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## Indigenous Peoples and Spatial Justice. An Interview with Renee LOUIS PUALANI, April 2nd, 2016, San Francisco, AAG annual meeting

Interview conducted by Beatrice Collignon and Irène Hirt, co-editors of *Justice Spatiale/Spatial Justice* issue "Claiming Space to Claim for Justice: the Indigenous People's Geographical Agenda".

[BC presents *Justice Spatiale/Spatial Justice Journal* to Renee Pualani Louis and the origins of the issue on Spatial Justice and Indigenous Peoples]

**JSSJ:** We are interested in how spatial justice is not only spatial justice but is like justice in a broader way. The call for papers was designed to reach academics of course, but also activists. We are interested in having your insights on how spatial justice relates to Indigenous Peoples because of your specific position as a Hawaiian, an activist and an academic, a cartographer who also worked for a government project at one point. Part of the work you did on Hawai'i place names was for Hawaii government right?

**RPL:** Yes, for a little while.

**JSSJ:** We'd like you to talk to us about what drives you in your various engagements with Indigenous Peoples issues, and how does it resonate with this idea of spatial justice and justice in general. And first of all, does it resonate?

We are curious about this, because, for example, I [Irène] asked the Band Council of Mashteuiatsh (Quebec) if we could have an interview together about their land claims in relation to spatial justice and one of them said: "Oh, spatial justice, it doesn't mean anything to us". It seems that it was too abstract. But when you speak about land rights and historical rights, etc, then it does make sense. So, how is it for you?

**RPL:** Well, when I first heard it, I was like: "I don't know anything about spatial justice; I don't know what I can share". And then I read your paper and said: "OK. I think I can come up with a few things"; and then I went to sleep and then next morning I thought: "Ah, OK". Because I could see that what I presented here, at this AAG, fits perfectly with spatial justice<sup>1</sup>. But I didn't think that at all, when I first read about the Journal, I didn't understand it. But thinking further I thought it fits very well with the Chantelle Richmond and Katie Big Canoe article on environmental repossession [Big Canoe and Richmond, 2014].

Actually, I am not too on board with the concept of repossession because it means ownership, which is a completely different understanding of the relationships to the land than the one we have been comfortable with before colonial peoples came in, with their processes. I like the idea of reconnection better. Though for some people, it is not a reconnection, it is a continued connection. But more of us have endured longer terms of colonial peoples' being in our homelands transforming them into their lands and their landscapes, so it appears we have fewer connections. So in those cases, it would be reconnections. I like the term reconnection also because there is a lot of people in cities that I think are very capable of connecting.

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<sup>1</sup> "Kapu Aloha: A (K)New Kanaka Hawai'i practice reinvisioned", March 30 2016, San Francisco: AAG Annual Meeting.

I don't think it matters if you are in the city. In your Call for papers you mention that there are native peoples that don't have places because the cities have taken over these places. Well, what if we thought of these cities as only the last layer on top of others and that our connections have not been erased just covered. You know, like this idea of body transparencies in a medical book. Actually I got this idea from you originally Beatrice, you know, what you said about Inuit place names carrying different layers of information and meanings on top of each other, which is sort of what GIS is. So, what if, this layer of the city is on top but really our responsibilities to care for the land where our people lived on has never been taken away, it is still there. And what would happen if urban Indigenous came together and recognized: "OK, so San Francisco, the city, is here but this is really Ohlone territory. As we learned in Corina Gould's talk [here at the AAG]<sup>2</sup>, she said, "The city grew up around me, but this is still my place". What if more urban Indigenous did that, so they are not disenfranchised? Those people who are now considered Urban-Indian on the US continent, could still claim their landscapes. It doesn't have to be a claiming of ownership, but a claim in responsibility. So the urban Indigenous, who are in their territories, can take responsibility within the city, and take care of themselves and their land. OK, it is paved over. But you can still take care of it, somehow. And may be, through your actions, you can inspire others that are not necessarily native to that land, but they are there, so they should care for it too. I'd like to see that shift in knowing and doing.

