we [the Urespa club members] all danced together this spring during a yearly Urespa general assembly, it felt different. I thought it is great to dance among both female and male groups. It feels so great. It gives me a sense of being part of something. I think it is a good idea that Urespa students continue learning Ainu dances and songs. Music and dance are important within culture.” (Interview, 2016)

### ***Fugo***

Fugo is an Ainu man from Hokkaido who also identifies with his Wajin heritage. In his interview, he describes how he knew about his Ainu heritage but did not think much about it until high school. A turning point for Fugo was when he heard Kaneko’s hate speech and started to realize its impact. He describes that moment as one of deep reflection: “I felt sad,” he says, “and thought who is going to do something about this if we, who carry Ainu blood, do not? I thought hard about how I can be of help.” So, he decided to enter Urespa. “I do not think I would have entered the Urespa club if it were not for Kaneko’s words.”

Fugo is an Urespa scholarship student. He is now more interested in reading Ainu-related books, and talks about how supportive it feels to have friends with which to share ideas about Ainu culture. Urespa has provided him with an opportunity to learn about his heritage that previously he didn’t have access to. “For some students,” he says, “they



were close to Ainu culture, but for me, everything is fresh and impressive. In general, there are no places [like Urespa] where we can learn the Ainu language and practice culture from people who know about the culture.”

However, when discussing the hate speech episode, Fugo also admits to a lingering sense of anxiety within himself and his parents. This is further complicated by the fact that as a scholarship recipient, he has to publicly identify as Ainu. He confesses that this means he is careful what he says to people in public about his Ainu activities, fearing the kinds of prejudice people might harbor privately about the Ainu. His father’s generation, he says, “was a generation that meant being Ainu was to be discriminated against,” and “my mother has warned me to be careful here in the city because of this, knowing my father’s painful experiences and feelings about the past.” Fugo describes how he deals with such negative judgment by focusing back on his cultural practice. “I try my best not to make any mistakes” he remarks; the sense of solidarity and achievement that Urespa inspires is important for Fugo.

### ***Kazuko***

Kazuko is a young Wajin woman. She readily admits that she had no exposure to Ainu culture or people growing up, so the Urespa experience is completely new for her. Although Kazuko is from Hokkaido, her first experience of learning about the Ainu was Honda’s introductory class in Ainu culture and history. Urespa has been a steep but, on reflection, positive learning curve for her, she says, and it has quickly made her realize how little people in her hometown know about Ainu. This is unfortunate, she says, but she finds hope in the fact that change is occurring. She explains how recently “there have been more stories on

TV about Ainu,” and the fact that her own parents have started to express their interest in Ainu issues shows the positive impact that her participation in the Urespa club can have on others.

When discussing the issue of social difference, Kazuko speaks about it differently than the Ainu students above. She says she does not feel or see any “boundaries” between Ainu and Wajin but, without elaborating, acknowledges that she has found it difficult: “I do not dislike being [in the club], but sometimes it is hard. It takes some time to get used to being there.” That said, she has worked at her Urespa activities and taken her responsibilities seriously. Her role in the Urespa Festa she found particularly challenging, but also rewarding. Without any Ainu language training, she learned to sing songs in Ainu with other female students and also learned some of the theatre performance text in Ainu as well. She appreciates the opportunities that Urespa has provided her: “There is so much that I get to experience for the first time, like the Ainu language, foraging *pekanpe*,<sup>14</sup>, joining Ainu food-making events. It excites me.” At the same time, though, she worries about making mistakes in her cultural practices. This has affected her everyday life: “The amount of time I get to sleep has been reduced. It was extremely challenging to do both Urespa Festa and school activities. I fell asleep in my classes. I do not have much time to myself anymore to do what I like to do.” (Interview, 2016)

### ***Gorou***

Gorou is an Ainu man from eastern Hokkaido, a place that he feels strongly connected to. From the age of three, he participated in an Ainu cultural group in his hometown, learning traditional dance and song. Yet

he finds it difficult to articulate his identity, saying he identifies as both Ainu and Wajin. “I grew up in a Wajin environment,” he says, but “I want to build up my Ainu identity from now on.” Like many high school graduates, Gorou struggled with what he wanted to do after school, but at the university’s Open House he listened to Honda’s personal story and ambition for the Urespa venture and thought it would be good to join the club.

Gorou describes himself as “happy and thankful” for a place such as Urespa. It is a “special place,” he says, where one can go to university and learn Ainu culture at the same time. He greatly appreciates connecting with the Ainu community networks that stretch across Hokkaido. This is something he gets from fieldtrips that the Urespa club goes on, visiting Ainu groups in different regions. What challenges Gorou the most is finding a way to navigate his cultural learning of Ainu culture. Ainu cultural practice is locally situated, meaning that styles of dance, song and crafts differ from one region to another and are all central to the patchwork formation of a “national” sense of Ainu collectivity. As he is proud of where he comes from, it is important for him to be accepted by his community, communicating in his interview his uncertainty “about what people in my hometown would think if I perform dances from different areas. It is confusing for myself, and I worry that I might forget my dances from my hometown.”

### **Urespa and the remaking of Ainu-Wajin relations**

Reflecting on these excerpts of interviews with the students above, but also on other interviews with Urespa participants conducted as part of Uzawa’s doctoral research, it is evident and somewhat inevitable that no

one person provides a definitive description of Urespa. All students openly discuss the contingency of their situations, which necessarily feeds back in to each individual's partial and tentative ability to comprehend the Urespa process. In general, an important feature of these conversations are the interactions and exchanges across ethnic boundaries that individuals describe both in terms of their internal lives and in reference to the activities of the Urespa club. Boundaries around identifications are maintained, of course – i.e. all students reference Ainu as an identity “other” to Wajin; however, the rigid duality of those identities dissolve when people talk about what it is they actually do and how it is they understand their experience of the Urespa process. In Urespa, Ainu and Wajin identities are remade; the openness to difference that the club promotes encourages students to resist reproducing the idea of cultural fixity or naturalized otherness. Instead, we glimpse the emergence of a new conversation about difference animated by the language of connection, possibility and self-creation that is made all the more poignant and immediate for the memories, anxieties and other emotions that break through to the surface as individuals talk. Essentially, the students move our understanding of identity away from notions of property (something that one “has”) to a contingent process of personal discovery and what we term “creative relationality.”

To listen carefully to the participants, we argue that the various forms of personal and social transformation that take place within the Urespa club rely on a process that promotes and, recursively, is shaped by, a *transcultural* form of social encounter. This transcultural encounter is as much about change *within* individuals as it is about change between cultural persons. It challenges the picture of multiculturalism based on the

tolerance of bounded ethnic groups. It does this by being open to the historical contingency of individual circumstances, allowing students the opportunity to explore their own journeys, multiple identifications, and border crossings. Through this lens, we see the Urespa venture itself as transformative of the story of Otherness in Japan. To further explain this, Watson returns to the student interviews and considers – but also critically engages with – three ways that the Urespa club model works through and across difference.

***Challenging the ethnic binary: transculturalism and the internal praxis of culture***

All the students that Uzawa interviewed above spoke about Urespa changing their perspective or understanding in some way. Gorou appreciates the deeper connections he is able to foster with Ainu communities and peers across Hokkaido. Aiko feels empowered. Kazuko senses that her involvement in the club is not only changing her understanding of Ainu life, but her parents' opinion as well. Fugo gains a new sense of pride and self-worth in identifying with his Ainu heritage. Taro's story is particularly intriguing, as he speaks about returning home and seeing things anew and, for the first time, it appears, appreciating the familial and personal significance of the material Ainu culture with which he grew up.

Each participant, in their own way, opens up about the prospect of change in positive terms. This is not to shy away from the anxiety and discomfort that change also brings and which Kazuko speaks to without elaborating on, but there is an evident shift occurring here that Uzawa also sensed during fieldwork. For the Ainu students, anxiety over

identifying publicly as Ainu remains an issue, but, as Fugo puts it, in distinction from his parents' generation, being Ainu today does not automatically equate with being discriminated against. Today there are different ways of making and remaking one's Ainu identity, meaning that for the Ainu students, their ethnic heritage offers a new form of identification that they can engage or disengage with on their own terms (Maher 2005, 88). Indeed, this rationale echoes Taro's decision to pursue the Urespa opportunity based on respect for his father's family commitment to Ainu cultural practice more than his own identification with the ethnic Ainu cause.

However, within the space of Urespa, this value of self-creation also freely allows the Wajin students to navigate across boundaries of Ainu identification, a journey which prompts Aiko to wonder out loud if she has any past Ainu relation and Kazuko to question any boundary between Ainu and Wajin. Inevitably, this is the double-bind of Urespa and other projects that in their own ways privilege the values of inclusion and multiplicity. By moving away from the main issues of economic inequality, social injustice and colonization that the Ainu political movement during the twentieth century had fought hard to demonstrate was the principal context of Ainu-state relations (see Siddle 1996), Urespa's reframing of Ainu-Wajin issues as an encounter between individuals could be interpreted as reducing important structural questions about the reproduction of institutionalized discrimination and social marginalization to questions of "who am I?" Consequently, ideas of Ainu identity that once constituted a pathway to political action now change, and individual identification itself becomes the focal point of political action (cf. Bourne 1999:136 cited in Cho 2013:86).

