**Subscriptions**

*Studies in American Indian Literatures* (SAIL ISSN 0730-3238) is the only scholarly journal in the United States that focuses exclusively on American Indian literatures. *SAIL* is published quarterly by the University of Nebraska Press for the Association for the Study of American Indian Literatures (ASAIL). Subscription rates are $37 for individuals and $90 for institutions. Single issues are available for $21. For subscriptions outside the United States, please add $20. Canadian subscribers please add 6% GST. To subscribe, please contact the University of Nebraska Press. Payment must accompany order. Make checks payable to the University of Nebraska Press and mail to:

Customer Service  
1111 Lincoln Mall  
Lincoln, NE 68588-0630  
Telephone 800-755-1105 (United States and Canada)  
402-472-3581 (other countries)  
www.nebraskapress.unl.edu

All inquiries on subscription, change of address, advertising, and other business communications should be addressed to the University of Nebraska Press.

For information on membership in ASAIL or the membership subscription discount please contact:

Siobhan Senier  
University of New Hampshire  
Department of English  
Hamilton Smith Hall  
95 Main Street  
Durham, NH 03824-3574

**Submissions**

The editorial board of *SAIL* invites the submission of scholarly, critical, pedagogical, and theoretical manuscripts focused on all aspects of American Indian literatures as well as the submission of poetry and short fiction, bibliographical essays, review essays, and interviews. We define “literatures” broadly to include all written, spoken, and visual texts created by Native peoples.
Manuscripts should be prepared in accordance with the most recent edition of the *MLA Style Manual*. Please send three clean copies of the manuscript along with a self-addressed envelope and sufficient postage to permit the return of the reviewed submission, or you may submit by e-mail as an attachment (preferably in Rich Text Format [RTF]).

*SAIL* observes a “blind reading” policy, so please do not include an author name on the title, first page, or anywhere else in the article. Do include your contact information, such as address, phone number, and e-mail address on a separate sheet with your submission. All submissions are read by outside reviewers. Submissions should be sent directly to:

Daniel Heath Justice  
Department of English, University of Toronto  
170 St. George Street  
Toronto, ON M5B 2M8  
Canada

Rights to the articles are held by the individual contributors.  
All rights reserved  
Manufactured in the United States of America

*SAIL* is available online through *Project MUSE* at http://muse.jhu.edu.

Articles appearing in this journal are abstracted and indexed in *Arts and Humanities Citation Index®* and *Current Contents®/Arts & Humanities*.

Cover: Photo courtesy of Bonita Bent-Nelson © 2003, design by Kimberly Hermsen  
Interior: Kimberly Hermsen
GENERAL EDITOR
Malea Powell

BOOK REVIEW EDITOR
P. Jane Hafen

CREATIVE WORKS EDITORS
Joseph W. Bruchac and Janet McAdams

EDITORIAL BOARD
Chadwick Allen, James Cox, Dean Rader, and Lisa Tatonetti

EDITORIAL ASSISTANTS
Deborah Grace and Kimberli Lee

EDITORS EMERITUS
Helen Jaskoski
Karl Kroeber
Robert M. Nelson
John Purdy
Rodney Simard
CONTENTS

ARTICLES
1 Thomas E. Moore’s Sour Sofkee in the Tradition of Muskogee Dialect Writers
TIMOTHY PETETE AND CRAIG S. WOMACK

SPECIAL SECTION: INDIGENOUS WOMEN’S RHETORIC
41 Guest Editor’s Remarks
AMANDA J. COBB
43 Translation Moves: Zitkala-Ša’s Bilingual Indian Legends
RUTH SPACK
63 Powerful Medicine: The Rhetoric of Comanche Activist LaDonna Harris
AMANDA J. COBB
88 “I Give You Back”: Indigenous Women Writing to Survive
ELIZABETH ARCHULETA

115 Contributor Biographies
117 Major Tribal Nations and Bands
KILLING THE INDIAN MAIDEN
Images of Native American Women in Film
M. Elise Marubbio
“Surveying the portrayal of Native American women through almost ninety years of popular movies, Marubbio stunningly demonstrates how little these films actually tell us about Native peoples and how much they reveal about the intertwined Euro-American fantasies of sexuality, race, and conquest.”—Annette Kolodny
$50.00 cloth

HOLLYWOOD’S WEST
The American Frontier in Film, Television, and History
Edited by Peter C. Rollins and John E. O’Connor
“Definitive in its own right.”—Journal of American Culture
“An excellent study that should interest film buffs, academics, and non-academics alike.”—Journal of the West
$40.00 cloth

At bookstores • 800/839-6855 • www.kentuckypress.com

American Indian Quarterly
Revitalized and refocused, AIQ is building on its reputation as a dominant journal in American Indian studies by presenting the best and most thought-provoking scholarship in the field. New editor Amanda J. Cobb is committed to making AIQ a forum for diverse voices and perspectives spanning a variety of academic disciplines. The common thread is AIQ’s commitment to publishing work that contributes to the development of American Indian studies as a field and to the sovereignty and continuance of American Indian nations and cultures.

Subscriptions (4 issues per year)
issn 0095-182x
Individuals $42 per year
Institutions $125 per year
Outside the u.s. - add $20.

University of Nebraska Press
P.O. Box 84555, Lincoln, NE 68501-4555
800.755.1105 • www.nebraskapress.unl.edu
A discussion in the field of Native literary studies concerns the degree to which contemporary Native fiction is politically oriented, especially in relation to Native writings of the nineteenth century, which were largely nonfiction and more obviously related to particular claims either in the writing itself or the author’s involvement with activism (Samson Occom’s critique of racism in the missionary field, William Apess’s collective work with the Mashpees to control lumber resources and elect their own select men, George Copway’s ill-conceived pleas for relocating Ojibways to the Dakotas, and Sara Winnemucca’s arguments to allow her people to return to the Malheur Reservation, e.g.). When not directly confronting a particular land or jurisdiction issue these writers often addressed the broader human rights of their people as well as the problematic ways Americans imagined them.