I would love to be able to say that, you know, we can be in control of our lands again. I would love for that to happen. That's in my heart and it will always be in my mind when I envision things. But I also understand the practical layer, that upper layer that's there and that we have to navigate through.

And why should we need somebody else to tell us that we have the right to care for our lands? I mean, as long as we are not hurting somebody else, and we are not breaking any fair implied law, why can't we do something to heal ourselves by caring for our lands? We can assert our Indigenous form of justice. Which isn't the same as the legal thing. It's about taking our philosophical understanding, which is biocentric, not anthropocentric. So it is not all about doing everything for man, it is about considering all processes important. All animals, all... whatever is in the world is important. And considering that they are all intelligent. I am talking about the natural beings, like the birds. So what if we consider them intelligent beings? Sure, they may not be thinking, conscious beings that humans have put themselves into the hierarchical position of saying what intelligence is, but they have some kind of responsibility. Birds carry seeds. They poop and something grows, so they are important to life.

And so, what if we shifted our thinking into: "We are not only gonna see just the buildings and just the bad stuff of the city. We are not gonna say it doesn't exist, but we are gonna start doing something and sorting our own spatial justice in the places where we are living". I am saying this because we are here, sitting in the middle of a city, but I think the people who are not in the city, who are on their lands, are in the same kind of situation. May be they think that their hands are tied because they say: "I can't go fishing unless I can afford a permit". Well, find another way to nurture the practices that provide for your extended family in the way that you know all "your people" appreciate it. And I don't mean just the human peoples. I mean the water peoples, the fish peoples, the tree peoples, all of these other peoples that we recognize as intelligent beings.

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<sup>2</sup> "A Place to Belong: Creating an Urban, Indian, Women-Led Land Trust in the San Francisco Bay Area", March 31st 2016, San Francisco: AAG Annual Meeting

So for me, when I say spatial justice, it is not just for just the human Indigenous peoples. Because their philosophy is biocentric, Native people have a tendency to take care of everything else too. And that's Indigenous spatial justice. Native people see not just the value but the critical need of all those things to live well, in order for human peoples to be healthy. Sustainability to a Native person isn't about how much food can I grow so that I can feed more people. It is about how do I grow the food so that this place where I am growing it in, will continue to feed me. So there is just a different kind of thinking about justice, about spatial justice. And about how they [Indigenous peoples] occupy that space. And what they are willing to fight for. So often, times, like those rallies like the ones I was talking about in my presentation on Maunakea<sup>3</sup>, it is not about the people. It's really about that place and the meaning that place has for our various cultural practices. And Maunakea being the home of the *akua*, it is a very special place.

*Akua*. *Akua*, many times, gets mistranslated as "God", because that is the framework they [Europeans and later Americans] came with when they came into our lands, and that is what they understood: "oh, *Akua*? OK, that's God". Unfortunately, they wrote it down and it became that meaning forever. Which is OK, that is one version, but we have a different one. So for us *akua* is anything that is a life giving process. Any element in nature, and we consider them; because they are intelligent beings, they have responsibilities, the natural elements and their processes, like the rain and the hydrologic cycle, right? And we give them familiar names because we can remember them in stories. And people think of stories as: "oh, yeah, stories, that is not really a good data collection". But you know what? It is really good. It is our compact, mobile knowledge device. It is our device, which has all that information in it. And our language is so metaphoric that we can contextualize the stories and pull out the knowledge they contain, and the wisdom. Well, not anyone; but a specific Master who can engage with those types of knowledge and can share it with the people according to the contexts that it needs to be shared in.

