

8 Ancestral seeds in a digital garden

Reviving and preserving the Indigenous heritage of the Canary Islands through AI

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8.1 Planting the seeds of revival – resurrecting the roots of culture

This chapter illustrates an exploratory journey between me, an interculturalist, and an Artificial Intelligence (AI) expert, my Research Assistant, Dylan Verdonkschot. This journey started in late 2023 when I was trying to imagine ways the digital could assist me with new possibilities for Contemporary Canary Islanders to revive and preserve our Indigenous Histories (Ramirez, 2024a, 2024b), as a Canary Islander myself. Hours of conversations with Dylan, together with our shared commitment to ensure Indigenous histories are honoured, celebrated and passed down as living legacies, not just historical facts, led to the project described in this chapter. To reconstruct Indigenous Canarians' histories and narratives, we are exploring how AI could generate images from prompts utilising historical records, which could help resurrect and restore their humanity. This project is part of a wider research endeavour which intersects with education and Indigenous heritage protection and revitalisation, following four aims: resurrection, revival, preservation and generation of educational resources, to broaden public outreach efforts, while ensuring the preservation of the Canary Islands' Indigenous histories. This is the Indigenous resurrection in the Canary Islands (Ramirez, 2024b), an eight-island archipelago off the coast of West Africa, shaped by colonial histories, transoceanic migrations and cultural erasures. Although it is considered to be the first case of European settler colonialism in Africa (Adhikari, 2017):

the history of the Canary Islands and their Indigenous heritage is largely left out of African histories (reduced to a strategic location for European colonisers) as well as the critical role in the history of the Americas (both in terms of enabling colonisation and the Indigenous Canarians as slave labour).

(Ramirez, 2024b, p. 19)

From an intercultural stance, the resurrection and restoration of Indigenous languages and cultures¹ is essential. This is not only because of their invaluable nature, but also due to the up-rootedness and dis/placed relations that some intercultural approaches and theories overlook when discussing “identity”. In my own intercultural journey, I struggled when unpacking my own identity, particularly around my ethnic ancestry. My students faced similar challenges when trying to map their identities. These shared struggles made me realise that “not everyone is able to critically engage with what has made them who they are as historical injustices have fostered separations that mean that knowledge of one’s histories is often inaccessible, producing problematic exclusions” (Ramirez & Pasley, 2025, p. 212). Up-rootedness and dis/place-ment highlight how colonisation survivors are often excluded from decolonisation narratives, which cannot fully account for those whose roots were displaced (Ramirez & Pasley, 2022).

When developing the idea for this chapter, I was constantly imagining AI as an ecosystem in which Indigenous Histories and Heritage could be “planted” as seeds to be nurtured so they could flourish over time. We, humans, would be like “gardeners” making sure we select the “right” seeds, understand their needs to grow and take care of them. This idea goes beyond mere planting and harvesting, and with an other-than-“Western”² understanding of our relationship with the land and the responsibilities as its carers. Although I have engaged with the idea of “seeds” and their potential to flourish in the context of language teacher education regarding intercultural communicative language teaching in Aotearoa New Zealand (see Ramirez, 2018), I was unable to fully conceptualise an effective metaphor for the present chapter. Hence, I decided to practice what I preach here and explore “AI’s potential to help us make tangible what is abstract in our minds” (Ramirez, 2024a, 2024b). AI suggested the use of “digital garden”.

A “digital garden” is an online space where individuals write and refine their thoughts. It merges elements of a journal and a blog, making each garden distinct, unique and incomplete. In Appleton’s (2021) words (Gardens, Streams, and Caufield’s Metaphors section, para. 6), these spaces “present information in a richly linked landscape that grows slowly over time. Everything is arranged and connected in ways that allow you to explore ... The garden helps us move away from time-bound streams and into contextual knowledge spaces”. In fact, these spaces are multimodal, never “finished” as posts are constantly created, edited and further developed over time, and tailored to the needs of the gardeners. Moreover, although this metaphor is related to online content creation, I found it relevant to represent the cultivation of Indigenous heritage(s), language(s), and culture(s) in the digital age, understanding AI as a “digital garden”, in an Intercultural³ Ecosystem. Thus, this chapter is a reflective (speculative) and experimental contribution that explores AI’s potential to be a digital garden, a metaphorical example of an ecosystem in which the Intercultural Chrysalis⁴ can thrive.