The prevalence of nonfiction in the nineteenth century, the dearth of creative works of the imagination, and the idea of a fiction that would arise in a later generation with questionable political credentials is complicated by those who see a hidden politics between the lines in the more recent fictional work, others a more direct engagement, and the occasional critic who discerns a complete avoidance of politics altogether. The dialect letters that began appearing in Indian Territory newspapers in the late 1880s challenge virtually all these assumptions. The letters are notable as both works of fiction as well as a forum for particular political issues. In the best-known instance, that is, Alexander Posey’s Fus Fixico letters, fiction writing
functions as editorials for Posey’s political work and advocate for the state of Sequoyah that would continue southeastern tribal nations’ jurisdiction over their territories after the rest of Oklahoma was admitted as a state.

Perhaps these letters are left out of the search for Native intellectual traditions because they are situated between the time periods commonly referenced in relation to Native literary eras: the nineteenth and early twentieth century and the contemporary outpouring of literature after the late 1960s. They do not fit comfortably into a particular period given their publication in opening years of the twentieth century.

These epistolary works of fictional storytelling, however, should be considered before claims are made that early nonfiction writing comprised a more direct or authentic link to Indian experience, political affairs, or the most obvious way of understanding a foundational link in Native theory or criticism. They at least add something to the creation story of Native intellectual practice that is worth consideration, and they pose important questions about whether one kind of literature (nonfiction) can be a more direct pipeline to a pure source of experience or politics than another (fiction). We do not suggest a postmodern turn in which literature is merely a proving ground for demonstrating that there is really no difference between nonfiction and fiction but a historical one in which the differences between the two forms of expression are contextualized in relation to the Indian and non-Indian worlds that surround them.

Hence Posey, concerned for his son’s future education, forbade young Alex to speak the Muskogee Creek language when he turned the age of fourteen. One of the ways of looking at the Fus Fixico letters is to view them as a personal revolution when Alexander Posey in his adult years defied his father’s sanction and insisted on “talking Indian” again and having that speech validated as significant literary expression. Here we are purposefully suggesting the possibility that Posey’s proclamation of a literary language he characterized as “Este Charte” (pronounced “stijaati” in Creek) involved an understanding that English could function as a Muskogee Creek language, a radical thesis then as now. In his correspondence with his con-
temporary fellow Este Charte writer Charles Gibson, Posey’s major criticism of cheap imitators, publishing simulations in newspapers that borrowed from his own work and other Indian writers, was that the briefest time inside the territory would prove the inaccuracy of their depictions of the language. This is to say Posey recognized Este Charte as an actual language spoken by Creeks as well as one that had become a literary tradition. One of the criteria of a language is that its meanings are communally conferred, and the literary language Posey created certainly passes that test since he was neither the first of its speakers and writers nor the last. Posey’s Este Charte is a passed-on oral and literary tradition, a Creek language in English. Daniel F. Littlefield Jr. documents the dialect’s relation to other tribal literature as well, particularly the Cherokee writers whose work preceded Posey’s in the 1880s.

The Este Charte tradition, further, did not conclude at Posey’s untimely death the year after statehood in 1908 when he drowned in the Canadian River. Jesse McDermott, who also worked for the Dawes Commission at the same time as Posey, wrote dialect letters from 1909 to 1913. Dialect writings of Creek-Pawnee painter Acee Blue Eagle were published posthumously in the 1960s. A number of writers from other southeastern tribes continued this tradition after Posey’s death. Of most importance to our studies in relation to Thomas E. Moore is probably the actor, pundit, and self-described “poet lariat” Will Rogers, who grew up reading territory newspapers and, later, took the dialect tradition to the American mainstream, where he presented his famous wise-fool persona as the person most likely to accurately assess the political challenges that faced America.

While outside the purview of this essay, much could be said about the structural framework of the dialect writing and Rogers’s version of it in his writings and radio broadcasts which one Muskogee scholar, Tol Foster, describes as one of the best running commentaries on the state of the American union in the 1920s and 1930s that is available. Foster’s work calls for an examination of Rogers’s broadly American discourse within the field of Native American studies given the amazing phenomena that one of the most important men in America in
those decades was an Indian, one, in fact, deeply rooted in the language, politics, and culture of his tribe and yet speaking so strongly to the broader American condition.

The most important writer to produce Muskogee dialect literature in the former territory and newly emerged state of Oklahoma after Posey’s untimely death was Thomas E. Moore, whose letters appeared front page as a regular Sunday feature of the *Tulsa World* in the late 1930s and early 1940s and again, briefly, in 1964 and 1965. Moore wrote under the pen name William Harjo, and his column was called *Sour Sofkee*, where some 150 of his letters appeared, an output, in fact, larger than Posey’s. In a personal interview, conducted in the summer of 2002 in Thomas E. Moore’s Okmulgee, Oklahoma, home, which will be constantly referenced from here on out in this article, Moore told us he chose the name William Harjo simply because it was so easily recognizable as a Creek name, and he felt that if he were to take up Creek subject matter he should use a readily identifiable Creek moniker. Moore’s literary predecessor, Alexander Posey, had also begun his literary career by choosing a persona at Bacone, where he first started to write under the name of Chinubbie Harjo, a choice of persona that a more recent Creek writer, Louis Oliver, problematizes in ways, evidently, that Moore and Posey did not, even linking the persona to Posey’s early death:

Had he not changed his name to
Chenube Harjo,
the river would not have taken him.
Many will believe my thought.
The Harjos were strange and mystical people
with possible animosities
from the snakes, Alabamas, Espagogees, Seminoles.
I’m not naming all the others,
but you my people would know them.

I’m speaking about Alexander Posey;
I believe a “hex” was put
upon his soul.7
Thomas E. Moore was born October 1, 1911, three miles south of Morris in Okmulgee County, Oklahoma. At the time of our interview with Mr. Moore, he was a relatively nimble ninety-one years of age, as ninety-one year olds go. Moore attended elementary school at Morris, then four years of Chilocco boarding school for his high school education. One of his fellow students was the soon-to-be-well-known Creek artist Acee Blue Eagle, who became an important part of the story as to how Moore ended up as a featured editorialist on the Tulsa paper. Of his Chilocco days, Moore said,

When I first went to Chilocco in 1925 I was in the ninth grade, and they put us in Home Two. They had two big dormitories. Home One was for the older boys. Home Two was for the younger boys. And Home Three was for the young girls. That was one of the biggest dorms there. And then on down around Home Four was where the older girls stayed, and they had one thousand students when I was there. Housed them from all over the state of Oklahoma, and I stayed in a room, Blue Lake in Home Two. Old Acee McIntosh [Acee Blue Eagle] that was his real name, he was one of my roommates, and there was a Cherokee boy in there named Marion Quinton; he was a full blood Cherokee. I was the youngest boy in that group. There was about five or six of us in there. Room Eight and that is where I got acquainted with Old Acee McIntosh. That was his name and then he adopted that Blue Eagle stuff, and he started painting you know and he was an artist and drawing pictures and things and then I knew him ever since then. He was a year ahead of me in school. I was in ninth grade, and he was in tenth grade.