So up in Maunakea, we can engage with all these different entities that have different responsibilities. And we know about them because of our stories. For example, through our stories we have a scientific understanding of the movement of the sun, and we have a scientific understanding of the movements of the stars; and you can see both of them on Maunakea. Those things, we have recognized, are important to the way plants grow, the way the tide moves, the way the fish comes in, when the fish spawn, when the flowers grow, etc., So we make connections to that. And we know these things, so we honor them. And when you go to a place like Maunakea that has all of these elements, and you can witness these processes, that allows you the opportunity to be intimate and to communicate with those entities. And so when somebody is going to change the purpose of that place that is the pinnacle of sacredness – and sacred is not merely a religious connection – it hurts! On Maunakea, they have put a number of telescopes on it, and not just one of these big things, it's 13 of them!<sup>4</sup> And now there is this project of building yet another telescope, the biggest of all. Thirty meters! Eighteen stories high, with just as many stories boring down into the mountain. It hurts!. And we hurt because we feel

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<sup>3</sup> Dormant volcano on Hawai'i island.

<sup>4</sup> *eds.* Introductory information about Mauna Kea site as provided from astronomers' perspective [www.ifa.hawaii.edu/mko](http://www.ifa.hawaii.edu/mko) may be compared to the perspective of Hawaiian people involved in the protection of the mountain [www.protectmaunakea.org](http://www.protectmaunakea.org)

the land is telling us: "don't let this happen!" A so that's what these young people, and the people who became the litigants, who are so emotionally invested, and now legally fight this battle. The young people that have stood up for this cause, they have not only invested themselves; they are now embodying and resonating what I believe the mountain is telling them to do. And so, that is their way of accessing spatial justice.

And the people who have the leadership of this particular project are amazing leaders. They not doing it for themselves at all; they do it because they have been called to do it. And to me that makes it exemplary of what I think about what spatial justice is, this indigenous concept of spatial justice. It is not just about the people. It is about the place, and like you have mentioned earlier about how the land is so important, it is about all the reasons why the land is important, and it kind of reminds me about Jay Johnson and Soren Larsen's new article coming out on the agency of place (Larsen and Johnson, 2016). How they frame it that in many cosmogonies, including some Hawai'i cosmogonies, place is born before the animals and before people, so they are the elder siblings. So places communicate with us. And that's how certain places are able to ask us to come together making it a place of contention.

**JSSJ:** Well, thank you! The way you frame this idea that spatial justice is not necessarily for the people, but for places, that is very interesting. It opens up a totally different perspective from the one we had in mind when we wrote the Call for papers. And if you can obtain spatial justice, there, for those places, in a way you're obtaining some kind of justice for yourself too. Because getting justice for the places it is a way of healing the harm that has been done over a long period of time.

**RPL:** Yes. And the fact of taking control, of doing that. It's not just the knowing it, but the doing it.

**JSSJ:** And do you think the Indigenous concept of justice can it meet with, or have dialogue with, the Western idea of justice and its legal system of justice? Indigenous peoples have been struggling with that for a long time. They've experienced it in North America and elsewhere: in order to may-be get some form of justice, you have to go through that legal system and its rules. And it actually makes you do things, or claim things, in a way that sometimes is just totally contrary to what you feel and know about how things should be done, what should be claimed, and how it should be framed. So, how do you see that?

**RPL:** How can that dialogue happen? That is a good question. Well, first of all, it's gonna be different in every place. Because every place has a different legal system and a distinct colonial takeover. But the general plan as I can see it, is if you don't have allies, you're gonna have to grow your own lawyers. Native peoples have been forgotten in many places, and in those places where they are heard, that is because someone is rallying about something that is not seen in a good light also by non-Natives. But we [Native peoples] are usually in it for the long haul. Growing our own lawyers, growing our own scientists, growing our own marine biologists, growing our own astronomers,... We have to have somebody that's an ally in the system, who can work in the system for us. We need to be tricksters. We have to because they are Master Tricksters [referring to Western lawyers]. So we need to have our own, we need to be tricksters too. We need to use the system that they have set up to our own advantage. And it is possible. We can do it. It's a slow process and a long strategic plan, and something that you pass on to your next generation, because it's not gonna be just you finishing it, it may be your grandchildren finishing it. And it's gonna be different in every place, but the only way it's gonna work is if you have someone that is on the inside fighting for you.