8.2 Ancestral seeds of Indigenous Canarians

In the “physical plane”, the Canary Islands is an archipelago composed of eight islands, about 100 kilometres off the coast of West Africa and about 1,000 kilometres from the Iberian Peninsula. From West to East, the islands are El Hierro, La Palma, La Gomera, Tenerife, Gran Canaria, Fuerteventura and Lanzarote (plus La Graciosa, in the Chinijo Archipelago, with the islets Montaña Clara, Isla de Lobos, Roque del Este, Roque del Oeste and Alegranza). During the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the Canary Islands functioned as a contested frontier between Portugal and Castile (a medieval Christian kingdom situated in the north-central region of the Iberian Peninsula), both vying for control over Atlantic insular territories and the adjacent African coasts (Galán Cuartero & Fernández Rodríguez, 2007). Following Christopher Columbus’s accidental arrival in the Americas in 1492, the archipelago gained heightened strategic importance. It came to be known as the ‘puertas del Atlántico [the doors of the Atlantic]’ serving as a critical resupply point for European naval expeditions (Galán Cuartero & Fernández Rodríguez, 2007, p. 12).

The Canary Islands were conquered by the Crown of Castilla between 1402 and 1496, following two different periods: La Conquista Señorial by Castilian nobility (≈1402–1450) and La Conquista Realenga by the Spanish crown during Los Reyes Católicos’ reign (≈1478–1496). This conquest is considered the first case of European settler colonialism in Africa (Adhikari, 2017). However, the Canary Islands’ Indigenous history is often excluded from African and American narratives, reduced to a colonial outpost and a source of enslaved labour for the Americas (Ramirez, 2024b). The Canary Islands perjured the loss of Indigenous human lives, their language(s) and culture(s), of which some endure across time in the names and practices of contemporary Canary Islanders (Ramirez & Pasley, 2022; Ramirez, 2024a, 2024b). This surviving “heritage” is what the chapter understands as ancestral seeds of Indigenous Canarians, which could be planted and tended to for them to flourish through AI as a digital garden.

In the Canarian context, this digital garden has a dual role: (1) to revive nearly lost Indigenous histories, knowledges and language(s), and (2) to reimagine intercultural futures beyond colonial paradigms. There are two important concepts to unpack here: “reimagining” and “intercultural futures”. In the present context, reimagining Indigenous histories is an onto-epistemic justice-driven and political act that challenges colonial erasure, engages with identity-making and repositions Canarian people within a broader decolonial frame. It invites deeper dialogue about who gets to tell history, how memory is shaped and what it means to be Indigenous or carry Indigenous legacies in contemporary Canary Islands. The concept of intercultural futures envisions a forward-thinking, justice-driven reimagining of communal life, aiming to dismantle structural inequalities rooted in the islands’ colonial and migratory

pasts. It involves reclaiming marginalised or silenced knowledge systems, such as those of the Indigenous Canarians. These intercultural futures prioritise educational and linguistic justice as a deeply political, historical and ethical practice, calling for institutions, educators and communities to embrace interculturality as a transformative process rooted in decolonial commitments: fostering belonging without erasure, relationships without assimilation and justice to address colonial legacies, affirm diverse cultural realities and co-create regenerative, inclusive futures for the Canary Islands.