Is this a fair critique? Exactly what model of change does Urespa aspire to effect? Urespa neither dictates what should happen nor does it advocate an Indigenous rights-based agenda. For Honda herself, the goal of the club has always been grounded in interpersonal relations. Its central ambition is to establish the conditions for Ainu and Wajin youth to interact and generate personal learning through experiences of collaborative practice. Therefore the club employs the language of social change but in reference to pedagogical ideas of possibility rather than any fixed ideology of structural reform. By intervening at the micro-level of social relations Urespa seeks to achieve change by allowing individuals to engage each other as friends and peers. This is a form of *transcultural* exchange that goes beyond passive respect and tolerance of difference to effect a new kind of vocabulary mobilized around concepts of solidarity, togetherness and social hope.

That said, we see in the interviews how the Ainu students comprehend their experience of Otherness differently from the Wajin students. Fugo, Gorou and Taro all speak of how they continually negotiate and position themselves in the interstices between their Ainu and Wajin lives. This emotional labor is couched within the context of Urespa and its rationale to provide both them and the Wajin students with the opportunity to value and explore the complex and situational maneuvers of Ainu life. Still, this gets at the very heart of Urespa's idea to bring students together to transform the static politics of multicultural difference into an innovative strategy of transcultural engagement. In this new language of (non-directed) possibility, Ainu culture becomes a positive form of praxis internal to oneself and others (Willis and Murphy-Shigematsu 2008b, 9).

*Networks over structures*

If we take Urespa as the formation of a kind of “micropublic” (Amin 2002), what kind of model of society is it producing? In the interviews, Gorou speaks about his appreciation for connecting with different Ainu groups across Hokkaido through Urespa. Similarly, Taro speaks about his intention of becoming a “cultural messenger” of Ainu culture out in public and is excited by the capacity of Urespa to generate a cohort of Ainu cultural ambassadors. The opportunities for solidarity between participants that Urespa creates are productive of a new kind of networked setting that attaches positive value on shared knowledge and cultural pride. Indeed, in this spirit, Kazuko and Aiko both describe their commitment to help Ainu students connect with their heritage and each other. Consequently, the stigma historically and publicly attached to Ainu identity is diminished and replaced with new forms of cultural affirmation. Thus, Gorou values Urespa as an opportunity to explore and consciously strengthen his Ainu identity. Fugo, on the other hand, talks about his focus on “not making mistakes” when it comes to cultural practice – an attitude to knowing as formative of a position of authority that helps him to move beyond the sense of inferiority his father and others of his generations experienced.

Drawing on both Uzawa’s extended discussions with Honda and the student comments above, the Urespa model refuses to put Ainu and Wajin in hierarchical relation to each other. Urespa provides a counterpoint (a “safe space”) to the either/or dichotomy of ethnic politics (i.e. Ainu or Wajin) that pervades the essentialization of difference in Japan. Self-creation is emphasized over ascription. Culture, as a static, monolithic entity, is critiqued in practice in favor of plurality and the



possibility of multiple identifications. This is a new image of Japanese society, one no longer based on normative structures fixed by the language of center, power, and vertical hierarchies, but animated by shifting networks that connect and reconnect, inspire and expand (Willis & Murphy-Shigematsu 2008c, 313).

Therefore the kind of micropublic that the Urespa students experience is open and co-operative. The club's structure solidifies new ideas and purposefully refashions the future of inter-ethnic relations in Japan (and with it our understanding of past and present). Most importantly, the edges of individual worlds where conflict and misunderstanding can arise are not framed as sites of friction anymore but regarded as moments for mutual learning and collaboration. Thus when Taro talks about being motivated by watching other (Wajin and Ainu) students do their best, or when Kazuko alludes to the difficulties of getting used to Urespa, or Aiko, as a Wajin student, speaks about what she thinks she can bring to Ainu learning, we are learning about the emphasis that Urespa places on people adjusting to each other, adapting, and re-positioning themselves. All of these reflections foster a sense of growing together within a new context of transcultural praxis. Moreover it emphasizes Urespa's focus on networking and the facilitation of change through connection and the critique it offers of the fixity of identity structures.

### ***Creative relationality and the remaking of difference***

In Urespa, whether it is a dance performance, Ainu language lesson, or throat singing to an old song, the act of learning becomes key to the strengthening of the participants' sense of integrity – of who it is they feel

they are and are comfortable being, in spite of public opinion. For these reasons, we regard Urespa's use of Ainu cultural heritage as a transcultural practice of "creative relationality." As the setting for group activities, Urespa establishes the conditions for the kind of transformative change that remakes Ainu-Wajin relations but without seeking to direct that change. This means that by leaving it up to the judgment and responsibility of the students, the cultural learning that occurs becomes not an end in itself, but rather the mechanism of sharing experiences together in that learning – hence, the meaning of Urespa, "growing together."

Of course and in returning to the critique of individualism mentioned above, to what extent Urespa can scale up and effect difference at a societal level depends on its capacity to link the micro to the macro. Although the interviewees did not reflect on this directly, we propose that the club's use of creative relationality as the primary means of networking within the Urespa group establishes the possibility for broader social change based on changes that individuals experience in the process of their participation.

How does linking individuals to the social work in this context? To talk about personal integrity is apt here, particularly in the way that Calhoun (1995) chooses to talk about integrity as a kind of "standing for something." What Calhoun explains is how she recognizes that people can report feeling transformed in their experiences of self-improvement but, she contends, this sense of personal betterment is a *social*, not an individual virtue. What she means by this is that an individual's sense of achievement or accomplishment is only truly meaningful when one sees oneself as part of an evaluating community. In this regard, the struggles

that all the students express in finding their way through the Urespa experience are significant not because of the attention it draws to them trying to connect with something within themselves (although this is important), but because of how their struggles open up through relations with other participants, family members and society. In other words, the co-learning activities of the Urespa model promote an insurgent and experimental melding of the personal with the social. This affects how the participants, and also the people with whom they interact through public activities and performances such as the annual Urespa Fest, think about society moving forward. It also draws attention back to Honda's insistence in the formation of Urespa to incorporate a "company system" into its structure. Providing students the opportunity to connect with employers in this way is about professional and career development but more than that, it is about fostering long-term relationships with corporate partners in an effort to change the stigma around the (un)employability of Ainu and the prejudiced stereotypes which inform those ideas.

### **Concluding thoughts: restorying Otherness in Japan**

The Urespa club is more than just a university-based curricular activity. In looking at its activities and formation from the point of view of social change and critical pedagogy, it is, we argue, an intervention in the conventional story of Otherness in Japan, a story that for too long has been based on indivisible boundaries between Ainu and Wajin identities. The new story of Otherness that Urespa constructs purposefully moves beyond essentialisms to privilege the personal and heterogeneous complexities of identification in contemporary Japan. In its co-learning activities, Ainu culture is a practice as opposed to a reified object of

intangible heritage and as such it is there to be engaged in together as a form of encounter that promotes the self-examination of roots and routes (Murphy-Shigematsu 2002; Willis and Murphy Shigematsu 2008a).

After all, Urespa is an organized form of social encounter that brings individual students together to work towards crafting an atmosphere of mutual responsibility and creative relationality in which they can navigate and narrate their own personal journeys. At the foundation of Urespa is a model of social inclusion and co-learning that puts a strong emphasis on learning through the act of doing. However, that the act of doing is focused almost exclusively on Ainu cultural practice – without reference to its complex political or historical context of Japanese colonization of Ainu lifeways – is not without its critics. Still, at the same time, and as Urespa demonstrates, change is nevertheless possible and mutually feasible if individuals are open to the often-difficult and deeply personal journey of transformation. So then, does Urespa work? If so, what can it contribute to the future?

In recent years, the value of social encounters in transforming the liberal values of “pluralism” and “diversity” into lived experience has been picked up in important ways by a number of scholars (see Valentine 2008; Wilson 2013). On the one hand, it is generally understood that contact between two strangers can rarely, if ever, be enough to scale up into a wider movement for transformative change beyond those shared moments (Valentine 2008, 332); on the other hand, however, if particular types of space are purposefully mobilized in concert with meaningful forms of interpersonal engagement, then perhaps participants can foster new attachments to social relations and forge new understandings of the historical and political contexts in which social encounters occur. This

can help establish the conditions for broader shifts in attitudes and actions (Mayblin et al. 2015).

Amin (2002), for example, in his work on the potential for intercultural dialogue and action following racialized urban disturbances, articulates an impassioned argument for the utility of “micropublics” in transgressing the normativity of habitual encounters. Amin contends that bringing people from different backgrounds together in a new context for a common activity can productively disrupt individual behaviors by creating new attachments to social relations (2002, 970). Those micropublics, in other words, provide moments of cultural destabilization, “offering individuals,” as he explains, “the chance to break out of fixed relations and fixed notions and, through this, learn to become different through new patterns of social interaction” (2002, 970).

Valentine has taken up a more critical standpoint on the issue by taking to task the assumption that interpersonal contact necessarily translates into respect (2008, 325). In contrast, she seeks to identify what contributes to “meaningful contact”; that is, “contact that actually changes values and translates beyond the specifics of the individual moment and into a more general respect for – rather than merely tolerance of – others” (Valentine 2008, 325). For Valentine, how to bridge the gap between the public and private self to effect transformative change is far from straightforward. Nevertheless, it is, she argues, the crux of the problem.