At this point we should say something about Acee Blue Eagle since this Creek-Pawnee artist recommended Moore as a writer for the Tulsa World, wrote dialect letters himself that were published after his death, and, as director of the art department at Bacone College in the 1930s, contributed to the birth of an influential art movement sometimes called the Bacone School, a rich period of traditional art forms and themes. Blue Eagle worked hard at recognizing Oklahoma Indian
writers, in fact, creating perhaps the earliest Native-edited literary anthology in existence, titled *Oklahoma Painting-Poetry*, published in Tulsa in 1959. Blue Eagle was so intent on its publication that he refused to go to the hospital when he got sick in order to keep working on the anthology, and this may have contributed to his early death.

According to an undated publication that was part of a memorial exhibition at the Gilcrease Museum sometime shortly after Blue Eagle’s death in 1959,

Blue Eagle was born Laughing Boy [Che-bon Ah-bee-la in Creek] McIntosh on the Wichita Reservation, north of Anadarko, Oklahoma in 1910. The boy was seldom called by his given name but rather by a kind of nick-name “Ah-Say”; this was transliterated to Acee when the boy entered school. The name Blue Eagle had been his mother’s family name and was adopted by Acee.

Acee was interested in drawing Indian subjects from a very early age; he and his bronze skinned playmates [!] often sketched designs and symbols in the sands of the creek bottoms or on rough boards with charcoal from camp fires. As a boy Acee attended several Indian schools including Anadarko Riverside, Nuyaka and Euchee, Haskell and Chilocco and for a short period after being graduated from high school he was enrolled at Bacone College near Muskogee. During these years Acee was experimenting with crayons and paints, producing flat stylized drawings similar to the ones done on hides by his ancestors. Dr. Oscar B. Jacobson of the University of Oklahoma saw the young man’s work and encouraged him to study art at the university.

Acee received his B.F.A. degree from the University of Oklahoma in 1932. In 1935 he studied and lectured at Oxford University in England and then toured six countries to introduce the American Indian and American Indian art to European audiences. Actually, recognition came for Indian art in Europe before it did in America. The first large showing was arranged by Professor Jacobson in Prague, Czechoslovakia. Later, recognition was to come at home.
Blue Eagle’s paintings were included in a large exhibit at the Grand Central Art Galleries in New York City in the mid-1930s. About the same time, he was commissioned to paint a mural of an Indian buffalo hunt for the library of the U.S.S. Oklahoma, which was sunk at Pearl Harbor in 1941. Acee also painted murals for several colleges in Oklahoma and for several public buildings under the P.W.A.P. After his return from Europe he was appointed art teacher at Bacone College, resigning to serve with the U.S. Army during World War II. After the war, Acee joined the art staff at Oklahoma State University Technological School in Okmulgee where he was in residence until the time of his death on June 18, 1959.

Blue Eagle’s death was indeed untimely; he had numerous projects begun—his life was full. He delayed going to the hospital to make final arrangements for the publishing of a booklet on the early Indian artists of Oklahoma [Oklahoma Indian Painting-Poetry]. It was Acee’s request that he be buried on the property next to the Gilcrease Museum in Tulsa. Thomas Gilcrease, founder of the museum, has long been a patron of the Indian artists of the area. Mr. Gilcrease has purchased over 50 paintings by Indian artists, almost 50 of which were by Blue Eagle. An impressive Indian burial ceremony took place on June 21 atop the museum hill, over-looking the city of Tulsa. The pallbearers were all Indian artists and included Black Bear Bosin, Jesse Davis, Brummett Echohawk and Fred Beaver.

While he is not the main focus of this study, we will quote two of Blue Eagle’s poems in order to demonstrate our contention that the body of dialect writing is a shared Creek network, a Muskogee literary movement with historical continuity. The first is called “Why Injun Artist Me.” What is striking about the poem, in addition to its place in Muskogeean literary history, is the way in which it prefigures the larger world of modern tribal literature with its emphasis on the healing aspects of narrative that are so central to the recovery stories of novels like House Made of Dawn (N. Scott Momaday), Ceremony (Leslie Marmon Silko), and Love Medicine (Louise Erdrich).
Many peoples was wonders why
My eyes not on a stars and sky
Sed it my fren’s, he easy could
Make good lawyer, doctor an’ should
Oh could make it lots of moneys
Fo’ him it sure would be good

I’m long years ago, use to think so
But like that, don’ think it no mo’
I’m jus’ don’ know’d why is so
But som’ting sed nother way to go
Maybe Great Spirit high in a sky
He’s know heap much better than I

Guess lots of it nother of man
Be Doctor, lawyer, so many can
So want me paint Indian and sacred sun
Sacred dances, games and lot of fun
So people see for many years to com’

So that’s why I’m not go like
Injun to be like white man
But paint Sacred, many pictures
of Injun and hope it can
Be good medicine, with sacred beauty,
Like Injun Priest paint with sand.10

One cannot help but remember Leslie Marmon Silko’s life story in which she recalls falling away from an early interest in law because she felt that narratives had more potential for changing the world, just as the poetic speaker here insists on his own pursuit of sacred discourse instead of the legal or medical path that many might think a talented, successful Indian of Blue Eagle’s generation should follow. In this way, this particular poem has larger ramifications outside the Creek world, an especially important aspect of Blue Eagle’s work given his southern plains family history on his mother’s side.
A “more Creek” poem takes up a subject that seems to be universal among Creek writers and is titled “Sofkey Time.” Both Posey and Moore write of sofkey, Moore drawing the title for his column from the famous Creek dish, and for Posey the “sofkey pot” creates a major sense of place and scene in his letters where women are busy cooking and men are sitting around talking. Blue Eagle’s version goes like this:

Eva’ heard you about Sofkey Time  
Injun sure like it ’cause suree good  
It’s most good kind of food for us  
Sure like it Injun peoples that kind  
Cook it that corn in pot with hickory wood.