The Canary Islands' Indigenous heritage, long considered decimated by colonisation, provides a field in which AI's potential in restoring Indigenous Canarians' humanity, reconstructing linguistic fragments, reviving practices and redefining identities in the digital era may be tested. However, could AI really revive "authentically" (as dynamic, lived and politically entangled realities), or would it produce "simulations" disconnected from/unrelated to their origins? This is one of many questions that, at this stage, remain unanswered but invite reflection. Thus, in the context of (post)colonial erasure, the concept of Intercultural Chrysalis is a transformative space where AI mediates intercultural encounters by reviving endangered languages and suppressed histories through AI-driven linguistic modelling, digital storytelling and virtual heritage, and by reimagining a speculative future-making enabled by AI. However, a question remains, can AI resurrect Indigenous histories and identities without turning them into digital artefacts severed from lived experience?

8.3 Ancestral seeds in a digital garden

The significance of the metaphor "ancestral seeds in a digital garden" in the context of the Canary Islands has to do with not only the preservation of (what is left of) ancestral knowledge(s) and heritage(s), but also with its revival. AI presents a medium for the ancestral seeds to flourish, first, in the digital, to then pollinate contemporary (and future) Canary Islanders' understandings of their identities, reconnecting with their Indigenous heritage. Although initially these ancestral seeds will be planted by, for example, me, it is the Canarian community and current and future generations who together need to keep tending to and nurturing these seeds in the digital garden. For example, once Indigenous histories, stories, languages and practices are digitalised with(in) AI by planting these "ancestral seeds", Canary Islanders and educators then cultivate them by engaging the knowledges, adding new layers of interpretation and meaning and providing space for engagement.

For the digital garden to thrive, interculturality needs to be part of the ecosystem where ancestral seeds and contemporary knowledges and practices coexist and enrich one another through a nurturing relationship, creating dynamic and evolving landscapes. Through AI in the ecosystem, the integration of traditional and modern elements would promote a holistic approach

to cultural revival and preservation through community collaboration, which may result in new cultural practices and expressions inspired by ancestral knowledge (flourished ancestral seeds). From an educator's perspective, I believe that we should create and imagine how "intercultural ecosystems and educational gardens" could assist us with the development of educational frameworks that foster intercultural understanding, respect and engagement with our complex intersectional identities.⁵ Moreover, interculturality here is understood not merely as a theoretical lens, but as a praxis, which insists on the meaningful participation of Indigenous communities and the centring of their knowledges in both digital and physical educational spaces, and, in this case, educational gardens.

Although AI provides robust tools for linguistic and cultural revival and preservation, its use when dealing with Indigenous heritage requires careful consideration. Key concerns include algorithmic bias, data sovereignty and ethical AI practices when engaging with Indigenous communities who must control their cultural data containing Indigenous knowledge. AI projects with Indigenous knowledge should be led by Indigenous researchers, artists and technologists to ensure these tools support Indigenous futures and avoid exploitation. An example of how Indigenous peoples tend to their digital gardens is with Angitū's haka (Māori dance) "EI AI", which was written with the help of ChatGPT, providing a space to explore the benefits and risks of AI through mātauranga Māori (Māori Knowledge/wisdom; Te Whake, 2025) in te reo Māori (Māori language). As Indigenous peoples, they had control over prompts and selection of results, while having the authority to select what was accurate or not. In fact, Angitū's leader, Pere Wihongi explained that "they fixed the mistakes made by ChatGPT" (Radio New Zealand, 2025). It is essential for Indigenous peoples to tend to their own data and the potential biases of AI, which regarding the Indigenous histories of the Canary Islands are plenty.

However, what does this mean in the context of the Canary Islands? The Canary Islands presents an example of the implications of ancestral seeds and digital gardens for up-rooted and dis/placed identities (Ramirez & Pasley, 2025) and the importance of providing space for these for reflection and active engagement. This space, interactions, and engagements represent an "Intercultural Chrysalis". As part of our project, we are currently exploring ways the use of AI could contribute to Indigenous resurgence in the Canary Islands, visualising and reconstructing narratives that seem impossible to manifest in tangible ways (Ramirez, 2024a, 2024b). AI visualisation of Indigenous Canarians has the potential to shape a collective imagination around possible pasts, enhancing public education and reconnecting other Indigenous communities with their heritage. In the following section, Dylan Verdonkschot provides us with a technical (while reflective and speculative) overview of the potential of AI in the preservation and promotion of endangered worlds and languages, and its crucial role in the Canary Islands.