For Honda Yuko, the Urespa club’s commitment to Ainu cultural practice as a medium for transcultural exchange underscores the social value of putting in place a process for individuals to change their understanding of themselves and others in an effort to “grow together.” In this, Urespa is an interesting case study of the “encounter” for the

emphasis it places on change being as much internal as intersubjective but without fetishizing the (ethnic) boundaries between individuals. If change is the “language of possibility” (Cho 2013) then the new story Urespa tells of Otherness in Japan is one of social hope and a future of mutual co-existence which respects the distinction between Wajin and Ainu but without assuming that either identity represents a fixed or immutable future.

- Conflict of interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests

- Funding

Kanako Uzawa received funding to conduct research featured in this article from UiT the Arctic University of Norway

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1 According to Japanese naming convention, family name is placed first.  
2 Following the precedent set by other authors in Ainu research (e.g. Siddle 1996, lewallen 2016, Watson 2014a), we employ the term Wajin in this article to refer to the ethnic Japanese or non-Ainu in order to clarify the point that having Japanese citizenship does not define one’s ethnicity.  
3 For Urespa, the term Ainu cultural practice refers to a range of performative activities such as dance, craftwork, storytelling and song and to the learning of traditional Ainu knowledge about flora and fauna and other aspects of Ainu ecosystems. Also incorporated into Urespa’s approach to Ainu culture are different levels of Ainu language learning and an introduction to the philosophical and religious aspects informing Ainu life.  
4 Amin (2002) refers to “micropublics” as those ordinary or prosaic spaces of organized group activity, such as sports or music clubs, communal gardens or drama groups that foster cultural exchange and interpersonal transformation.  
5 The Japanese government enacted the new Ainu law on 19 April 2019. The Ainu are henceforth to be legally recognized as an *Indigenous people* in Japan for the first time, with the objective of enabling Ainu people to live with pride and dignity in a

society wherein each individual co-exists in an environment of respect. The prohibition of discrimination against Ainu individuals is also a feature of the law (*The Japan Times*, 19 April 2019; Uzawa 2019).

6 These included the national government's Chief Cabinet Secretary, Suga Yoshihide, and Mayor of Sapporo, Ueda Fumio.

7 According to the Survey of Hokkaido Ainu Living Conditions (2017), there are three main criteria for defining Ainu: 1) individuals who come from families or communities with Ainu bloodlines; 2) those who self-identify as Ainu; 3) non-Ainu who have married into or been adopted into an Ainu family. However, individuals who may have familial or communal connections with Ainu bloodlines but who do not identify as Ainu are not counted as Ainu in the survey (Department of Hokkaido Environment and Lifestyle, 2017, p.1).

8 For more information on these "action programs," see <https://www.sapporo-u.ac.jp/departement/action-program.html> (last accessed 15 April 2019)

9 As of 2018 there are 30 Urespa company members (Sapporo University Urespa Club 2018).

10 While Urespa provides a focus on cultural practice it is important to recognize the existence of Ainu cultural groups and the role that they have played in the Ainu cultural revitalization movement. In Hokkaido, there are currently 18 regional cultural preservation and performance groups in operation (see the website of the Agency for Cultural Affairs & National Institute of Informatics) and although each group defines its own membership criteria, activities are generally open to both Ainu and Wajin individuals. There are also other initiatives in Hokkaido such as the *bunka ninaite* (Culture Bearer) program led by curators at the Ainu Museum in Shiraoi. This is a three-year program for Ainu youth who want to learn about Ainu culture and develop their Ainu language skills (see lewallen 2016, 214). Finally, there is a vibrant Ainu cultural movement in the capital region with at least four separate groups that meet and put on public performances (also see Watson 2014a).

11 All names attached to interviewees are pseudonyms.

12 Uzawa has made some adjustments to this empirical data to protect the student's identity.

13 This is the Ainu name for a decorative headband.

14 This means 'water chestnuts' in the Ainu language.

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This is an Accepted Manuscript of an article published by Taylor & Francis  
in *Asian Anthropology* on 9 January 2020, available online at  
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/1683478X.2019.1699599>

## Article 3

# What does Ainu cultural revitalisation mean to Ainu and Wajin youth in the 21st century? Case study of Urespa as a place to learn Ainu culture in the city of Sapporo, Japan

Kanako Uzawa

AlterNative  
2019, Vol. 15(2) 168–179  
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sagepub.com/journals-permissions  
DOI: 10.1177/1177180119846665  
journals.sagepub.com/home/aln  


## Abstract

This article illustrates living experiences of Ainu cultural practices by the students of Urespa. Urespa is a self-motivated, non-profit social initiative or association founded in 2010 by Professor Honda Yuko at Sapporo University with the aim of bringing Ainu and Wajin students together in a curriculum-based environment to co-learn the Ainu language and Ainu cultural practices. In the Ainu language, *urespa* means “growing together”. The article draws on the author’s fieldwork with Urespa in Sapporo, Hokkaido, in 2016 in focusing on a new way of practising Ainu culture in an urban setting in the 21st century. The article, therefore, focuses on Ainu cultural revitalisation, everyday cultural practices, and on how it plays out within Urespa in a context of decolonisation and self-determination in Japan.

## Keywords

Ainu cultural revitalisation, decolonisation, self-determination, cultural sovereignty, Ainu urban study

## Introduction

Time goes by, and everybody has his or her own way of living. I do not like to be stuck in the past. Learning culture is important, but I do not like to be captured by it (interview, 2016). Shingo shares what learning Ainu culture means to him. Shingo, around 20 years old, is an Ainu male student with Wajin<sup>1</sup> heritage and upbringing<sup>2</sup> from Hokkaido. He signals the importance of crafting the self in a process of learning. In this article, I look into a currently evolving way of practising and revitalising Ainu culture—how Ainu culture is practised daily and interpreted by both Ainu and Wajin youth. The key concepts are, therefore, Ainu cultural revitalisation, everyday cultural practices, decolonisation, and self-determination. Another important term used in this article is *indigenous methodology*, where I bring in my perspectives as an Ainu researcher with Wajin heritage and upbringing in trying to understand what the Ainu cultural revitalisation means in the 21st century for both Ainu and Wajin youth.

Within a Japanese context, Ainu cultural revitalisation is most often connected to cultural *preservation*—keeping what remains—or *restoration*—recovering what has been lost. A legal approach to Ainu culture can be seen, for example, in the *Ainu Cultural Promotion Act* (CPA) in 1997 (for more, see Siddle, 2003; Stevens, 2014). Besides the legal framework, there are traditional cultural activities supported by the Ainu Association of Hokkaido<sup>3</sup> in which

18 Ainu Hokkaido-based regional cultural preservation groups gather in each community to participate in monthly cultural practice (Agency for Cultural Affairs & National Institute of Informatics, n.d.). This practice mainly focuses on Ainu traditional dance and song, and membership is generally open to both Ainu and Wajin individuals, although this rule changes from group to group. Outside of Hokkaido (mainly around the capital), there are other Ainu cultural preservation groups that have similar functions; on the whole, these groups focus on Ainu cultural preservation and restoration.

Now, there is a new phenomenon that represents a slightly different way of practising Ainu culture. This is the focus of this article—the Sapporo University Urespa (hereafter Urespa) club. Urespa is a non-profit social initiative or club founded in 2010 by Professor Honda Yuko<sup>4</sup> at Sapporo University (Sapporo University Urespa Club, 2013). In the Ainu language, *urespa* means “growing together”. Uzawa and Watson argue that the campus-based Urespa has an aim

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Department of Social Sciences, UiT the Arctic University of Norway, Norway

### Corresponding author:

Kanako Uzawa, Department of Social Sciences, UiT Arctic University of Norway, Tromsø, Norway.  
Email: kanakouzawa@me.com

of bringing Ainu and Wajin students together in a curriculum-based environment to co-learn the Ainu language and Ainu cultural practices. By doing so, it strengthens a sense of positioning oneself and others and eventually embraces each other's differences (Uzawa & Watson, forthcoming).

Within other indigenous contexts, decolonisation and resurgence are often dealt with separately in academia (for more, see Corntassel, 2012, p. 89). Jeff Corntassel, citing de Silva (2011), claims that "decolonizing praxis comes from moving beyond political awareness and/or symbolic gestures to everyday practices of resurgence" (de Silva, 2011 see Corntassel, 2012, p. 89). Corntassel (2012) states, "this shift means rejecting the performativity of a rights discourse geared towards state affirmation and recognition, and embracing a daily existence conditioned by place-based cultural practices" (p. 89). In this article, I pose the question differently: Is it possible that the Ainu indigenous resurgence can play out within Urespa in a context of decolonisation? This is followed up by two sub-questions: (1) How does Urespa perform Ainu culture? (2) Which tools do Ainu and Wajin youth use to learn and perform Ainu culture in a city? In the "Discussion—*Ukoramkor*" section, I refer to a debate on the relationship between decolonisation and indigenous resurgence by Jeff Corntassel and Cheryl Bryce (2012) and Jeff Corntassel (2012). In addition to the Urespa case, I use an experimental example of cross-cultural pedagogy used for Maori and Pakeha (White) university students in Aotearoa New Zealand introduced by Alison Jones (2001). I use this example to highlight differences more than similarities and why Urespa works while Jones' case did not.