Long in afall of summa weathers  
That Injun corn is good and hard  
Indian womans put corn in Keecho  
And just sprinkle lil’ of it waters  
So corn no jump out and pound it hard.

Put in tray wove of hickory wood  
Jus’ flip it up in air, wind blow husk  
Make a nice Sofkey grits as she could  
If never seen my fren’ you should

Cause wood ashes lye and cook long time  
That Injun womans put in a pot  
And when Sofkey is cook real good  
Oh Creek Injun sure like a lot.

Humorous elements surround the consumption of sofkey because it is, truly, an acquired taste, and it fits in with “fumbee” (stinky) comedy because of its sour smell. A jar of sofkey, if it is the strong kind, makes one sit up and pay attention when it is uncapped. It is the sort of thing that might not make a person laugh the first time she tastes it but is good for a chuckle or two from onlookers. Not even all Creeks and Seminoles like it, though for many it is a na-
tional delicacy. Traditionally, all houses had to have a jar of it around for guests. Today it is mostly eaten at the grounds and churches and special feeds.

Moore makes sofkey humorous because he lampoons what sometimes seem like lazy men sitting around doing all the talking while women are doing all the work. This is a very common theme in Posey’s letters, men b.s.ing while women cook, and this male languor often occurs around the sofkey pot. There is a comic role reversal here because women, stereotypically, are accused of being the gossips, but the men are always the gossips in the Fus Fixico letters. While Creek men do their own share of the work in ceremonial and church situations, it is the women around the fire that are really visible and appear to be working the hardest. A lot of what the men do in terms of arduous arbor building and so on occurs out in the woods where lumber is cut, for example, out of sight from the camps in the case of ceremonies and churches, and, hunting, fishing, farming, chopping wood, and so on in terms of traditional rural life earlier in the century. So it might seem like at home, around porches and fires, men do most of the sitting and yakking. Women, of course, have their social times too while cooking. Unfortunately, we do not get these women’s perspectives from Posey. There is definitely a lack of female viewpoints in the Fus Fixico letters. Posey’s work is written from a male perspective, and, like most Creek males, he probably would not be privy to everything women do and say. To his credit, it seems to us, he is at least able to make fun of the male worlds he is familiar with. It is unfortunate that he did not explore women characters with as much depth.

Moore’s contribution to the Creek literary sofkey pot is entitled “The Sofkee Maker” and takes up some of these Poseian caricatures of Creek males:

Did you ask me what I’m gonna do today?
Well, set down you an’ come close up this way.
I tell all about it—everything—to you;
An’ give you some to eat when we git through.
I make it something good to eat right now;
My wife he do the work, but anyhow,
I have to set down right here all day long,
Don't even git tired, me, just sing a song.

I pound all that yonder sofkee grit;
I mean for little while, but I just quit.
No, aint lazy, me, wife just want to do,
Beside, my hand hurt an’ sun sure hot too!

Some Indian sofkee keep ’bout three weeks long,
But I don’t like that, me—taste, he’s too strong.
Ol’ man Woxie like sofkee whole lot sour;
He eat it every day for two three hour.

You say wife do all the work look like to you,
An’ you bet I set right here ’till he git through?
Well, I have job myself, whole lot:
I keep the fire burnin’ under pot!¹²

The caricaturization of men’s relationships to women, and men’s tendency to sit and talk, is pervasive in Posey. For example, Fus reports, “Well, so I was not write to you any news to put in for about a month nearly. But I didn’t had no time to write. My cotton was bust open so much last two three weeks I was had to pick it out like everything. Guess so I pick out every day about twenty-five pounds or little over, and my wife, he was pick out about fifty pounds maybe.”¹³ Fus also says, “So I will write you some more news to put in like Charley Gibson, while I was lots a time sitting around the house doing nothing but drink sofky and smoke maybe.”¹⁴ Fus reports on a hardworking Creek woman cooking for her husband’s “hang around the sofkee pot” buddies who seem less than appreciative:

Well, so Kono Harjo’s wife was made some more sour bread and some more suck-ko-nip-kee and some more blue dumpling and some more good hickory nut sofky, and old time Indian dishes like that, for New Year; and Kono Harjo was sent
word to Hotgun and Wolf Warrior and Tookpafka Micco to come over and help eat it up so he could throw the scraps out to his squirrel dogs.\(^{15}\)

To return to the chronology of Moore’s biography after our literary side trips around the sofkey pot, Bacone, and other places, in addition to meeting Acee Blue Eagle at Chilocco, an important contact who would one day help launch his literary column, it was at Chilocco that Moore was exposed to, and began writing, poetry: “Oh, we studied English. We had good teachers here. The woman that taught us in English, a white woman named Mrs. Fieldman. She is a graduate of the University of Kansas . . . that is when I first read poetry.”

Moore then attended Bacone Indian University, where incipient literary ideas that had begun at Chilocco took further root. When asked where he got the ideas for the characters in his poems and letters, he responded:

Oh, I don’t know. I got those ideas when I was in Chilocco probably. I mean that is when I got those ideas about writing about those funny fellows and down in Bacone I was on the weekly. Bacone used to publish a weekly newspaper. *Bacone Indian* they called it. I was on the editorial staff of that paper. I got a half a college credit hour for doing it. Every once in a while they’d have a special in there by somebody so I would write that special, write about what I wanted to, various things, bad legs or anything. That is why I wrote a lot of the stuff. Sometimes I would write a poem when it was my turn to write. I would write them a little poem and then print it. *Bacone Indian*, Bacone’s weekly newspaper.