8.4 AI as “the” digital garden (Dylan Verdonkshot)

As a researcher and AI specialist working with historical texts and digital technologies, I see AI not as a mere tool but as a digital garden where fragmented pieces of knowledge that are lost or overlooked can be nurtured, cultivated and shared across generations. AI offers a space where history is not just archived but actively grown, where Indigenous stories, artefacts, languages and perspectives can take root and flourish beyond the limits of time. The application of AI provides unprecedented opportunities for the archiving and restoration of ancient artefacts and historical records. Through AI, we can develop dictionaries to help decode lost languages. Michael Running Wolf, an AI researcher and co-founder of the First Languages AI Reality (FLAIR) programme, exemplifies this work. Drawing on both his technical expertise and his Lakota and Cheyenne heritage, he uses AI and virtual reality to revitalise disappearing Indigenous languages. His approach is grounded in empathy and caution, recognising how technology has historically been used to harm Indigenous communities. This work highlights how AI, when guided by cultural understanding and ethical intent, can support language preservation in meaningful and respectful ways (Heidt, 2025). Another example is NeuroLaunch’s (2024) ElevenLabs tool, which is advancing AI voice synthesis by infusing synthetic speech with emotional nuance, by capturing subtle vocal cues, such as tone, rhythm and emphasis, allowing AI-generated voices to express a wide range of human emotions. This innovation not only enhances digital communication but also helps preserve the expressive qualities of contemporary languages, making them more relatable and impactful in digital storytelling and education. In addition, Marchant (2025) highlights how AI has enabled the restoration of ancient artefacts, such as carbonised papyrus scrolls. Notably, two machine learning researchers used AI to reveal the title and author of a sealed scroll damaged by the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in AD 79, identifying it as part of *On Vices* by the Greek philosopher Philodemus. This breakthrough illustrates how AI can help recover lost texts and preserve cultural memory that might otherwise remain buried. Additionally, AI-based image reconstruction can enhance the depiction of artefacts and historical scenes, offering a more accurate representation of historical contexts.

One of the most transformative aspects of AI is its ability to revitalise lost languages and safeguard linguistic diversity. Much like tending to a garden, we can use AI to cultivate Indigenous linguistic heritage, reconstructing phonetics, grammar and syntax from fragmented historical records. Initiatives like Te Hiku Media’s (n.d.) *te reo Māori* language models developed in Aotearoa New Zealand have shown how AI-powered voice cloning can ethically support the preservation and revitalisation of Indigenous languages. These efforts are guided by principles such as collective ownership, community consent and respect for ancestral knowledge, ensuring that Māori maintain sovereignty

over their language and how it is used in AI systems. Their work in training AI on te reo Māori speakers aims to ensure that linguistic knowledge is not only recorded but also able to be interacted with in a way that builds a connection to the people of the language, not just the language itself. Similarly, AI-powered dictionaries and speech synthesis projects offer opportunities to restore endangered or extinct languages, allowing them to be actively practised and engaged with rather than passively memorialised.

Beyond language, AI is a powerful tool for the restoration of historical records and artefacts from endangered cultures. In my own work, I have seen how AI-generated image reconstructions breathe life into slivers of descriptions that remain of the Indigenous Canary Islanders. A promising application lies in the restoration of deteriorated cultural artefacts, an area where recent deep learning advancements have significantly expanded our capabilities. Just as archaeologists piece together fragments of the past, AI can serve as a digital restorer, filling in missing gaps and reconstructing lost details with remarkable accuracy. A recent study on AI-assisted restoration highlights how deep learning models, including Stable Diffusion (to generate photorealistic images based on textual descriptions) and Neural Radiance Fields (to generate photorealistic 3D views of scenes from 2D images), can be used to *inpaint*⁶ damaged historical artefacts and generate highly plausible 3D reconstructions of broken or deteriorated artefacts (Stoean et al., 2024). By applying this approach to Indigenous Canarian heritage, AI could reconstruct ceramic vessels, rock carvings and even precolonial dwellings that exist only in fragments today.