This article is based on my field work in Hokkaido in 2016. This included interviews with Urespa students in Sapporo while I was a visiting researcher at the Researcher Faculty of Media and Communication at Hokkaido University. I divide this article into three sections. First, in a section on methods, I discuss my position as an Ainu researcher with Wajin heritage and upbringing (hereafter Ainu researcher) from an indigenous methodological perspective by using Martin Nakata's (2007) concept of cultural interface and an indigenous perspective by Linda Smith (2012). Second, I provide a brief contemporary history of Hokkaido, followed by Urespa's structure. Finally, I introduce the voices of Urespa students with a focus on Ainu cultural revitalisation and the tools they use in the process. I analyse and reflect upon the students' voices and my own observations as an Ainu researcher by discussing the principal concepts of Ainu cultural revitalisation, everyday cultural practices, cultural interfaces, and decolonisation.

## Positioning and method

In my research, I have chosen indigenous methodology, the participatory research method, and observation. This relates closely to my background as an Ainu with Wajin heritage and upbringing, meaning identifying myself as an Ainu researcher, yet having a mixed heritage and upbringing. Therefore, I position myself in this article as Ainu

researcher. My main reasons in choosing such methods are (1) to bring in absent voices of Ainu people who have been marginalised in the past, both within and outside of academia; (2) to frame the concept of decolonisation to emphasise indigenous perspectives within a Japanese context; and (3) to reflect upon my own position as an Ainu researcher.

My main 21 interviewees are Urespa students, 9 females and 12 males, and 13 of who identify predominately as Ainu. The students' age range is 19–30 years. In order to be able to participate in all Urespa activities, I was asked to become a member. I wrote a long letter explaining my motivation and my own relation to the research. This was the first time that Urespa had accepted a researcher to conduct research about it. This gave me a sense of fear: understanding a power of the research which results in influencing the students one way or another. I have, therefore, attempted to be critical towards my position as an Ainu *researcher*.

When it comes to the importance of bringing in indigenous voices in academia, Linda Smith (2012) writes that "every issue has been approached by indigenous peoples with a view to *rewriting* and *rerighting* our position in history. Indigenous peoples want to tell our own stories, write own versions, in our own ways, for our own purposes" (p. 29). The Ainu share a similar challenge and wish to write their own stories. For this reason, I emphasise the importance of reclaiming and rewriting Ainu living stories and experiences. This, I believe, helps to understand gaps in the field of Ainu research in general. Therefore, my research attempts to fill in the gap between the past and present lives of the Ainu by sharing Ainu living experiences.

In modern Japanese society, a process of identifying oneself as Ainu is highly complex and challenging as most Ainu are married to Wajin; most Ainu, therefore, carry both Ainu and Wajin heritage and culture. As Lewallen (2016) also states, "the vast majority of today's Ainu are descended from at least one and usually more Ainu-Wajin union(s)" (p. 99).

I find Martin Nakata's (2007) term *cultural interface* useful to illustrate the complex social and cultural relation between and within Ainu and Wajin, where one may find their identities and ethnicities in and between with a focus on cross-cultural space. This approach sheds lights on the complexity of the social conditions of Ainu and Wajin in Japan. Furthermore, Bob Pease (2010) uses the term "privileged position" to challenge all scholars to be critical about their own positions, regardless of the identity. In my research, this highlights how to position myself as an Ainu researcher; yet, I am privileged enough to become a researcher since there are very few Ainu who pursue higher education.<sup>5</sup> This leads to another dialogue on cultural interface by Martin Nakata (2007), which focuses on the knowledge systems that contest each other and the spaces they occupy by stating that ". . . things are not clearly black or white, Indigenous or Western." (p. 9). Nakata (2007) continues,

In this space are histories, politics, economics, multiple and interconnected discourses, social practices and knowledge technologies which condition how we all come to look at the world, how we come to know and understand our changing realities in the everyday, and how and what knowledge we operationalise in our daily lives. Much of what we bring to this

is tactic and unspoken knowledge, those assumptions by which we make sense and meaning in our everyday world. (p. 9)

Here, Nakata describes the multi-layered contemporary social space for both indigenous and non-indigenous persons living in and between different identities and realities. This approach helps in understanding the complexities of insider/outsider relations such as my research with Urespa students. Social identities can both overlap and challenge one another: Ainu, Wajin, or both. For example, my great, initial fear before the research began was how I would be received as “a highly educated researcher on Ainu issues”, regardless of my Ainu heritage. Such fear originates from a history of unfair treatment of the Ainu in academic research; many Ainu now seem reluctant to participate in any Ainu-related research. In my case, I determined that history could not hold me back. I would, rather, create my own ground to stand on as an Ainu researcher. For the Urespa students, what seemed to matter was how much I was willing to learn Ainu culture together with them. For this, I treasure all my moments with them and still cherish what we have shared together. What was intriguing throughout the process was that some students surprisingly did not seem to have a reference point to the colonial history of Ainu research. This indicates a lack of Ainu history in the compulsory education system in Japan. This was a moment where I realised they are a new generation trying to craft a new future on their own terms, and that is why now is the time to write a new chapter of Ainu living experiences in the 21st century.

## Context and background

Hokkaido, located in Northern Japan, is the land of Ainu, or *Ainu Mosir* in the Ainu language. The Ainu (*human beings* in the Ainu language) have traditionally lived in a geographic area incorporating the Kurile Islands, southern Sakhalin, Hokkaido, and parts of northern Honshu.<sup>6</sup> Up until 1869, the *Ainu Mosir* had plentiful natural resources and the Ainu carried on a traditional way of living. In 1869, *Ainu Mosir* (previously called *Ezochi*) was renamed Hokkaido (Oguma, 1998, p. 54) by the Meiji government, who took full control of Hokkaido while the central government aimed to rebuild a modern nation state by ending Samurai feudalism. In 1899, the Hokkaido Former Aborigines Protection Act (Siddle, 1999, p. 72) was enacted for assimilation purposes; this was finally replaced in 1997 with the *CPA* entitled in full Law for the Promotion of the Ainu Culture and for the Dissemination and Advocacy for the Traditions of the Ainu and the Ainu Culture (The House of Representatives, 1997).

In 2008, the House of Representatives and the House of Councillors adopted the “Resolution to Recognize the Ainu as an Indigenous People” on 6 June 2018 (Advisory Council for Future Ainu Policy, 2009, p. 1). The resolution, though, does not include recognition of Ainu rights as an indigenous people of Japan following the standard of international law: collective rights and the right to self-determination are not yet recognised in the resolution.

A new bill was proposed to the Diet, the Japanese legislature, in February 2019. “A Resolution for Promoting Measures for the Actualisation of the Ethnic Pride of the Ainu People” (hereafter “new Ainu law”) (Ministry of Land Infrastructure Transport and Tourism, 2019) outlines the core principles of a proposed new law to replace the extant *CPA*. The newspaper *Hokkaido Shimbun* reports the government’s intention to enact the New Ainu Law was enacted in 19 April, 2019<sup>7</sup> on the principles of (1) the establishment of special measures for the Ainu to gather natural resources such as plants and salmon<sup>8</sup> for ceremonial purposes and for use in conveying Ainu culture, and (2) the establishment of a system of financial subsidies for local government regional and industrial development using Ainu culture. To this end, a cross-ministry Headquarters for the Promotion of Ainu Policy is to be established within the Cabinet. The government asserts that the new law recognises the Ainu as an Indigenous people and “prohibits” discrimination against them (see also Uzawa, 2019; Yoshida, 2019).

A close reading of the Resolution, however, neither reveals definition of the term “Indigenous” nor any mention of rights normally associated with collective rights. No concrete details of the involvement of the Ainu in the planning, implementation, or evaluation of the financial subsidies have been included, nor can one find any defined penalties for violations of the discrimination clause. The Resolution thus not only fails to recognise Ainu self-determination but also threatens to bypass direct involvement of the Ainu. Furthermore, legislators have specifically expressed expectations regarding the new law’s role in bolstering Ainu tourism, which, given the exploitative history of Ainu tourism, is a notion that has enraged some Ainu activists (*The Japan Times*, 2019; see also Uzawa, 2019).

Generally speaking, the word *Ainu* often implies an image of northern people living in nature or wilderness, maintaining a traditional way of life in Hokkaido, while in reality in the post-World War II (WWII) era, many Ainu have migrated to urban areas in search of further education and work or sometimes to escape from discrimination (for more, see Uzawa, 2018; Watson, 2014). In 2018, a contemporary Ainu urban life is no different to any Japanese person’s lifestyle—receiving a Japanese education, using the Japanese language as mother tongue, and adopting Western fashions.

The size of the Ainu population is unclear as Japan does not have national census based on ethnicity; Japanese citizenship does not define ethnicity. Who, then, is Ainu, and who is not? Identifying as Ainu carries a high degree of social complexity. Parallel to this, there is still a particular survey conducted by the Hokkaido prefectural government called *Hokkaido Ainu Living Conditions Survey*. This estimates the Ainu population and their living conditions. However, this survey should be viewed with caution because, due to the challenge of identifying Ainu, the population numbers are underestimated. It is also widely known that many Ainu still face discrimination and prejudice, and therefore, they do not wish to reveal their Ainu heritage (for more, see Council for Ainu Policy Promotion, 2016). The *Hokkaido Ainu Living Conditions Survey* has



been conducted every 7 years since 1972 (Advisory Council for Future Ainu Policy, 2009, p. 16). Here, it states that the Ainu population<sup>9</sup> in Hokkaido consists of 13,118 individuals in 5,571 households across 63 municipalities (Department of Hokkaido Environment & Lifestyle, 2017, p. 3).