*Post-scriptum*, a few months after this interview: I would like to add that we cannot have a dialogue when the people with whom we speak frame the encounter as evidence of their humanitarian natures. Sitting in dialogue is as much about listening to the condition or circumstance from the perspective of those with whom you are in dialogue as it is about sharing your own perspectives. It is not about patting yourself on the back for going through an ordeal or explaining your plans for places where we have connections and responsibilities. Sincere dialogues need to happen in more places than courtrooms or other legal venues. They need to happen in our communities with our neighbors. That means academic communities as well.

**JSSJ:** So, you working as a cartographer, it is part of that strategic plan of growing your own specialists in every field, right?

**RPL:** Yes. That's the idea. Like in my book where I define Kanaka Hawai'i cartography – hopefully it will be coming out in Spring 2017 (Louis with Kahele, 2017). In the book, I say "that is the way it works". I define the philosophical underpinning: "this is our ontology, this is our epistemology, this is our methodology, this is our discourse, and this is how we do it". So yeah, I just say: "This is ours". And hope that other peoples will take that and say: "Oh yeah, OK, this is ours too".

**JSSJ :** Also, you could tell us about how you became a cartographer, and a geographer, growing up in Hawai'i. Because we may-be wrong, but we think it is related with your struggles as an Indigenous person, but may-be not.

**RPL:** May-be, may-be not. First of all, I am an only child. And my parents are lower-middle class. I was born on Oahu, and I went to Kamehameha School, that is the School for Hawai'i students, and it is an endowment from Princess Bernice Pauahi Bishop who got a lot of lands from the Kamehameha genealogies, she is Kamehameha herself. The lands generate a lot of income, and a good part of the private school tuition is supplemented by the lands. So tuition is a lot more reasonable for students like me. So I got in, being that I am part Hawaiian. I am mostly Portuguese, from the Azores and the Madera Islands, I am a bit Puerto Rican, I have a little of Tahitian, a little Japanese: so I am truly an Island girl, mostly a tropical island girl. But I do have all of these others heritages. Part of being Kanaka Hawai'i is we honor all our genealogies.

So, I got to Kamehameha School, and that was a really good start for me, a very good opportunity, there are a lot of opportunities there for Hawaiian students. And, I went into engineering because I am good at math. But I failed. So I had to go into the workforce. By then I knew a little bit of computer A/T design, I knew AutoCAD... and to make a long story short, I was an efficient worker but I couldn't get very far because I didn't have the degree. So I said: "OK, I am going back to school". And while I was there, I also took a Hawaiian studies course. And in this Hawaiian studies course, I really blossomed; I really found something that I connected with. It was one of those very simple lessons. One of the teachers there would say: "Being born Hawaiian means you are born with responsibility". So I sort of realized what that meant for me in taking that course. And I said: "OK. I will take more of these courses".

Eventually I got a summer internship at the Council for Energy Resource Tribes, in Denver, on a AIA grant, an American Indian Association grant. I got in because they had AutoCAD and they needed somebody to help other workers learn AutoCAD. But the USGS is also in Denver. And so I had a tour of the USGS and there I learned about this thing called GIS. And I thought: "Oh this is the next step up from AutoCAD". And so that's where I got the bug about GIS. And I thought: "I could map all of the ceded lands, with this! OK, that's good." And I came back to Hawai'i and decided to go into geography. And I found my home. That was where I belonged. I just knew it.

It felt right. All the classes were easy. I mean, except for physical geography. Hawaiian studies brought me into the cultural part, and geography allowed me to bring in natural skills in understanding computer things. And I wanted to do a project on ceded lands.