More than simply repairing physical objects, these AI-driven restorations can reignite public interest in museum exhibits by, for example, turning passive displays into dynamic, interactive experiences where visitors can witness historical artefacts as they once were. Equally transformative is AI's ability to create immersive experiences through Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR). Digital museums are no longer just static repositories of artefacts but have the potential to become living environments where AI powered Indigenous "actors" – models trained on oral histories, traditional knowledge and protocols and practices – can engage with visitors in real time, creating new learning experiences that help teach the people of today about the people of the past. A similar approach could be developed for the Canary Islands, creating interactive AI-driven Indigenous actors who act as guides, sharing precolonial knowledge, myths, oral histories and traditions in a format that is both educational and engaging. These AI capabilities have proven invaluable in our research on the Indigenous populations of the Canary Islands, where extant information is scarce and deteriorating due to time. By preserving artefacts, documents and recordings related to specific peoples, we could safeguard the essence of Canarians' identities and heritage. This preservation effort is crucial in reviving and maintaining the foundational elements of individual and collective identities.

Beyond preservation, AI also has the potential to reinterpret historical narratives – clearing overgrown pathways in the landscape of history to reveal alternative perspectives. There is a vast collection of historical texts available to researchers, but many of these have yet to be digitised or are difficult to process due to the aged and often illegible material. Moreover, much of the historical knowledge available to researchers remains fragmented, but also inherently biased, as a large amount of remaining historical documents on Indigenous worlds come from colonial perspectives or are obscured by conflicting accounts. For example, major world events such as the eruption of the 1883 eruption of Krakatoa Volcano in the Dutch East Indies are well documented across diverse sources, whereas texts like Plato’s descriptions of lost islands and civilisations remain ambiguous. AI-assisted textual analysis has demonstrated to me in my research, its ability to uncover previously unnoticed correlations between texts, as well as the biases that are written into those texts, allowing me to piece together a richer history of events, including diverse interpretations of what actually happened. Using AI, researchers can efficiently analyse large volumes of historical texts, uncover hidden insights and gain a broader understanding of lost places or alternative perspectives on historical events.

With the latest advancements in generative AI, it is becoming easier to create realistic images of historical populations, such as the Indigenous Canary Islanders. These tools bring us the potential to visualise lost histories and peoples, allowing researchers to generate representations based on fragments of history that remain. However, despite this progress, current AI-generated depictions tend to be constrained by inherent biases in training data and Western technologies’ tendency to reproduce generalised or stereotypical imagery indicative of their creators’ worldview. A key challenge in this area is the datasets used to train these AI models. Most existing models are trained on broad, public datasets that can lack references to specific peoples or contexts. This results in AI-generated images that often look Mediterranean, North African or European, overlooking the unique characteristics of Indigenous populations across the world. Additionally, AI models frequently incorporate modern artistic biases, producing content that reflects modern-day assumptions and prejudices rather than historical accuracy. For example, when asking OpenAI’s Dall-E model to generate an image of “Rich People”, the AI will only represent white people in its images (Baum & Villasenor, 2024). Similarly, in the context of cultural heritage, AI models can perpetuate and amplify existing biases. Historical collections often reflect the perspectives of dominant groups in society such as colonial powers. When these collections are digitised and used by AI, the same biases can be perpetuated (Griffin et al., 2024). An AI model trained predominantly on Western art collections might over-represent Western artistic styles and under-represent non-Western art, leading to a skewed representation of images generated on non-Western cultures.