Moore’s father had also attended Bacone from 1890 to 1893 in its early years, and one of Moore’s own brothers went there as well. Bacone College is the oldest continuous institution of higher learning in Oklahoma, established in 1880 by the American Baptist Church for the purpose of educating American Indians. Muskogee writers Thomas E. Moore, Alexander Posey, and Louis Littlecoon Oliver all
attended Bacone. Moore and Posey both wrote for campus student publications there—for Posey it was the beginning of his experiments with persona writing where his Chinubbie character evolved. Almon C. Bacone, the founder of Bacone Indian University (later named Bacone College), had “originally come to the Cherokee Nation to be an instructor at the Cherokee Male Seminary at Tahlequah, but he decided there was a need for a ‘Literary and Theological School for Indians.’ This feeling he expressed at a seminal meeting of the Baptist Cherokee Association held on October 10, 1879, at the Fourteen Mile Creek Church.”\footnote{16} The original intent of the school was to educate the Five Civilized Tribes and Delawares. In spite of an early mission to the southeastern tribes and, later, to a broader tribal constituency, the school, however, has a special historical relationship to Muskogee peoples:

In October of 1881 Bacone came before the government of the Muscogee-Creek Nation asking permission to locate the Indian University near Muskogee. After discussing the request, the Muscogee-Creek House of Warriors [the lower house of the Nation’s legislative body] voted to table Bacone’s request. Samuel Checote, Principal Chief of the Muscogee-Creek Nation, disagreed with the result and contacted the members of the House of Warriors to urge them to consider the advantages of having this institution of higher learning inside their Nation. On October 29, 1881, William McCombs moved that the tabled motion be reconsidered. On the next balloting it passed by a vote of thirty-nine to thirty-five. The House of Kings [the upper house of the Muscogee-Creek legislative assembly] moved rapidly, passing the bill that same day, giving the Indian University a charter along with permission to locate on 160 acres of Muscogee-Creek land. This grant was made with the stipulation that the Indian University had to open its enrollment to students from all Indian Nations. This university thus became the one land-grant institution of higher learning established by an Indian Nation.\footnote{17}

In the years that Posey and Moore attended Bacone, they would have
received a conventional education, part of a four-year program, that would be like a high school degree today: courses in algebra, Latin, Greek, European history, American history, physiology, natural philosophy, geometry, trigonometry, logic, English literature, surveying, astronomy, the history of Western civilization, chemistry, zoology, botany, French, German, mental philosophy, political economy, moral philosophy, and evidences of Christianity were some of the course offerings available to students. Interestingly, while literature was part of the curriculum, it was not a major emphasis at Bacone, so one might wonder why several Creek writers flourished there.

Bacone did not become well known as an art school until the early 1930s, when it established an art department, which Acee Blue Eagle himself chaired from 1935 to 1938, a productive time period when a school of traditional Indian art that would become internationally known began to emerge there. More research needs to be done in order to understand what it was at Bacone in Posey’s and Moore’s generations that might have encouraged them to become writers. One factor is that it was likely a literary training ground by default, the place Creeks were most likely, early in the century, to attend “college,” essentially high school, with possibilities of matriculating to university, if they were so inclined or the right opportunities presented themselves.

One has to remember that, after the destruction of the tribal educational institutions such as the Creek Nation schools that suffered the same fate as the dissolution of tribal governments, in many areas of rural Oklahoma Indians simply were not allowed to attend public schools, or they chose not to make forays into an education system that had gone from tribal to non-Indian jurisdiction. Indian education suffered tremendously during the statehood era—to be specific, it worsened after the closing of the tribal schools, and illiteracy rates increased in the early part of the century within Indian nations that were more literate than their surrounding white neighbors in Texas and Arkansas during the territorial period. Schools like Bacone and Chilocco, for some Native people, were the only institutions of higher learning Indians could still attend or still wanted to attend.

During the early part of Bacone’s history, further, the majority
of its faculty members were bilingual, speaking one or more Indian languages. Bacone always had some Indian faculty and, somewhat like the school Institute of American Indian Art that would emerge later as a major Indian art school in the 1960s in Santa Fe, New Mexico, Native students were encouraged to exchange cultural information with members of other tribes. These students were encouraged to learn something about their tribal backgrounds as part of what constituted a broad American education. Needless to say there was a heaping helping of Baptist theology as well, but this waxed and waned in emphasis in the evolution of Bacone and at no point was it a school where students only went to Bible classes or even predominantly to Bible classes. It was probably an Indian-friendly place in ways atypical of the federally run boarding schools that emerged during the latter part of the 1880s, where Native students were shipped in from far away, schools that educated a large proportion of Indians attending educational institutions until John Collier, commissioner of Indian Affairs in the 1930s, began his well-known reforms as part of the Indian New Deal, one of which was mainstreaming American Indian students into the public school system.

Bacone had connections, further, to continuing education, including matriculating a few students to Yale. In Moore’s case, after Bacone, he went on to college and completed a bachelor of arts degree at William Jewell College at Liberty, Missouri, and then graduated with a bachelor of law degree from the College of Law at the University of Oklahoma. In the 1930s, Moore had moved to Wewoka, Oklahoma, and he had gone to work for the Bureau of Indian Affairs in 1934. He recalled the beginning of his Sour Sofkee column thusly:

I got this call from Mr. N. G. Henthorn. I believe that was his name. He was editor of the Tulsa World. He said, “Come see me.” So I went up there, and he said, “Your friend old Acee McIntosh Blue Eagle was in here, and he recommended you,” he said. He [Henthorn] said, “Write something for the paper, anything you want to write. Don’t you ever write anything that criticizes Indians or we won’t print it if you do.” I said, “I wouldn’t do that,” and so he had me to show him some stuff I
had written, poems and things. “Oh, yeah, that is just fine.” So I wrote that for several years for the *Tulsa World*, in Sunday’s *World*, and on the feature page, right on the first page.

Like Posey, a source of inspiration for his columns would be local happenings:

Sometimes I would go by and N.G. said come in here and visit with him. So I did. I knew him . . . I always liked Mr. Henthorn when I went in there, and he would tell me there was an art show, Indian art over uptown [Tulsa]. But downtown they had a display of Indian art up there. “Do you know what that art show is?” and I said, “No, I am not an artist.” They said, “You ought to go over there and look at it.” Henthorn said, “Go over there and look at that and then you write about it, and we will publish it.” So I went over there and looked at those pictures, and I knew some of the guys that had drawn some of those pictures, painted them, so I wrote a story about it, and it is supposed to be creative and funny you know, and I sent some and they published it, and then I would go up there and see them once in a while and then Mr. Henthorn would say, “You come back after you go and tell me what you thought about that,” so I did.

