

# THE GOONZETTE

*Digital Culture • Commentary • Analysis*

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# Discord Diaries: Why Online Communities Hit Different Than the Locker Room (But Still Kinda Mid Sometimes)

Kia ora, whānau! Your boy Tommy here, and today we're diving into the wild world of Discord highlights – or as I like to call it, "digital marae where chaos meets community."

Look, I've been in some intense locker rooms, bro. Green Bay in January when we're down by 14? That's pressure. But Discord? That's a whole different beast. It's like having a perpetual team meeting where half the squad is memeing, quarter are actually strategizing, and the rest are just vibing in voice channels talking about whether pineapple belongs on pizza (it does, fight me).

## \*\*The Good: When Digital Whānau Actually Whānau\*\*

Real talk – some of my tightest connections these days happen in pixels, not person. There's something beautiful about logging into a server and seeing your people online, that little green dot like a digital hongi. I've watched communities rally around members going through rough patches faster than a blitz package on third and long.

Had this one moment where someone was struggling with mental health stuff, and the whole server just... showed up. Like, properly showed up. Voice channels turned into support circles, DMs became lifelines, and suddenly this "just for gaming" space became something deeper. As we say, "He tangata, he tangata, he tangata" – it is people, it is people, it is people. And sometimes those people are usernames with anime profile pics, but the mana is still real.

## \*\*The Weird: When Internet Culture Gets Too Internet\*\*

But yo, Discord can be absolutely unhinged too. One minute you're having a legit conversation about strategy or life, next minute someone's rickrolling the whole channel and starting a 47-message argument

about whether cereal is soup. (It's not, by the way. Y'all wild for even suggesting that.)

The emoji reactions alone could power a small taniwha. Someone drops a thoughtful message about overcoming adversity, and it gets three fire emojis and a skull. Someone posts a blurry photo of their lunch? Suddenly it's the most engaged-with content of the week. The algorithm of human attention is more mysterious than Andy Reid's playcalling in the red zone.

### \*\*The Mid: When Hype Doesn't Match Reality\*\*

Not gonna lie though, sometimes Discord highlights feel pretty mid. You'll see servers hyping up their "legendary moments" and it's just... someone accidentally unmuting during a sneeze, or a bot malfunctioning and spamming the general chat. It's like when sports media tries to manufacture storylines – "EPIC RIVALRY" but it's really just two teams that played each other once and nobody got hurt.

The constant notification culture hits different too. Every ping feels urgent until you realize it's just someone asking if anyone's online in a channel with 47 people currently active. Ko te manu e kai ana i te miro, nōna te ngahere; ko te manu e kai ana i te mātauranga, nōna te taiao – the bird that eats the miro berry owns the forest, but the bird that feeds on knowledge owns the world. Sometimes Discord's just miro berries, you know?

### \*\*The Meta Game\*\*

What trips me out is how Discord communities develop their own whakataukī without realizing it. Inside jokes become wisdom. Memes become cultural touchstones. That one time someone said something profound at 3am in voice chat becomes server legend, passed down to new members like oral tradition.

I've seen channels where the real conversations happen in reactions, not words. Where the timing of when you come online becomes part of your identity. Where your custom status becomes poetry, and your Spotify integration reveals more about your soul than your bio ever could.

### \*\*The Real\*\*

**A**t the end of the day, Discord highlights are just life highlights with extra steps and worse sleep schedules. The same human dynamics that make teams work – trust, banter, shared purpose, occasional drama – just compressed into channels and compressed even further into moments worth remembering.

**W**hether it's clutch plays on the field or clutch jokes in the chat, community is community. Some days it's mid, some days it's magic, most days it's just people being people in the space they've got.

**K**a kite anō, catch y'all in the channels. And remember – touch grass occasionally, but don't feel guilty about finding your tribe in pixels.