Another limitation of the current generative AI models is their interpretive nature. While these models can create “aesthetically pleasing” and compelling images, they struggle to acquire nuanced details when trying to construct images based on textual descriptions alone, especially when those descriptions originate from a single source. Without precise, curated historical data, generative AI presents a risk of reinforcing misconceptions about Indigenous people rather than correcting them. As seen in the output given by generative AI in the context of Elba Ramirez’s research, we can see that prompts need a lot of engineering to produce results that approach what we would consider accurate, based on the descriptions from texts and remaining artefacts (see next section “Tending the digital garden of Indigenous Canarians”). These results highlight the need for an interdisciplinary collaboration between archaeologists, historians and AI researchers to refine training datasets and develop models that prioritise, e.g., historical accuracy.

Despite these limitations and the continuous evolution of generative AI technology with deliberate improvements – such as training AI with curated historical sources and refining prompt engineering techniques – it holds the possibility for creating more accurate and educationally valuable representations of not only Indigenous Canarians, but Indigenous people everywhere who are trying to reclaim their identity, culture and history. As we cultivate this digital garden, it is essential to recognise that AI is not a replacement but a tool for regeneration and preservation. Its role should not be to dictate historical narratives but to provide new “soil” for Indigenous knowledge to grow, amplifying voices that have been marginalised rather than replacing them. If approached with ethical principles and community collaboration, AI may ensure that Indigenous histories are not just preserved but continuously reimagined through engagement with surviving Indigenous peoples. Flourishing beyond colonial erasure into a future where Indigenous histories are actively lived, shared and evolved.

8.5 Tending the digital garden of Indigenous Canarians (Elba and Dylan)

As this chapter is a reflective (speculative) and experimental contribution that explores AI’s potential to be a digital garden, a metaphorical example of an ecosystem in which the Intercultural Chrysalis can thrive, we are going to describe how we are currently tending to the Indigenous Canarians. Our project is, as Dylan stated in the previous section, an example of how interdisciplinary collaboration can provide refined training datasets and models that prioritise cultural and historical accuracy. Table 8.1 shows the different stages of prompt engineering and the corresponding results. In Stage 1, we started using the prompt “Image of Indigenous Canary Islander” which is considered “basic” (not overly descriptive). The image produced gave us results

Table 8.1 Visualisation of AI image prompts

Stage	1	2	3
Aim	Gen-AI image	Gen-AI image with prompt engineering	Gen-AI image with own programmed AI
Prompt	“Generate an image of an Indigenous Canary Islander.”	“Generate a hyper-realistic photo, full body image of an Indigenous Canary Islander man from Lanzarote. He stands in the sunlit volcanic landscape of his island, surrounded by rugged terrain and sparse vegetation. His physique is robust. He is barefoot and his skin has a toasted brown complexion from the sun. His hair is dark and kept at a medium length. He wears a simple garment made from woven plant fibers or goat hide, tied around his waist.”	“Indigenous Canary Islander from the island of Lanzarote.”
Result	Representation of Indigenous Canarians are shown with Western facial shapes and features, with minimal resemblance to the historical descriptions.	More realistic representation of Indigenous Canarians. Facial and body features begin to resemble the written descriptions, as well as clothing and environment, providing a more accurate depiction of the Indigenous Canarians and landscapes.	Production in a photorealistic style, based on descriptions and images used to train it, resulting in more realistic and detailed depictions of Indigenous Canarian peoples, lives and cultures.
Educational resource potential	Limited Stereotypical and inaccurate depiction of Indigenous Canarians. Can help educate on the need for descriptive prompting and the bias in current AI.	Average Resources are still limited and do not provide a truly interactive engagement. Can show what “mainstream” AI can produce when prompts are engineered thoughtfully.	High Indigenous Canarians are rehumanised, leading to greater engagement with their history and identity, fostering a sense of self and belonging.

that did not seem to be in line with the descriptions we currently have of the Indigenous Canarians, as the people in the images have/had Western features, such as bone structure, and lacked accuracy in details regarding clothing and environment. Educationally, and from an intercultural standpoint, the images produced are only useful for discussions around stereotypical and inaccurate depictions of Indigenous Canarians and bias in current AI.