In terms of Ainu Studies, Yamada Takako describes that from the final years of the Edo era (1603–1868) to the early Meiji period, the Ainu became attractive study subjects for European scholars due to the myth that the Ainu, as people of the Far East, were a Caucasoid population (Yamada, 2003, p. 77). The Ainu also practised the bear festival (*Iomante*), as did prehistoric Europeans, and so were of great interest to Europeans (Yamada, 2003, p. 78). Yamada states that Japanese Ainu studies conducted in Japan have a broad spectrum of different disciplines, ranging across ethnography, anthropology, folklore, archaeology, linguistics, geography, and history (Yamada, 2003, p. 75–76). In the 20th century, a number of studies on the Ainu were conducted; these, however, were mainly dominated by non-Ainu (for more, see Morris-Suzuki, 2014, p. 65), and very few studies consider contemporary Ainu living experiences and livelihoods. Richard Siddle (1999) points out that the Ainu did not have a written language, although it does have an oral literature tradition, which has resulted in almost exclusively Japanese documentary sources on Ainu history for the pre-modern period (p. 67). Siddle (1999) concludes by saying that historians had a limited view of Ainu history while they attempted to expand a wider picture of the Ainu and their history through archaeological and occasionally ethnographical evidence (p. 67). It is only recently that studies highlighting Ainu living experiences began to appear. For example, if one looks exclusively at studies available in English, one finds *Beyond Ainu Studies* (Hudson, Lewallen, & Watson, 2014), a book published recently that compiles different aspects of Ainu history and living experiences of the Ainu in the 21st century. In *The Fabric of Indigeneity*, Ann-Elise Lewallen (2016) explores how Ainu women's clothwork provides both a space for healing from intergenerational trauma and a political vehicle for Ainu activism at home and abroad, even as Ainu women face on-going settler colonialism within Japanese society. In his book *Japan's Ainu Minority in Tokyo*, Mark K. Watson (2014) focuses on Tokyo Ainu in the 21st century. He discusses the complexity of individual and human-centred experiences in and around Tokyo. It offers a rethinking of the production and reproduction of the Ainu culture through a lens of diasporic indigeneity. These perspectives and approaches are highly relevant to the Urespa case, where my research also emphasises urban Ainu living experiences, self-crafting processes, and, moreover, what Ainu cultural revitalisation means within the field of Ainu Studies.

### Urespa structure

How does Urespa represent itself as an alternative way of practising Ainu culture? This goes beyond a one-sided practising of Ainu culture, which focuses more on cultural

restoration and preservation. Urespa practises Ainu culture differently to other Ainu cultural groups. It is the first self-driven non-profit social initiative designed, securing a scholarship for Ainu students; at the same time, it aims for co-learning for both Ainu and Wajin students to educate professional individuals on any Ainu-related subject—from history, dance, songs, storytelling, and so on—to take place at Sapporo University. It aims to create a multicultural social model for both young Wajin and Ainu students through co-learning (Honda, 2013, p. 129). Urespa has been an independent non-governmental organisation since 2013, but maintains an engagement with Sapporo University whereby they rent office space and classroom for their weekly activities.

Urespa is constituted by three components. First and most remarkable is that it provides the first ever university scholarship for Ainu students. Through this scholarship, students become a member of Urespa; they study at the university during the day time and attend Urespa activities after lectures. Urespa scholarship students are expected to take curriculum-based Ainu language and history courses in Sapporo University as well as Urespa evening activities. A second component is called the “Urespa company system”, whereby any private company representatives or individuals are invited to take part in the club's group activities and to lend support by contributing a yearly membership fee. As of 2018, there are 30 Urespa company members (Sapporo University Urespa Club, 2018). Any individuals are also welcome to become a member to join Urespa group activities—a field excursion to a mountain to study Ainu plants, or Ainu embroidery class with an instructor for a day, and so on. This enables students and Urespa members to learn about each other and the club itself. The final component is called “Urespa movement” and aims at creating a multicultural social model in which anyone who is interested is invited into the Ainu culture (see Honda, 2013). Finally, here it is important to mention the uniqueness of Urespa besides being the first ever university scholarship to Ainu students—that the entire operation of Urespa is driven by the students themselves. There are only two people who assist their operations: Okada Yuki, who is an administrator and teacher, and Honda Yuko, who is a representative of the club. The study group held two times a week does not earn students any study points, so it is a fully self-motivated organisation. They have guest speakers from time to time, but in the study group it is the students who perform the role of teacher. This gives both a different group dynamic as there is no power hierarchy and free space for all students to ask questions, in addition to being challenged as teachers.

### Ainu language is fun

My next step is to examine precisely how the Urespa students practise the Ainu cultural revitalisation. Through interviews, it became clear how differently the youths engage with Ainu culture in comparison with my generation and how they wish to craft their own future. The Ainu language plays an important role in their learning. Taro<sup>10</sup> had no particular awareness of Ainu heritage or Ainu culture until he entered the club. He is an Ainu male student with Wajin

heritage and upbringing, about 20 years old, from Hokkaido and one of the youngest students in Urespa. He says that he has no experience of being discriminated against as Ainu before, so the fact that he has an Ainu heritage makes him feel no different to who he feels he is. He is always open to new ideas—for instance, an idea of how to approach the Ainu culture. He often wears fashionable clothes, just like any other university student. He remarks on how he *practises* the Ainu language and what makes him who he is. He says,

I use the Ainu language a lot with Urespa friends. I use *hi* and *hey* in the Ainu language. By using the language by myself, I feel closer to the Ainu language. I notice more mistakes by using it and hope to learn together with other Ainu students. I enjoy learning the Ainu language most. I enjoy it because I can use it right away in my daily life. (Interview, 2016)

Taro truly enjoys learning the Ainu language. Put simply, it is because it is fun for him. It is rewarding to try out new words he has learned with other Urespa students, from whom he gets an immediate response. This makes the language part of his everyday life.

Takako is a Wajin female student from Hokkaido who often stands quietly at the corner of the room, but observes her surroundings carefully. Her eyes are full of curiosity and she is hungry to learn something new. The impression of her changes when she speaks, one cannot help but be impressed with how she represents herself with her clear voice and opinion, though she only entered the university not so long ago. She is fond of Ainu oral literature and talks enthusiastically about how she is learning the Ainu language and her impression of Urespa:

How do I feel expressing myself as Wajin? I think there is something that the Wajin can do as Wajin. I see the importance of inheriting Ainu culture, and I want to stand by their side as a supporter. What makes me who I am? I liked Ainu oral literature when I was in junior and high school. It surprised me when I entered Urespa! It made me feel who I am to be able to read such literatures, and talk about it with Urespa friends. It makes me happy. As an environment and friends, it is fresh. When and how do I speak Ainu language? I use the Ainu language for fun, and want to use Ainu words. English does not go beyond the textbook, but we have an environment (Urespa) where we can use the Ainu language fully for our daily communication. (Interview, 2016)

Takako seems to be overwhelmed with joy to be able to read, learn, and even get to recite Ainu oral literature at Urespa and to use it right away. In the Japanese education system, English is a compulsory part of the curriculum, although very few are able to speak and write English upon graduation; there is not much place to practice it in everyday life. On the other hand, Ainu in the environment at Urespa has become a language of daily use despite the fact that it is not yet part of the compulsory curriculum. For Takako, to practise the Ainu language is to have fun.

Shingo is an Ainu male student with Wajin heritage and upbringing. He shares his experience of learning the Ainu language. He says,

I am Ainu, but more consider myself as Wajin. I did not study anything about the Ainu before, and had a negative image towards Ainu. I did not want to tell my friends about Ainu either. Now, as I study Ainu, my feeling about Ainu has changed, and it is encouraging for me to have Urespa friends. . . . Do I use the Ainu language? I use the Ainu language to say I want to go to the toilet. I used it in my everyday conversation. In this way, I feel closer to the language and it is easier to remember. I now have a different impression of the Ainu language than before. Once I attended the Ainu language field camp. I did not understand anything. I was disappointed, but when I got it right, I was happy. That made me want to put more effort into learning the Ainu language. I want to attend the field camp again, and also want to go to the exhibition where the Golden Kamuy (Ainu related manga) is displayed. (Interview, 2016)

He smiles as he speaks, and it is difficult to imagine that once he even had a negative image of the Ainu, especially now that his willingness to learn the Ainu language and culture seems determined. He even says that Ainu dance and Urespa friends make him feel who he is. He was not fond of dancing or speaking in front of people. Now, however, he wants to practise his performance as much as possible.

Another Ainu male student with Wajin heritage and upbringing, Koutaro, is in his mid-20s from Hokkaido. He considers himself as more Ainu than Wajin. He often makes other students laugh with his spontaneous jokes. His sophisticated wit often captures the attention of all the students.

. . . I use the Ainu language at Urespa, and even outside of our language classes. I use it when I joke. I use easy and simple Ainu words. It makes me feel closer to the language . . . becoming a member of Urespa, I have gotten more friends I can talk to and about Ainu. It is a place I can rest and where I belong. (Interview, 2016)

For Koutaro, Urespa has a significant role—a place where he can be himself and enjoy the language and culture. It is a safe place where he can rest his mind and feel at home.