**JSSJ:** Ceded lands?

**RPL:** Ceded lands. [Crown and Government lands of the Kingdom of Hawai'i that were confiscated by the Provisional Government and the Republic of Hawai'i. They were "ceded" by the Republic of Hawai'i in 1898 to the United States by the Joint Resolution of annexation. In 1959, when Hawai'i became a State of the United States of America, the US Government gave some of the lands back as a public trust, which was handed over in 1978 to the newly created Office of Hawaiian Affairs]. I wanted to figure out where all these ceded lands were, so that we can figure out relevant usage fees. First of all, who's there, and should they be paying more? Or are they paying enough? Are we getting what we deserve? But I learned pretty quickly that this was the job for an archivist, somebody who actually understood how to get into the written documents. Because the map is not the legal document, the Statement is the legal document. But I wasn't an archivist. Also, that was a long time ago. ArcView was our GIS software, and it wasn't powerful enough for these ideas. So, I had to ditch the idea of mapping ceded lands. But what I did learn, at the time, was many old maps and documents have place names written in the margins. I decided to look at the different place names on these documents.

I was suddenly finding place names that I could not find in the book *Place names of Hawaii* (Pukui *et alii*, 1974). How was that possible? I was finding these place names on the survey maps, and the survey documents, in the surveyors' notebooks, but I couldn't find them in *Place names of Hawaii*. And that bugged me. Because a lot of times the book lists little anecdotes about what these place names were about, and I got hooked on those stories. I got hooked on the stories and that's just like what you say Beatrice, about Inuit place names: on a map, they are just dots. The map doesn't tell you anything, because it only shows dots, it doesn't tell the stories carried by the names.

So I gave up the ceded land mapping project, but I was hooked on place names. Because I loved the stories. I did a little research and I found out that the Kingdom of Hawai'i also made maps. I wanted to see what these maps looked like as opposed to the current USGS maps. And I found that as time went by, as we get closer to today's age, the words on government maps changed from mostly Hawaiian terms to mostly English terms. For example, the term kahawai was replaced by the term stream. And also, the land-use was changing. So slowly, as time went by, Hawai'i names and Hawai'i words, and Hawai'i understanding of place, were changing. And again, I think that this is just a different layer that was laid on top of the places. So that idea of love for those stories of the place-names carried through my dissertation. But I had no idea where that was gonna lead. But at one point, my adviser told me: "sleep on it". And that was the best advice. I took a couple of weeks, I slept on it, and an idea came to me. For us, place-names are more symbolic, and the map is the landscape. And the name is that symbol on a map. And that's when I realized that Hawai'i place names were storied symbols in a Hawai'i performance cartography; because we walk the land. We don't look necessarily down on it, like a bird's eye view, though we can make use of those maps, but we know our place, because we walk it, so we perform our cartography. That aspect is what I concentrate on, in my forthcoming book (Louis,

2017). And this cartography spans across disciplines: navigation, oral composition, and hula<sup>5</sup>, all are practices that have cartographic processes within them. Cartographic practice and cartographic process are different things, I believe.

I don't do it because I wanna be famous, you know, that's the furthest thing in my mind. I do it because I see this really big picture and an opportunity for a better life, for a better way of living, a healthier way. Not just for me, but for a lot of people. And I know that I am not the only one, I am just one of many people who get the opportunity to may be reach out to a small segment of the population, and have a positive effect on those people, so that they actually go do something. I like to think of myself as a connector, and as somebody that can help send the fires within other people, and show them how much their work is appreciated, needed, and hope that they can send the fires in other people. And then, we actually are starting to change the way we think. We are not just bogged down by the negative energy or the negative stuff and we are actually helping everybody to move forwards, especially in academia.