Stage 2 shows a prompt that has been “engineered” – crafted carefully using a collection of descriptions that have been cross-referenced with each other to ensure the prompt that was engineered was accurate. The prompt used descriptions of Indigenous Canarians, as described in historical and archival documents, adapting the “wording” to modern-day understandings. When engineering a prompt using more detailed descriptions of the Indigenous Canary Islanders, we began to generate images that are, from the descriptions that remain (historical sources), a lot more accurate than the first images generated with a basic prompt. While the final result is still not perfect in its depiction due to limitations of the current model used in generating photo-accurate images, it does show us the possibility of what can come when creating a more detailed prompt. We start to get a result that looks “truer” to how the texts describe the Indigenous Canary Islanders that reveal the small details that are currently missed in image generations such as clothing and tools. Although images are still inaccurate, they could be used in educational contexts to show what “mainstream” “Western” AI can produce when prompts are engineered thoughtfully, while analysing what “accurate” means in the context of historical and archival descriptions of Indigenous Canarians by colonisers and settlers.

We are currently working on Stage 3, which will involve our own programmed AI only using sources we train it with, so when requesting an image of an “Indigenous Canary Islander from the island of Lanzarote”, it produces a photorealistic style image, resulting on more realistic and detailed depictions of Indigenous Canarian peoples (past), lives and cultures. If successful, these images could show a visual representation of Indigenous Canarians that could lead to a greater sense of identity, through a new way to engage with the past, potentially enhancing a sense of self and belonging.

In the process of “Tending the digital garden” through AI-generated images, particularly in the representation of Indigenous Canarians, it is essential to foreground the role of prompt engineering as a deliberate and iterative practice. The outputs produced by generative AI are not autonomous artefacts; rather, they are shaped by the user’s linguistic choices, contextual framing and cultural awareness. As our project demonstrates across its three stages of prompt refinement, the quality and cultural sensitivity of the resulting images are directly correlated with the specificity and intentionality of the prompts. Zhu and Duan’s (2025) prompt-based teaching model underscores how the specificity and intentionality of prompts, shaped through iterative refinement and enriched contextual knowledge, are crucial for optimising AI

outputs. While their focus is on academic writing, the same principles apply to image generation, where detailed, culturally aware prompts lead to higher-quality and more contextually appropriate results. Moreover, while critiques of AI bias are often warranted, they can risk oversimplifying the issue by overlooking the user's agency in the generative process. As highlighted in the CIFAR-supported course *Indigenous Perspectives in AI*, the integration of Indigenous worldviews into AI development and usage requires a shift from extractive to reciprocal and respectful practices (Sandusky, 2024). This means moving away from using Indigenous knowledge or imagery without permission or benefit (extractive), instead engaging in collaborative processes where Indigenous communities are respected, involved, and share in the outcomes (reciprocal and respectful). This is particularly relevant when working with representations of historically marginalised communities, in which careless or uninformed prompt design can inadvertently reproduce colonial or stereotypical imagery. So far, the findings of our project reinforce that responsible prompt engineering needs to be grounded in cultural literacy and ethical intent, so it is not merely a technical task but a form of digital stewardship.

8.6 Harvesting insights

Language is more than a tool for communication; it is the soul of a people. It carries identity, culture, belonging and the weight of historical trauma. For many Indigenous communities, language embodies ancestral wisdom, spiritual practices and lived experiences. Its suppression through colonisation has left deep scars, making language revitalisation not just a cultural act, but one of healing and resistance. In the context of the Canary Islands, I (Elba) believe that language embodies the spirit, identity and cultural essence of a community, but since Spanish erased the Amazigh language, we lost a vital part of who we are/were. Moreover, Dylan and I understand that AI, particularly through NLP, offers powerful tools to support this revitalisation. AI can help reconstruct, preserve and regenerate endangered languages, enabling their use in digital spaces and education. However, language must not be treated as mere data. It must remain rooted in the communities that use and live it. AI could help revive and preserve endangered cultures and languages for future generations. It could breathe new life into nearly lost histories, languages and traditions. For Indigenous Canary Islanders, AI might support the revitalisation of language, reconstruct erased narratives and strengthen Indigenous Canarian Identity. However, the use of AI requires careful intention, understanding and commitment to Indigenous knowledge systems, showing a growing need for educating people on how to use AI responsibly.