A female Wajin female student with Wajin heritage and upbringing, Kiku, is a little over 20 years old and from Honshu. Kiku shares why she likes Ainu oral literature. She says,

I liked an Ainu history. How? For example, the fact that Ainu do not have letters, and well of course, I found Ainu oral literature so interesting. History is important. I find it strange that the Wajin do not know the fact that the Wajin came to Hokkaido, and invaded Ainu. I have no resistance to studying about the Ainu. (Interview, 2016)

Here, Kiku faces colonial history by trying to make sense of the world she lives in. As she describes here, history is important because it tells the story of what we are and how we live in and with this world. This puts more emphasis on how important it is to produce writing that tells us more about Ainu living experiences.

What Taro, Takako, Shingo, Koutaro, and Kiku have in common is that all of them enjoy learning the culture and

language of Ainu. They have all begun feeling that they are part of the Ainu culture and language, regardless of their ethnicities. The act of practising Ainu language and culture connects them together and strengthens a bond to share and practise Ainu culture. Their daily pro-active learning, in which they self-direct their own education, constitutes the basis of who they are and who they want to become. Having friends whom they can respect mutually strengthens the group dynamic and self-confidence.

The Ainu language is very much alive within Urespa. Most students use Ainu words daily to communicate with each other during lunch and throughout their Urespa activities. What is common among students regarding the usage of the language is that they use the Ainu language simply because it is fun. For example, the most popular word was “osoma”, meaning *defecate* in the Ainu language; as only a few people know this word, it is a discrete expression for going to the toilet. Through the interview with 21 individual students, 80% of respondents stated that they use the Ainu language in their daily lives, mostly with Urespa student friends. Words that are often used are “osoma” for *defecate*, “hemantakusu” for *why*, “iku an ro” for *cheers*, “inunukas(i)” for *miserable*, “arikiki anro” for *trying your best*, and “irankarapte” for *let me greet you*. Most students learned those words through Urespa activities and Urespa friends.

The usage of Ainu language in Urespa is spread in various ways. Their annual theatre production is performed entirely in Ainu language. This requires students to memorise and familiarise themselves with the theme of the play, and by doing so, learning the language according to the script. Otherwise, Ainu language words are used in everyday communication between students. They are used to describe daily activities, to spice things up, and to connect to their identities as well as to the language. Obviously, some students do better than others, but that may be due to the result of family background or interest. Overall, it seems that by adapting how they use the language to suit their contemporary lifestyles, the Ainu language is used as a form of self-acknowledgement between individuals and within the group.

## A guide to practising Ainu culture in the 21st century

So then, what kind of tools do they use to learn and perform the Ainu culture? How do they learn the Ainu language, oral literature, dance, and song when they do not have daily access to Ainu communities? Technology plays a big role in the process of learning. This is perhaps something that Urespa has developed out of necessity: practising Ainu culture in an urban setting. Mobile phones and social media are used for daily communication and information sharing. The Urespa students often share Ainu language texts, songs, and dances by smartphone, as well as brief chats between students through a mobile application widely used in Japan called LINE. This is obviously different from the time when one used to learn more from Ainu elders, but one cannot deny the fact that it is a very useful

tool to share information rapidly, regardless of geographical locations. Since Urespa students attempt to learn dances and songs from different regions, this tool functions very well. YouTube was definitely the most used Internet site for their dance classes. In addition to all these technological devices, students also try to use resources within Urespa to ask whether anyone already knows such songs and dances. In this process of learning, it is worth noting where they put their focus. How to be precise and accurate in their own performances following those technical devices is crucial for students, as this becomes a parameter to measure the quality of their performances. For example, in such videos they discuss how Ainu words are pronounced during dances intensively and how songs are sung. This seems to be an attempt to feel as close as possible to *traditional* Ainu performances, although what is considered as *traditional* is a question of its own. Accuracy seems to be important because students feel they have achieved a certain level of performance where they feel safe and perform for a public audience as a member of Urespa with pride. Representing Urespa means a lot to them. It gives credibility and pride as an Urespa member and a *knower* of Ainu culture. This professionalism strengthens the connectivity and togetherness between the students.

Returning to Taro, his recipe for how to practise Ainu culture is to share it with others. Taro began to speak about what makes him who he is and what matters to him:

... what makes me who I am? I think it is people and friends. There are people who are willing to talk and share even if it is their first encounter. When one has an idea about something, if one's thought is shared with another person, then that allows two persons to think about it together. If these two shared that thought with another person, then all three of them would be able to think about it together. One cannot do anything alone. It does not matter how much knowledge one holds. When the person dies, the knowledge will disappear as well. If only one person holds the knowledge, then it means the knowledge is kept within the person only. So, it is best to share with everybody. Each person has a different colour of clay. If one holds the colour within oneself, that does not do anything. But, if one shares with others, then there will be possibility for making something together. (Interview, 2016)

For him, friends and people mean something more than ethnicity. His statement signals a quest to craft a future with both Ainu and Wajin together. Each single person has their own and unique colour, which can be changed depending on the choices they make. What one has and has maintained within oneself is valuable if one decides to recognise and share them, although some may think that almost everything about Ainu culture has vanished with assimilation. It is especially so with knowledge around Ainu traditional cultural practices and language. The fact is that much knowledge is in fact embedded within oneself. It is just so that one does not recognise it. What makes it different is to have the consciousness of mind to recognise what one has and how valuable it is to oneself and others.

Taro also remarks on the importance of how to perform Ainu culture:

It is not enough to carry Ainu blood. It would be better to send out a message to society while learning something. It is best to gain ability (knowledge) instead of carrying material objects with you, and to share that with others. It does not make sense if one cannot do that. It does not mean that you practise *Kamuynomi* (Ainu traditional ceremony) if you wear Ainu robes. I want people to really see *Kamuynomi* itself. I want people to see it with the spirit of the Ainu, not just as pictures, but as living people. I want people to see and feel what kind of meanings are embedded in *Kamuynomi* and how we feel about it. I want them to want to come back again and to fall in love with what we have in the Ainu culture. (Interview, 2016)

*Kamuynomi* is an Ainu traditional ceremony, held at special occasions such as weddings or when a new house is built. It involves praying to *Kamuy*<sup>11</sup> for one's safety and continued happiness. Taro's feeling towards Ainu culture is growing within himself. He is full of passion and hope for the future. Ainu culture and language are no longer something unfamiliar or unknown to him. He lives in the Ainu culture as he does with the Japanese culture.

## Challenges to Urespa

Urespa is not without its critics. Shingo shares both positive and negative aspects of Urespa:

About Urespa club? It is the club where we decide by ourselves, such as deciding what to study in our weekly study group. Urespa tries out new ideas like events and the Urespa Festa.<sup>12</sup> It is a free space where we can talk together. When I presented my study report, I had fun doing it. I think we learn better when we have fun. That is special and I appreciate that. How do I feel expressing myself as who I am? Ainu respect gods (*kamuy*), but we have our own way of doing it now. Time goes by, and everybody has his or her own way of living. I do not like to be stuck in the past. Learning culture is important, but I do not like to be captured by it . . . what can be challenging in the club is that the whole atmosphere can sometimes turn into darkness. It is difficult to say what I want to say. There are some who do not give their best efforts even though we have this great opportunity to learn . . . it is important to recognize that we carry the name of Urespa, so we should act accordingly. (Interview, 2016)

Shingo is clearly seeking to create his own future by believing that there is fun in learning. Behind all those positive remarks on Urespa, the interview illustrates a reality of the colonial history that all students need to go through as part of their learning. This, in fact, concerns both Ainu and Wajin students. During the interviews, or privately, some Wajin students expressed the indescribable shame, guilt, or pity they feel within themselves because of Japanese colonial history. For example, Mina is a female Wajin student of only around 20 years old from Hokkaido. During the interview, she expressed that she does not want to talk about Japanese history with other Ainu–Wajin students—she is afraid that she may hurt them by talking about it (Interview, 2016). The students feel somehow responsible for what has been done to the Ainu. How can Urespa be helpful or go beyond this? What seems to be helpful is to have a

collective space where differences in culture and ethnicity are embraced and accepted. The variety of cultural activities within the club provide a sense of togetherness and a new pathway into Ainu culture. This is an especially important element of the club since this was initiated only by students themselves, which gives a sense of an achievement. This also breaks commonly shared understandings or stereotypes of who is Ainu and who is Wajin.

Returning to Kiku again, she shares her challenges with the Wajin when she returns home to Honshu and in Urespa. Kiku says,

. . . when I return home in Honshu, people ask me what the Ainu are, as they are not well known in Honshu. I explain that the Ainu are the indigenous people of Japan and they are inheriting their tradition. As part of the process, I am learning about the Ainu in Urespa with students who come from different parts of a country. I have not thought so much about what to do after my graduation, but would like to continue taking part in Urespa activities. How do I feel expressing myself as Wajin? Within Urespa, I wonder where the boundary is between Ainu and Wajin. For example, who can do what in Ainu ceremonies? It is confusing and as an Urespa member, I am not sure how much I can do. I withdraw a bit. The teacher, Honda, told me to be who I am, but I struggled a lot with it. But then, I came to think that I can be who I am by facing something new. The feeling of achievement makes me who I am. Whatever it is, as long as I put all my efforts into it, then, I can be who I am. It does not matter what the result is. I am happy when I overcome difficulties. A good thing about Urespa? I think it is good to have a place to learn about Ainu culture. Besides that, it is good that we can strengthen ourselves. If we were regular university students, we would not have been given the responsibility of being in charge of running the club. Before, I could not talk in front of others, but recently I am able to do that. What is challenging in Urespa is that we do not do more than what we are told to do. We can be better by using our imaginations, and I wish we could express more of who we are. (Interview, 2016)

This highlights a challenging position for non-Ainu students—the Wajin—especially when no one tells them what is expected of Wajin students. Still, Kiku seems to explore her capacities and to find her own pathway as a Wajin Urespa student.