\*Tommy out\* 

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\*Tāmati "Tommy" Whārangi chronicles digital culture from Aotearoa. Formerly of the NFL, currently of the internet.\*

# Beyond the Courtroom: Why Indigenous Rights Are Everyone's Rights

When non-Native people ask me about Indigenous rights, I often sense they're expecting me to launch into a history lesson about broken treaties or launch into grievances about past wrongs. Don't misunderstand me—those treaties matter, and those wrongs demand acknowledgment. But here's what I really want people to understand: Indigenous rights aren't relics from the past. They're the cutting edge of what justice looks like in the 21st century.

As a Ho-Chunk attorney, I've spent years watching how the legal system approaches Indigenous rights with a peculiar mix of reverence and dismissal. Courts will solemnly acknowledge our "unique status" in one breath, then minimize our sovereignty with creative legal gymnastics in the next. It's a dance as old as federal Indian law itself—acknowledge enough to appear respectful, but not so much that it threatens existing power structures.

But here's what that conventional analysis misses: Indigenous rights represent a fundamentally different way of thinking about the relationship between people, communities, and the land. When we talk about treaty rights to hunt, fish, or gather, we're not just talking about economic activities. We're talking about legal frameworks that recognize reciprocal relationships with the natural world—something that becomes more relevant every day as climate change accelerates.

Take water rights. The Winters doctrine established that tribes have reserved water rights that predate state law. Most legal scholars frame this as a narrow exception to state water allocation systems. I see it differently. Tribal water rights represent a legal recognition that some things are too essential to be left to market forces alone. That's not just an Indigenous principle—it's a human principle.

The real genius of Indigenous rights lies not in their exceptionalism, but in their universality. The principle of sovereignty—genuine self-determination—threatens those who benefit from centralized power because it suggests that communities might actually be capable of governing themselves. When

tribal nations successfully manage their own courts, their own natural resources, their own economic development, it raises uncomfortable questions about why other communities can't do the same.

This is why Indigenous rights face such persistent opposition. It's not really about whether Ho-Chunk people can spear fish or whether Lakota communities can control their own child welfare proceedings. It's about whether power flows up to distant institutions or remains grounded in communities that have to live with the consequences of decisions.

The legal strategy here requires thinking several moves ahead. Every Indigenous rights case sets precedent not just for tribal communities, but for any community seeking to protect itself from external control. When we defend tribal jurisdiction over child welfare, we're establishing principles about community autonomy that resonate far beyond Indian Country. When we protect sacred sites from pipeline development, we're developing legal tools that any community can use to protect what matters most to them.

But we need to be honest about the obstacles. The Supreme Court's recent decisions in cases like McGirt v. Oklahoma show both the potential and the limitations of working within existing legal frameworks. Yes, we can win significant victories by holding the federal government to its own promises. But we also face a legal system that remains fundamentally uncomfortable with genuine Indigenous sovereignty.

That's why the most important work often happens outside the courtroom. Building relationships with non-Native communities who recognize their own interests in Indigenous rights. Supporting Indigenous candidates for office who can shape policy from the inside. Developing economic and political power that makes it costly to ignore Indigenous voices.

The climate crisis is making this work more urgent, not less. Indigenous communities protect 80% of the world's biodiversity, despite representing less than 5% of the global population. That's not coincidence—it's the result of legal and cultural systems that prioritize long-term sustainability over short-term extraction. As the dominant economic system shows its limitations, Indigenous approaches to governance become less exotic and more essential.

For my Ho-Chunk relatives and all our Indigenous allies, the message is clear: our rights aren't about special treatment. They're about fundamental principles of justice that benefit everyone. The fight for

Indigenous rights is really a fight about what kind of society we want to live in—one where power serves people and place, or one where people and place serve power.

The courtroom remains one arena for this fight, but it's not the only one. The real victory comes when Indigenous rights are recognized not as exceptions to American values, but as their fullest expression.

\***D**ave Standing There (Hoocąk Haci Ničc) is a Ho-Chunk attorney specializing in federal Indian law and tribal sovereignty.\*

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