AI can serve as an Intercultural Chrysalis, providing a safe space for the metamorphosis to take place. This metamorphosis in the present chapter means the revival and reimagination of past Indigenous histories within contemporary Canarian histories through re-humanisation (moving away from

mere human remains, sketches and artefacts to ancestors). AI, as both digital garden and chrysalis, should be used collaboratively to amplify, not replace, Indigenous histories and ancestral and contemporary artistic expressions, as it should aid in creating and sharing new Indigenous narratives, myths, musical traditions and histories beyond colonial influences. For Indigenous Canarians and other communities, AI-assisted storytelling provides ways to reclaim their pasts and envision new futures. In the Canary Islands, where Canarian identity is indeterminate (Ramirez, 2024b), AI practices should focus on being a catalyst for Indigenous Canarian narratives and future generations. Thus, we close this chapter wondering whether AI will (has the potential to) help the Canary Islands move beyond (Indigenous cultural identity) loss to envision an “Intercultural future” where Indigenous Canarian heritage is not just remembered but actively revived and “lived” alongside contemporary knowledges and practices.

Notes

- 1 In this chapter, “culture” is critically positioned as a politically loaded and Western-centric construct, historically shaped by colonial knowledge systems that have classified, ranked and often essentialised non-Western peoples (Said, 1978). In the context of the Canary Islands, “culture” has served and still serves both as a tool for imposed identity, erasing Indigenous Canarian worldviews, and as a battleground for communities to assert their belonging, memory and resistance. While the term risks reinforcing fixed or stereotyped notions of identity, abandoning it would also foreclose important political and epistemic work. Thus, in this chapter, “culture” is used not as a stable or homogeneous category, but as a contested and historically situated space of negotiation, to be engaged with reflexively and in alignment with wider decolonial and pluriversal initiatives.
- 2 The term “Western” is used intentionally to prompt discussions in Intercultural Communication Education and Research. Despite its issues, the West remains a significant conceptual framework. Labels can be problematic, but not naming the source of power conceals its influence. In this chapter, West/other-than/non-Western refers to power relations rather than mere geographic location, acknowledging diverse cosmologies within the geographic West. This use reflects how physical geographies differ from their imagined power relations in discourse (Said, 1978).
- 3 The term “intercultural” is used in this chapter as a concept that demands deep reflection on identity, belonging and historical connections. In the Canary Islands, intercultural signifies scrutiny of who is included in dialogues, who is left out and under what conditions. It calls for a commitment to continuous, respectful engagement aimed at dismantling systemic inequalities, challenging stereotypes and addressing the social injustices that persist across the archipelago. Rather than a superficial celebration of diversity, “intercultural” is presented as a relational and political practice: one that recognises the islands’ diverse histories and embraces their rich, complex diversity as a resource for collective reimagining and justice-driven transformation.
- 4 Note from the editors (Dervin/R’boul): The term *the Intercultural Chrysalis* was first proposed by us as a working concept for the chapter authors.
- 5 Complex intersectional identities describe how various aspects of a person’s identity (such as race, gender, class, sexuality, ability, etc.) interact and shape their

experiences. These overlapping identities influence how individuals are perceived and treated in society, often intensifying both privilege and marginalisation. Intersectionality helps us recognise that a person can be privileged in some respects while being disadvantaged in others (Crenshaw, 1989). For instance, a queer, disabled, Māori woman might face discrimination not solely based on her ethnicity or gender, but through the combined impact of these intersecting identities within power structures.

- 6 *Inpainting* in AI-generated images refers to the process of filling in missing or altered parts of an image using machine learning algorithms. This technique allows AI models to intelligently reconstruct or modify sections of an image by analysing surrounding visual data, ensuring a seamless and realistic appearance. It is commonly used for image restoration, object removal and creative modifications in AI art generation.

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