Making Relations in the “House of Difference”

Co-presented by Center for Native American and Indigenous Research (CNAIR) and Global Indigenous Studies Group.

My talk reflects on my current book project that explores a set of connections and histories—critical insights about the politics of identity, experience, and difference produced primarily but not solely by women and queer men of color in the 1980s and 90s—through conceptual framings that grow out of an indigenous studies context: genealogy, recognition and relationality, and survivance. In it I honor theoretical insights that came out of both the academy and a space that overlapped academy and community, a space that has been radically diminished today and was always under-resourced and ambivalently valued. Within this context my talk explores Amero-African novelist/filmmaker/community activist Toni Cade Bambara’s formulation of the “Two Worlds obsession” that she trenchantly describes in her essay “Deep Sight and Rescue Missions” as reducing “complex narrative dramas by POCs to a formula that keeps White World as a prominent/given/eternal factor in the discussion” to follow up on her subsequent questions about what happens when the authenticating audiences of our analyses are not white and Audre Lorde’s revolutionary recasting of difference as necessary creative energy that gives us options other than only being able to see difference as the cause of inevitable division. My talk asks what happens when relationality in difference becomes the center of analysis not the footnote or periphery.

Lisa Kahaleole Hall

Lisa Kahaleole Hall is a multi-racial Kanaka Maoli associate professor and chair of the Women’s and Gender Studies program at Wells College in Aurora, New York. She also holds an appointment as Courtesy Associate Professor in the American Indian and Indigenous Studies Program at Cornell University. Her work has been published in American Quarterly, The Contemporary Pacific, Wicazo Sa Review, the Journal of International and Intercultural Communication, Out/look: National Lesbian and Gay Quarterly and various anthologies. She is currently collaborating with Scott Morgensen, A.W. Lee and Dana Wesley on a multi-year Canadian SSHRC grant, “The AKIN Project: Documenting Queer Genealogies of Anti-Racist and Anti-Colonial Activism in Canada” and is finishing a book about women of color and queer color ethnic studies work in the 80s and 90s entitled Making Relations in the “House of Difference.” Her BA in Women’s Studies and MA/Ph.D. in Ethnic Studies have left her thoroughly undisciplined.