Especially in academia. It is a fortress, oh my goodness, don't you think it is a fortress? It is so hard sometimes, it got such hard edges! But there are a lot of good people in it. And there are a lot of people who thought they were doing good when working on Indigenous issues and did things the way they did because they thought it was the right thing to do. And because they did it the way they did it, we are in the places that we are today. Good, bad or otherwise. It doesn't mean that what everything they did was bad, it doesn't mean that it was all wrong, it's what they did or thought, and now we have all evolved as a culture, we are now in a different place. A lot of people, I was one of them, criticized them, saying: "You should have done...", "You know, this is bad..." I was one of them. But then I aged a little. And realized that's not a good thing to do, because you actually make enemies. And the only way to soften the hard fortress of the academy is to mimic them and digest everything that did come before you allowing appropriate parts to nurture learning while letting others dust the back corners of libraries. I don't know how that has anything to do with spatial justice [laughs]. But thank you for letting me tell that story!

**JSSJ:** So when you started being active in academic geography and cartography, there was no indigenous geography?

**RPL:** oh, so you want to know how that happened!

**JSSJ:** Yes, we think this has something to do with justice too.

**RPL:** Oh yes, it does. It is a different kind of justice. We occupied space in the academy. Yeah. That is another kind of spatial justice, absolutely. How did that happen? That would have to be because of my counterpart, Jay Johnson. He had got his Masters in Social Work at the University of Kansas and came to Hawai'i to do his PhD in geography, and he took an empty desk in my office and that's what got us started. Every now and again we would have conversations, like people do in their office: "I am writing this article and I am stuck on this, what do you think?" And so, we got to talking and mingling our ideas and stuff, and a good friendship began. He liked the kind of attitudes I had about cartography and my asserting the fact that there is a Hawaiian cartography and that we've got to find a common ground. I think this was my first article, just finding some common ground, to find some space together that we can all work [Louis Pualani, 2004]. And together we got launched in the academia; I believe it was back in 2001, at the AAG New York conference.

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<sup>5</sup> eds. Hula is a uniquely *Hawaiian dance* accompanied by chant or song that preserves and perpetuates the stories, traditions and culture of Hawai'i

That's when the American Indians Specialty Group changed its name to the Indigenous Peoples Specialty Group. So Jay and I decided to join their business meeting. Doug Hermann was the secretary of the group and he said: "I nominate Renee for a Board position." And I said: "Sure!" [...] But the IPSG didn't look like us. It looked like other people doing studies on us. So we decided to bring in our people. And at first, we were on one side and the others on the other side. It was like being at marriage where, you know; each family stays on one side and doesn't mingle. Eventually, we ended up chasing away people. Because they were facing the people they were studying and it became difficult for them to maintain their kind of academic scholarship with us questioning them. They left and went to like, the Ethnic Studies Specialty Group. That was probably the time when I was not a nice person. I was openly critical and mean in the way I presented my arguments. I was angry. I was really angry. And I may have hurt some peoples' egos and make them feel that their reputation was at stake, and I have learned from that process.

Anyway, we actually started with the specialty group and Indigenous geography happened as a result of breathing life into the specialty group itself. And it was amazing. We went through two or three years with only thirty people in the specialty group, and we ended up within five years with three hundred people. Mainly because it wasn't only for academics. We started thinking about what we needed. At that time we were just students and we just wanted a good mentor. We had good mentors in Hawai'i, but elsewhere it was different. A lot of [indigenous] students were not having a mentorship in their own universities. The IPSG was their savior. Looking back, I knew it then, we needed warriors in various places. Much like I was saying about those people who want to get that legal part, they need to grow their own lawyer, to grow their own scientist. So we thought: "We need to grow our own academics." "OK, how do we do that?" "Well we have to understand how the Academic system works." "The system rewards you for writing. If you want a job within the University, if we want students to interact with a face that's familiar; we have to put one in there." And that's what we did. We said: ", Ok, what's the topic, what's the hot topic right now? Because Indigenous Peoples are gonna have something to share whatever the hot topic is." And so we did that. And at that time it was cartography. Everybody was talking about cartography. And I said: "Great!" Because that's my area, and I have a lot to say about this. And so, it was GIS, cartography and GIS. So for a few years, we rode that wave. And then, it shifted. It started to get into the more philosophical, the place things, the landscape things. So we rode those waves, and we found journals that would be considered second rate, in the very beginning, that would accept special editions. And then, as those people were able to submit and get jobs, and may be even tenure, we needed to get them permanent job, we had to get them tenured? Now, you have to go for the higher echelon journals. So we went to that, the next stage. We did special editions there. Just to give those people who were doing good work the opportunity to publish in those high rated journals that universities look at as: "OK, you're a good person, you are doing your work, you are getting published at the highest levels."