Though sometimes reporting on local events, and always rooting his stories in locale—that is, in the speech, geography, and culture of his home landscape that falls under Creek jurisdiction—Moore also deviates in important ways from Alexander Posey’s earlier work. Like his hero Will Rogers, Moore uses his writing to comment on the larger fabric of American society, and even on international news, especially the two events that shaped the 1930s more than any others: the Great Depression and the looming war in Europe. Posey, on the other hand, was concerned with directing his attention to the politics of Indian Territory and the looming statehood issues. Posey often ventured into Washington politics, but they were in relation to territorial issues rather than an investigation of American society and history. One connection to Will Rogers is especially obvious in
the book-length published compilation of the Sour Sofkee letters because one of them is titled “Wooley on the Death of Will Rogers”:

Wooley Fixico he say:
“Will Roger” he was died the other day;
Killed in airplane fallin down,
Long way from home, ’bout thousand miles from town.
Now we miss it whole lot too,
’Cause aint got funny joke like use’ to do;
Old Man Will was make good joke,
Just give to you so much big laugh you choke.

“In happiest fell ever see,
Make everybody happy try to be;
If you all time feel like mad,
Will Roger’ make you laugh all over glad!
He’s Indian fella, Cherokee,
Belongs to tribe all time like you an’ me;
He was had allotment land
In Cherokee hills where whole lot rock an’ sand.

“Will Roger’ he was best kind,
’Nother man like him in whole world can’t find;
Good man he’s young fella died,
Bad one like me can’t die if he tried.
Maybe hundred years I live
Before use up time some good man give;
Maybe then last song I sing.”
Wooley he was said these thing.18

In our interview with Mr. Moore, he recalled two anecdotes about Will Rogers; the first was a humorous one in regards to a Will Rogers speech Moore witnessed:

I was at Chilocco . . . and they dedicated a pioneer woman statue. It is in Ponca City now. We went down there, and when they dedicated that they had a big celebration that day. . . . Will
Rogers was the principal speaker . . . and they had a big parade, and he and Alice Robertson were riding in that convertible in the parade.19 . . . We were there, and we saw several people there that day. . . . Will Rogers . . . he was speaking when they dedicated that pioneer woman statue. They had a cover over her at first, and Will Rogers got up there and made a speech . . . and he said, “you know my wife; I have a broad-minded wife . . . She let me come all the way here to Ponca City, Oklahoma, to take the clothes off another woman.” He said that. I heard him. “Yeah, my wife, got the most broad-minded woman in the world,” he said. “She let me come all the way from California here to Ponca City to take the clothes off another woman.” He jerked that rope, and that thing fell off and there was this beautiful statue.

A more serious issue Moore recalled has to do with the Creek National Council House that the city of Okmulgee was considering tearing down:

The oil men around town wanted to restore that [council house] and put a hotel in there. This is back in the teens I believe—teens or twenties—and he [Will Rogers] came down there and he had a program . . . at the Hippodrome Theater and he said, “Now you have the council house here. It is a Creek council house and it is the only one in the world. You wouldn’t destroy something if it is the only one in the world.” And he saved our council house. “Don’t you ever let them tear that council house down.” Old Will Rogers told them that [when] he was making a public speech down here. And he told them, “You know Okmulgee is a wonderful city. Something important there that council house,” he said, “don’t you ever let them tear that council house down,” he said.

Moore also fondly recalled Rogers at the Orpheum Theater in Muskogee giving a speech to try to raise money for Arkansas flood victims. The Rogers influence is much evident in the expanded scope of Moore’s writings, which use Muskogee Creek life as a springboard for American and international issues.
Moore comes by his politics naturally. He is a lawyer after all, but both his personal and familial histories lend themselves to a Creek, an American, and an international perspective. One might mention, for example, Moore’s experience as an overseas veteran of World War II during which time he served in the U.S. Army in the Pacific Theater and with the occupation forces in Japan soon after hostilities ceased. Or one could note his family’s Muskogean politics and their history of having served in Creek national offices as early as when Creeks transplanted their government to Indian Territory and a Moore held the office of national treasurer. One of his sons, Patrick Moore, at the time of the writing of this article, sits on the bench of the Muskogee Supreme Court. Moore and his wife have been active in the Republican Party (we might note here a complicated Creek history in that the Republican Party was the side that traditionalists under Opothle Yahola sided with in defiance of the official Creek government that allied itself with and fought for the Confederacy during the Civil War; Creek-Republican links involve complicated shifting alliances). The political turn of Moore’s letters is a natural embodiment, perhaps a fulfillment, of his history.

Before further exploring Moore’s intellectual links to Alexander Posey, his other obvious influence besides Will Rogers, let us mention a personal connection. Moore’s father knew Posey well:

He [Alexander Posey] was quite a bit younger than my dad was. He was a real good friend. He used to come to Okmulgee, and the Creek Nation had an orphans’ home where Tech [an old school building in Okmulgee] is now and old Posey was the superintendent out there [at] one time and they used to come over there and he would go back because every one of them horses pulled buggies in those days and they would just go across the country. Posey would come out to stay all night with him on his way home or on his way to Okmulgee. He knew him real well.

Like Posey, Moore also used his column to focus on prominent Creeks. Chitto Harjo and his followers who were known as Snakes become an important influence on Fus Fixico, and the Snakes were
mentioned frequently in the letters. Chitto Harjo was a Creek traditionalist leader who fought against Oklahoma statehood, most significantly by forming an alternative Creek government at Hickory Grounds, one of the ceremonial sites, after the United States refused to recognize the official Creek government at Okmulgee subsequent to the Curtis Act. Harjo’s alternative government continued into the 1930s long after Harjo’s own death shortly after statehood.

A little-known fact about Chitto Harjo is that he was involved with formal organizational networks that were part of a calculated resistance, one being the Mother of Four Nations, a traditionalist underground that crossed southeastern tribal lines and brought together discontents from the Five Civilized Tribes in a unified political front against the statehood interests. These leaders had contact with one another because their fires, their ceremonial grounds, were interlinked. They saw one another frequently at the night dances and during Green Corn because when they were not having their home ground ceremonies, they were visiting other grounds. An incredibly important part of Creek dances is the visitors who are called on throughout the evening to lead songs and keep the singing and dancing going until morning. The religious and political nature of Harjo’s resistance to Oklahoma statehood was deeply intertwined, and these resisting square grounds were a political as well as a spiritual movement, just as they had been in earlier crises such as the Red Stick War.