Takako's challenge in getting used to a “new” culture and relationship to people can also be acknowledged. Takako says,

I attend events organised by mainly the Wajin, but I sense Ainu culture is more known now in Hokkaido. I want that to spread to the whole of Japan, and even more to the world with the involvement of the Wajin. What was the most influential experience in Urespa and why? What made me impressed was that Ainu people have a deep brotherhood type of relationship among themselves, and I envy that. As a Wajin person, I do not have such a culture. It is impressive to have such ancestral connection and environment. What about challenges? What I feel difficult as Urespa student is that it is difficult to enter the strongly family-based Ainu community in general (many of them are related to each other). Also, I feel a gap in Ainu dance since I do not have any experience of it. (Interview, 2016)

Even though Urespa is designed as an open learning space for both Ainu and Wajin students, they still struggle to find their own positions in the club. However, this cultural boundary is perhaps something that each student should acknowledge and strive to find a way that works for both Ainu and Wajin students.

### **Comparative side view—cross-cultural pedagogy in Aotearoa New Zealand**

In the following comparative discussion, I would like to bring in a comparison between the Urespa case and the cross-cultural case study in Aotearoa New Zealand. This is in order to position and allow Urespa to be compared to a different indigenous context. Despite the fact that Maori share quite different cultural, social, and political conditions to the Ainu in Japan, both cases share, to some extent, similarities and differences. Just to give a general context, the Maori population is much greater than that of the Ainu—15% of the New Zealand population—and the Maori language is one of the official languages of the country (Jones, 2001, p. 280), while the Ainu language is not yet one of the official languages of Japan, and it was only in 2016 that one local public school in Nibitani in Hokkaido began, for the first time, teaching Ainu language regularly throughout the school year (Uzawa & Ding-Everson, 2017, p. 307). The Ainu were only recognised as indigenous people of Japan as recently as 2008.

Here, we should pay attention to where both peoples stand in international indigenous politics. The Ainu came into the global movement of indigenous peoples a little later than other indigenous groups in the world. This explains one of reasons why the Ainu is in a different phase of cultural revitalisation when compared to, for example, Maori in Aotearoa New Zealand, where the Maori cultural revitalisation was already taking place in the 1980s. It was only in the later 1980s and early 1990s that Ainu activists—such as the participation of the Hokkaido Ainu Association<sup>13</sup> at the UN WGIP<sup>13</sup> in 1987—joined the global movement (Stevens, 2014, p. 203). Although there has been Ainu cultural and political movements initiated domestically since before the 1980s, the joining of the Ainu as a global indigenous player in international indigenous politics had a great impact on improving their cultural and political conditions domestically.

Urespa was initiated as an experimental social model in which two different ethnicities are brought together with the purpose of learning Ainu culture for co-existence in society. Based on my research findings, Urespa is promising as it gives students more positive outcomes than negative. Here, I would like to bring in the experimental pedagogical case study introduced by Alison Jones (2001) while focusing purely on similarities and differences to Urespa. Jones' article *Cross-cultural Pedagogy and the Passion for Ignorance* from 2001 discusses the psychological positioning of Maori and Pakeha (White) students in a feminist university classroom in Aotearoa New Zealand, where a pedagogical ideal of increasing cross-cultural

knowledge is examined. This deals with the anxieties arising among some Pakeha students when Maori teachers are in a position of authority in the tertiary education classroom, where most students are Pakeha. Jones (2001) describes this as “. . . an interesting and relatively new configuration of race and authority in education . . . ” in Aotearoa New Zealand (p. 280).

This was an experimentally designed course with two teachers—Kuni Jenkins, a Maori academic, and Alison Jones, a Pakeha. They divided students into two ethnic groups: Pakeha students, and Maori as well as Pacific Islands students. This curriculum-based course aimed to understand diversity in line with women's perspectives and experiences, and a portion of the course included all Maori, Pakeha, and Pacific Islander teachers. This strategy was a response to requests from Maori students over many years and was welcomed by the Maori and Pacific Islands students, while the continuous separation made one Pakeha student frustrated as they wished to learn more about Maori and Pacific Islands students face to face, rather than through books (Jones, 2001, p. 281). On the other hand, Jones (2001) also describes that many Pakeha students expressed an active and bitter resistance when Maori and Pacific Islands teachers expressed their cultural identities and interests (p. 281). So, Pakeha students felt excluded, ignored, guilty, and challenged to understand the world of “the cultural other” as Jones (2001) defines it (p. 279). Jones goes on to describe some experiences of the Pakeha, including her own, when encountering the Maori world. She says,

For many Pakeha (and I will include myself here) there is an inevitable and disturbing moment when the Maori teacher speaks. It is a moment of recognition—perhaps unconscious—that some things may be out of one's grasp. It is a fleeting, slippery glimpse (the possibility of) an “unknowable.” (Jones, 2001, p. 283)

These uncomfortable and inevitable feelings, I assume, can be shared among all of us when we all encounter new, unfamiliar people, cultures, and environments, although this particular case is based on the more complex social and political structure of the Maori–Pakeha relationship. It is the same with the Urespa case. As described earlier in the text, the Urespa students Kiku and Takako also share an uncertainty of how to act in relation to Ainu cultural practices and the Ainu community. I will not go into further detail of Jones' analysis here, but what is relevant to the Urespa case is how similarly and differently Urespa students responded to their cross-cultural Urespa environment in my research. First, Urespa is an independent and self-driven organisation, while Jones' case was a curriculum-based course with a teacher. Second, it seems that Jones' case exacerbated a clash between Pakeha students and Maori teachers and students, while Urespa seems to deconstruct the tension between Ainu and Wajin students. However, what is common with both models is that reminders of their colonial history are challenging to face for both indigenous and non-indigenous students. Taking an example from Ainu and Wajin students, my observation is that it

seems to be difficult always to be characterised into fixed image of the Ainu, such as being a victim of colonial history. This may prevent them from crafting their own hopeful future because much of the focus is on a dark history of struggle. The youth need positive, inspirational inputs that make them want to move forward. For non-indigenous students, it appears that any encounter that touches upon colonial history leaves them in darkness, often not knowing how to understand such history and act upon it accordingly. What Pakeha students expressed as guilt or disturbance in the classroom may be shared in the Urespa case too, as in Mina's case mentioned above. This, I assume, is a rather common feeling among non-indigenous people.

What differentiates the Urespa case from Jones' is that in Urespa there are no authoritative teachers involved in their co-learning. This provides more opportunities to explore oneself and a relatively new culture and world and, more importantly, to grow together. It strengthens their self-confidence and capacity to self-manage, in addition to their ability to reflect upon themselves and others. Furthermore, it is also important to remark on the challenges that Urespa students face through cross-cultural learning. That means discussing who "knows" Ainu culture. It has become clear that the power relationship between Ainu–Wajin and Wajin students in Urespa shifts depending on how intimately one knows Ainu culture. This was truly intriguing to witness as this is contrary to the typical Ainu experience in Japanese society, where the Ainu are more than often positioned as an ethnic minority group that needs "cultural adjustment". This, of course, involves a risk of the Ainu ending up doing the same to the Wajin as has been done to the Ainu in the past: imposing what Ainu culture is and how it should be practised, instead of creating what the Ainu and Wajin can do together.

### Discussion—Ukoramkor<sup>14</sup>

Urespa represents many aspects of contemporary indigenous life in a city. It touches upon an intersection between different ethnicities and different ways of learning and performing Ainu culture in the world that we live in. Using electronic devices makes it possible for them to see how dances are performed by locals and to listen to the sound of songs sung by Ainu elders 50 years ago. With new inspiration and the positive energy of the Urespa students, a new life has been given to the Ainu culture.

Based on my findings, Urespa students are emerging to express themselves differently than in the past. This new phenomenon goes beyond Corntassel and Bryce's (2012) description of indigenous resurgence, which focuses more on indigenous community-based resurgence and states that revitalisation is primarily about indigenous peoples ". . . reconnecting with homelands, cultural practices, and communities, and is centered on reclaiming, restoring, and regenerating homeland relationships" (p. 153). Urespa takes a contemporary urban space in a city and upholds an alternative way of practising Ainu cultural revitalisation than what Corntassel and Bryce suggest. Despite this, Urespa activities engage Ainu and Wajin youth with Ainu

culture for self-development and strengthen the foundation of the Ainu cultural revitalisation. The Urespa case study, therefore, illustrates how Urespa as a social model promises a more hopeful social model of co-existence between the Ainu and Wajin in a city. In other words, it signals a possible and alternative way of understanding how to perform Ainu cultural practices, regardless of ethnicities.