This is how we did it: we figured out the system, we provided avenues for people to get to where they needed to be, and now we have the infrastructure for the masses, yeah: "Come on, masses of Indigenous Peoples come in, and study in the school." And then we felt flat. Because they, the Indigenous students, didn't want to come, didn't want to study geography. Why? Just a couple of nights ago I said: "Well, that's because they are teaching geography wrong." What I mean is that Native people do not respond to the way that geography is taught, not only because of its colonial heritage but because of its attitude towards the land, its philosophy,



because of the anthropocentric view, where everything here is for man. As opposed to our own ontologies and our biocentric view. So there is a disconnection, a real culture shock when a Native person comes to the university and studies at a place that completely disregards the important things on their homelands. Then it becomes an issue of: "Well, is there an indigenous geography? Is there a way that we look at the world that others don't? And can we frame it so that we are not putting the discipline down but steering its thinking so it evolves?"

And I think that the discipline is evolving. Cartography has changed. It embraced alternative cartographic systems, accepted alternative representations as cartographic. But geography hasn't, yet. It is a larger challenge, you know. I always say it is the Grand-mother discipline, philosophy may be the Grand-father discipline, but geography is the Grand-mother discipline because that's where all the grand-children come together, all of those disciplines that study one particular part of human engagement with earth.

And now, we are hoping to make it happen. Because we've got the infrastructure. We've got Native people in the places, not just in geography. So we need to get the students in. Specifically, in geography. They kind of shy away. They like environmental sciences, you know, they like forestry, they like to be outdoors. So, how do we pull them into geography, how do we get them back to the grand-mother? We are working on those kinds of issues now. How do we give Native students the pathways? And of course, they got to have the desire and the skills to get through it. It's not easy. Being an academic, it's not easy. But you know, it's not easy to be a good hunter either. Or a good fisherman, or a good canoe carver. We may not have many opportunities to pull them into academia, but if we can get them at the tribal college level and show them a little bit of what Indigenous geography is, if we can provide an Indigenous geography type of curriculum for them there, then may-be it will make them better citizens for their own communities. We are kind of working on that now. We are working on figuring out how do we actually get the curriculum to the people who actually need it.

And that's my story of Indigenous geography. It is a nice long one, but it is a full one. It is a process that has to take place, it is one hurdle after the next, after the next. The ultimate cause is the evolved understanding, not just of geography, but of science. And I would like to be a part of that. There are a lot of people working on this. I am just one of them. You guys are too. You are doing it too. Because you are giving space for something like this to happen. You are giving them an audience, you are giving my voice to an audience.

**JSSJ:** Thank you very much Renee. Can you just tell us where you are now, as a professional geographer and cartographer?

**RPL:** I am at the University of Kansas now, same as Jay Johnson. I didn't want to get involved in the teaching, because I saw how restrictive it was, but we wanted to keep sharing thoughts and ideas. So Jay got me hooked up with the Institute for Policy & Social Research at the University of Kansas and I became an affiliate researcher. And when you start actually being a part of some of the research projects, you become an adjunct. And then I started having my own research grants and I became an associate researcher. But I do this from Hawai'i, I'm based at Hilo.

### **About the Interviewed**

Renee Louis Pualani is a cartographer and geographer and an associate researcher at the Institute for Policy and Social Research at the University of Kansas. She works from Hilo, Hawai'i.

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