Similar to Posey, who wrote prominent Creeks such as Chitto Harjo into his letters, Moore also dramatizes well-known community members. One such Creek, arguably famous or infamous, is Jackson Barnett. His story is not quite as noble as Chitto Harjo’s, and it has a tragicomic undercurrent. Moore had this to say about Barnett:

He was originally from around Henryetta. And he wasn’t very well educated, and he was one of the richest Creek Indians. Some white woman went down there around Henryetta kind of got acquainted with him and sort of kidnapped him. She took him and left for Canada and got married to him and then crossed into Missouri and got married to him over there, and then they went to California, Los Angeles, and lived there . . .
well he wasn’t very smart and wasn’t very well educated at all and they lived in Los Angeles and she never would let him see Indians or go around them. You know he got into it with the government . . . some way I don’t know, and they bought a nice home in Los Angeles. . . . He was having fun I guess and then he got sick and died. . . . He never had any children, of course, and then the government got into it and said she wasn’t legally married to him at all. I don’t know how that ever came out. But they had a big law suit. Of course, it was in federal court, and when he died they had spent a lot of his money, and when he died, well, the Indian kinfolk heirs, fifteen or twenty of them, came out of the woodwork, Okmulgee and places. They came in, and they had a little money off of his estate, and that woman, they sort of eliminated her [as heir], the white woman that kidnapped him and married him and took him to California and wouldn’t let him come back to Oklahoma to see his folks. He used to live out there for years and years until he died.

The poem in *Sour Sofkee* is entitled “Jackson Barnett the Richest Indian”:

Jackson Barnett he was died the other day,
That’s what city newspaper all time say;
He leave big money—how much I don’t know,
Guess maybe two three million dollars maybeso

Jackson Barnett had oil wells whole lot;
Was had so much he can’t spend all he’s got;
His name ‘Richest Indian for whole world’ they say;
He just thousan’ dollars spend it every day.

Old man Jackson kin folks don’t had it none
Before he gittin’ rich an’ havin’ fun;
Just poor an’ livin’ by his self down there,
’Cause kin folks he aint got it some no where.
When old man livin’ seem like nobody care,
But now, kin folks whole lot he want his share;
No flowers send when he was died or even take off hat!
An’ now: Just claimin’ cousin, nephew an all like that.

Indian fellas, White man, colored folks too,
Git Barnett money they all want to do;
When court turn money loose maybe nex’ fall,
I sody pop bet you lawyers git him all!

Look like everybody in there try to be;
If my name Barnett I there too, me;
I have dozen lawyers in that court all time,
An’ maybe I git nickels. . . . . . or a dime.21

One of Moore’s obvious accomplishments in a poem such as this one is the challenge of creating rhyming couplets while maintaining the authenticity of the dialect; this is to say the rhymes limit his word choices at the end of the line, and, within those limited choices, he must also try to convey the peculiarities of his Muskogee language in English. To offer further evidence that Moore’s dialect writing, especially, and Posey’s earlier writing are a Creek language, we want to point out that Muskogee Creek is based on a subject-object-verb structure rather than subject-verb-object as in non-Muskogeean English. Taking the Jackson Barnett poem as an example, this is evident in several lines: “He just thousan’ dollars spend it every day” instead of “He spent a thousand dollars every day”; “Old man Jackson kin folks don’t had it none” instead of “Old Man Jackson didn’t have any kin folks”; and “I sody pop bet you” instead of “I bet you a soda pop.” Moore, of course, does not duplicate the subject-object-verb structure in every line of the poem because by switching back and forth between the standard English subject-verb-object and the Muskogeean English subject-object-verb, he makes the Muskogeean features emerge more prominently by way of contrast, creating heightened ironies that are so important to humor.

One feature of Moore’s dialect writing is the personification of
inanimate objects: “city newspaper all time say.” In other places, gender pronouns are sometimes given to ideas: “Big mistake somebody make all time when he say horse sense he’s smart,” this from Mr. Moore’s second inclusion in Sour Sofkee, a prose piece called “Horse Sense.” Sometimes the poetic lines communicate a Muskogean literary style that deviates from both Muskogee and English structures, as in this gem of a jumbled sentence in the Jackson Barnett poem: “Cause kin folks he aint got it some no where.” This is an object-subject-verb sentence in which humans are depersonified; kinfolks become “its” (this was before Cousin It of Adams Family fame), and Moore uses the contradictory indications of possession to a humorous effect, “aint” juxtaposed with “got” and “some” with “no.” Does he have kin or does he not? That is the question. Jackson Barnett’s estate was surrounded by just such controversies.

The Jackson Barnett of the poem is a tragicomic figure rich in currency and poor in kinfolks. Another kind of caricature in both Moore’s and Posey’s writing involves more famous people outside the Indian world. It is a strange coincidence, if in fact it is one, that both Posey and Moore lambasted a Roosevelt—in the first case the earlier U.S. president of Rough Rider fame, and in the second the president who presided over the New Deal. “President Roosevelt’s Fishing Trip” is one of the prose pieces in Sour Sofkee:

March 3, 1940. Well, President Roosevelt go ’nother fishin’ trip. Same thing usual . . . when everything too much git hot in Washington for him. Every time like that he go vacation somewhere . . . an’ tax-payers pay expense bills. Everybody got nosey interest in President vacation. Nobody know where he go. Nobody know why he go. Talk about it all time . . . try to everything figure out. Somebody say Mister Roosevelt go ’nother vacation ’cause he loan money Finland an’ want to git away from Washington so can’t hear Republican Senators bawl him out about it. But that information got mistake on it. Mister Roosevelt more smart man than that. I tell you why he go this time. He already fix it up with Congress to loan money Finland ’cause Finland he’s war now an’ need all he can git.
So, President just Congress fix it up with him. Then he go on vacation. While he’s gone Congress let Finland have money . . . whole lot of it. Then President won’t git no blame on it.

When Republicans ask him about it an’ start bawl him out, he say, “I didn’t have nothin’ do with it . . . don’t know nothing about it. . . . I on vacation when that happen!”