The second part of this section follows up the main question: Is it possible that the Ainu indigenous resurgence can play out within Urespa, in a context of decolonisation? In the article "Decolonial goals and pedagogies for Indigenous studies" (Nakata, Nakata, Keech, & Bolt, 2012), the experience of Torres Straits Islanders is used to explain the importance of understanding two contested worlds (western and indigenous) referring to Nakata's argument. It states,

. . . full access to 'knowledge about knowledge' is a critical pre-condition of Islanders' understanding of themselves 'in the world' as they are positioned at the point of convergence between competing systems of thought. For him, 'the Western' is able to be 'made sense of' and is best worked on when its history and its workings are understood. This enables a fuller appreciation of its complex interface with ongoing Indigenous systems of thought and ongoing analysis of colonial experience and the ever-changing face of the ongoing 'Western' knowledge presence. This conceptualisation of the Indigenous contemporary space allows analytical attention to be drawn to the presence of both systems of thought and their history of entanglement and (con)fused practice, all of which conditions the way that contemporary Indigenous lifeworlds can now be understood and brought forward for analysis and innovative engagement and production. (Nakata et al., 2012, p. 126)

There are two points I want to raise from Nakata's description in relation to the Urespa case. One is how Urespa gives an opportunity for Ainu and non-Ainu students to familiarise themselves with Ainu culture by accessing Ainu culture and knowledge fully. This enables students to understand how they are differently positioned in this world. Having this as a basis of the club, Urespa also offers "the indigenous contemporary space", defined by Nakata above, which may disentangle confused practices formed by the colonial history. It opens a better space for the youth to grow into. This, once again, goes beyond Corntassel and Bryce's point emphasising the indigenous community-based resurgence. With these elements together, the Urespa youth are in fact positioned in a freer environment where they can practise Ainu culture and language daily on their own terms. This is cultural sovereignty—a freedom to craft their own future on their own terms, which naturally leads to building a common ground for both Ainu and Wajin to revitalise Ainu culture in Japanese society. Therefore, I assert that this Urespa social model contributes to a decolonisation process that embraces the everyday cultural practices emphasised by Corntassel earlier in this text. Furthermore, another point suggested by Corntassel and Bryce (2012) is the importance of indigenous people not being embodied within the state-centric right discourse (p. 153). Why is this important? In my understanding, it is important to remember and focus on embracing everyday indigenous values and knowledge, or what is left of them,

which enables practitioners to craft the future freely, not to get caught in the struggle of pursuing an affirmation or recognition by nation-states.

Contrary to my analysis of this case, what was intriguing in my observation is that none of the Urespa students spoke about the term “decolonisation”. This sheds lights on the public discourse in Japan, confirming my assumption that a discussion of decolonisation and colonisation or even an understanding of the term “indigenous peoples” is little discussed in the public debate in Japan.

Considering these questions above, I move next to the discussion of what bonds Ainu and Wajin students together in the Ainu cultural revitalisation process outside of Ainu communities. What makes it possible for both Ainu and Wajin students to contribute to the Ainu cultural revitalisation? Based on my findings, some key words are *fun*, *togetherness*, *sharing*, *recognition*, and *practical usage of the culture*. Here, I introduce an analysis conducted by John C. Maher (2005) as a tool to interpret both interview materials with students and my own observations. I use Maher’s analysis as a method to interpret diverse ways of perceiving and practising Ainu culture. Maher talks about how to do ethnicity and culture in cities in his article “Metroethnicity, language, and the principle of cool”. Maher provides a somewhat dynamic approach to cross-cultural environments by using the term *metroethnicity*. He describes it as follows:

‘Metroethnicity’: an exercise in emancipatory politics. It is an individual’s self-assertion on his own terms and that will inevitably challenge the orthodoxy of “language loyalty.” Metroethnicity involves the shift from examining our identity as the site of historic struggle and focusing on what we can achieve as persons . . . (Maher, p. 84)

Maher’s term *metroethnicity* highlights a contemporary indigenous way of living wherein one has more freedom to choose what is most relevant to oneself in that particular period of one’s life. In this sense, the geographical dislocation of the Ainu is not a limitation, but rather an opportunity to reflect oneself by embracing what one possesses in place-based cultural practice. This is self-determination not in a collective sense, but at an individual level. In other words, it is the rights to self-determination in the presence of a majority. Maher further describes how Japan in the 21st century is experiencing “a new-old cultural wave” in which cultural difference is considered *cool* (2005, p. 90). I agree with Maher (2005) as he points out “the problems that minorities face is no longer about difference (we are different); it is about their possible exclusion (we are excluded) from the centre of cultural action” (p. 99). He emphasises here the importance of what is at present available and how one can embrace the differences instead of using them to separate people. Within a Japanese context, this can be an alternative way of dealing with *the differences*. I believe Urespa provides such a space for the youth. Based on my findings with a limited number of students, their experiences vary from being discriminated against heavily in the past because of their Ainu heritage, to having no experiences of discrimination; or from being suspicious

of Ainu culture as a Wajin person, to starting to love the Ainu world. What binds them together is an enjoyment of Ainu culture on their own terms.

Here, I introduce some expression from Tomoko, an Ainu cultural practitioner. For her, to learn to be Ainu was to enjoy herself in the Ainu culture. She shares her cultural learning from one of the elders, Suteno-*fuchi*,<sup>15</sup> and describes how much she enjoyed the teaching and philosophy of learning the Ainu culture (Keira, 1999, p. 379). Tomoko says,

She always told me to fulfill my responsibilities and work as an Ainu woman in a fun manner. I never had the feeling that I was being taught, nor did *fuchi* mean to teach or lecture; rather, she shared with me her stories and her memories. Something, unexplainable through words or logic, took hold in my mind. (Keira, 1999, p. 380)

This important message is at the core of our well-being; to acknowledge *who* we are as indigenous people, by enjoying *what* we are. Even though there are several generations of absent Ainu voices, both in society and in European and Japanese academia, the willingness to learn and express Ainu culture remains within us, even in our contemporary world. If that means including other ethnic groups in the Ainu cultural revitalisation, why not enjoy the Ainu culture together? This, I believe, will eventually strengthen the common ground for both the Ainu and Wajin to achieve common goals in a cross-cultural society.

## Conclusion

Ainu culture is fun. This is something I realised when I was learning Ainu culture with Ainu elders, both Ainu and Wajin friends in my youth in Tokyo. How could I pass this inspiration to the next generation? My contribution here is to write about living experiences of both Ainu and Wajin youth in the contemporary world. To be clear, I do not downplay the importance of discussing the rights-based discourse focusing on, for example, rights to land, nature, and natural recourses; these are obviously an absolute necessity to the well-being of indigenous people. However, what I am suggesting is to allow ourselves to look into a new social model and tool that suits both indigenous and non-indigenous people. Given the general situation of the Ainu, there is a necessity for the Ainu and Wajin to establish a common social ground to stand on and to respect both cultures mutually. This entails embracing the remnants of the Ainu culture for the youth to be able to create a new future, one that allows them to choose their own path.

Urespa is an organic, creative entity in an urban space that provides unique opportunities to (re)establish the foundation that brings positive social changes, not only for Urespa students but for Japanese society as well. It opens up a new possibility to reconnect with the past by revitalising Ainu cultural practices and language at the same time as it creates new future opportunities. It is a place to engage with unspoken questions and doubts about Ainu culture and identity. The creation of one’s

own relationship to Ainu culture strengthens a foundation of a cross-cultural society in which one appreciates each other's individual values and culture and realises that each culture is an asset to society. Moreover, it manifests a possibility to (re)establish or reinforce the foundations of the rights to indigenous self-determination in the presence of majority. The cultural sovereignty reproduced or reframed by the Urespa students challenges a pre-existing state-based and institutionalised social model of how to do Ainu culture. It is not only those who identify themselves as Ainu students who are embracing who they are or what they want to become; Wajin students are discovering a new way of being active members of Japanese society. The effect is mutual and relational, and therefore, we have a future to look forward to together.

### Declaration of conflicting interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

### Funding

The author(s) disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: This research is supported by UiT the Arctic University of Norway.

### Notes

1. I use the term *Wajin* here to describe the non-Ainu ethnic majority since ethnicity is not defined in Japanese citizenship.
2. It refers to those who have a mixed heritage and upbringing of Ainu and Wajin.
3. The most politically involved and largest Ainu organisation in Japan (Ainu Association of Hokkaido, 2018).
4. Japanese naming places family name first.
5. Only 33.3% of Ainu-identified youth continue into further education after high school, a statistic that is significantly lower than the 45.8% for Wajin youth (Department of Hokkaido Environment & Lifestyle, 2017, p. 7).
6. Honshu is the largest of the four major islands which form the Japanese archipelago.
7. The Japan times. (19 April, 2019). Japan enacts law recognizing Ainu as indigenous, but activists say it falls short of U.N. declaration. Retrieved from <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2019/04/19/>
8. Salmon used to be a staple food for the Ainu.
9. Survey participants referred to as Ainu in this survey are those who are recognised as someone inheriting Ainu blood in communities and those who are adopted or married and living as one household. However, those who refuse to identify as Ainu, even though they may have inherited Ainu blood, are not counted as Ainu in this survey. See Department of Hokkaido Environment and Lifestyle, 2017. *The Report of Hokkaido Ainu Living Conditions Survey*. Online: [www.pref.hokkaido.lg.jp/ks/ass/ainu\\_living\\_conditions\\_survey.pdf](http://www.pref.hokkaido.lg.jp/ks/ass/ainu_living_conditions_survey.pdf) (accessed 11 July 2018).
10. All names of students are pseudonymous.
11. Kamuy could be understood as “gods”. The rich and profound spirituality of the Ainu guides their relationship with the phenomenon of the natural world and is the basis for diverse ceremonies which are carried out even to this day.
12. Every year Urespa organises and arranges Urespa Festa, where they produce their own theatre and other events.
13. United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Populations.
14. Ukoramkor means in the Ainu language, “meeting to discuss the differences”.
15. *Fuchi* means *respected female elders*.

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