That’s why Mister Roosevelt go vacation this time. He don’t want to ketch fish. Don’t even need it vacation ’cause he aint tired. . . . aint done nothin’ but set down all time an’ speech make about radio fireside chat.\textsuperscript{23}

For comparison’s sake, consider Posey’s critique of Theodore Roosevelt as compared to Moore’s letter about Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Posey, as mentioned earlier, concerns himself more with American politics inasmuch as they relate to Indian Territory, so it is natural that he tells a story about Roosevelt’s visit to the territory:

“Well, so,” Hotgun he say, “Colonel Clarence B. Duglast, he was dee-lighted, and Charley Gibson he was dee-lighted, and Alice M. Lobbysome she was dee-lighted too.”\textsuperscript{24} And Tookpafka Micco he was look down his old pipe-stem and say, “Well, so what for?” And Hotgun he go on and say, “Well so ’cause the Great White Father from Washington was suffered ’em to come unto ’im on the grand stand, while he was showing his teeth and shaking the Big Stick before the multitude up to Muskogee.” Then Tookpafka Micco he spit out in the yard and say, “Well, so what kind of a thing’s the Big Stick, anyhow?” And Hotgun he look wise, like the supreme court, and explain it, “Well so the Big Stick was the symbol of power, like a policeman’s billy. In the jungles a Africky it was called a war-club; and in the islands a the sea, like Australia, it was called a boomer-rang; and among us fullblood Injins we call it a ball-stick; and if it was fall in the hands a the women folks, it was called a rolling-pin, or maybe so, a broom-handle. It was had lots a different names, like breakfast food. Over in Europe a king was had precious stones put in it, to make it more ornamental than useful, and call it a scepter. The brass-knucks was
the latest improvement on it. In olden times Samson was had a Big Stick made out of a jaw-bone of a ass, and was made a great hit with it among the Philistines. Same way when the Great White Father was want to show his influence all he had to do was to flourish the Big Stick and everybody was get out from under it.” (Wolf Warrior and Kono Harjo they was grunt and Tookpakka Micco he was pay close attention and spit out in the yard again.) Then Hotgun he smoke slow and go on and say, “Well, so, like I first start to say, Colonel Clarence B. Duglast he was dee-lighted and Chief P. Porter he was dee-lighted, and Charley Gibson he was dee-lighted and Alice M. Lobbysome she was dee-lighted too. They was all butt in before the reception committee could see if they badges was straight. They was put the Great White Father on they shoulders and histed ’im upon the grand stand, and he was made a talk to the multitude. He say, ‘Well, so I was mighty glad to see you all and hope you was all well. I couldn’t complain and I was left Secretary Itscocked enjoying good health. (Big cheers and somebody out in the crowd say, Bully for Itscocked!) Look like you all was had a fine country down here. You all ought to had statehood and let Oklahoma show you how to run it. (Colonel Clarence B. Duglast, he pay close attention and listen for some word ’bout ’imself.) I want everybody to had a square deal down here. (Lots more big cheers and everybody smiling but the Snake Injin.) You all was had a fine town here too. You could run flat boats up to it from Ft. Smith, and deliver the goods over lots of railroads, and pump out oil, and develop salt-licks and float bee-courses. But I didn’t had time to talk any more, ’cause I couldn’t stop here but two minutes and I have been here put near five. So long.’

“Then the special train was kick up a cloud of dust and hide behind it, and the multitude was climb down off the houses and telegraph poles and go tell they neighbors ’bout it. Colonel Clarence B. Duglast he go and tell his friends the President think he was ten cents straight, and Chief P. Porter he go and tell his friends the President say he was the greatest
living Injin, and Charley Gibson he go and write a ‘Rifle Shot’
’bout giving the President a fan made out a tame turkey feathers instead of eagle plumes, and Alice M. Lobbysome she go and buy the platform the President stood on for a souvenir. Maybe so she was made a bedstead out of it and distribute the sawdust and shavings among the full-bloods to look at.”

And Tookpafka Micco he say, “Well, so I might need some kindling next winter and the keepsakes was come in handy.” (Wolf Warrior and Kono Harjo they was give another big grunt.)

Then Hotgun he go on and say, “Well, so the next stop the Great White Father make was out in Oklahoma in a big pasture, where they was lots of cayotes. He was got after one a horse-back and crowd it over the prairies till he was get good results and captured it alive. He was had lots of fun with it before he was run it down. The President was a great hunter and was kill big game well as a cayote or jackrabbit. So he was to the Rocky Mountains to beard the bear and lion in they den.”

And Tookpafka Micco he say, “Well, so this time the Lord better help the grizzly.”

Some of the political phrases may be a little dated for today’s readers, but most will recognize the big stick policy in terms of the phrase itself if not its contemporary manifestations in terms of U.S. colonial policies in Iraq—only the “speak softly” part has changed. It is amazing to us to think that this was an Indian talking about the president of the United States in a territory newspaper in 1905. We cannot imagine an Indian pundit with this kind of editorial voice given a forum in the Gaylord-dominated Oklahoma media of our own time. This may be the result of the shift from territorial tribal governments whose elected Indian officials comprised the whole body politic to a state government in which Indians make up a small percentage of the legislature. The decline from 100 percent to much closer to zero percent participation in government, no doubt, is a pervasive enough power shift to affect Oklahoma media, as well as events under the capitol dome, which now has an Indian on top of it, though few inside the building.
The Moore and Posey comparison is instructive for its differences as well as its similarities. In both cases a president is the subject of a critique: FDR for his premeditated scheme to abdicate responsibility in relationship to a loan for Finland by claiming his absence when the decision was made and TR for a big stick policy that feels like a big bully policy in Indian Territory, where it means congressional decisions forced upon the tribes against their will.

In terms of literary devices, Moore’s work is marked by linguistic realism, an attempt to capture the spoken aspects of Este Charte, whereas Posey’s letters are more focused on the literary aspects of the dialect. In Posey’s case, we might note the more complicated narrative framework throughout the Fus Fixico letters. Not only do we have the elaborate literary hoax, that is, the editor of the *Eufaula Indian Journal* pretending to be someone else, writing to the editor of the *Eufaula Indian Journal*, that is, writing to himself—a spirit of mischief that is at the heart of the letters—but further the letters are based on the device of the overheard conversation. Fus Fixico, a full blood who does not speak good English, writes to the paper, reporting on what his friends are saying and doing. On one level, of course, this amounts to Posey writing to Posey who was very literate in English and, in some ways, quite unlike the character he represents in his column. It is fun to imagine how many people were in on the joke as opposed to those who believed in Fus as a real person and the debates that might have occurred in relation to his identity.

Inside Posey’s fiction, Fus repeats what he overhears discussed by several Creek full blood friends: Choela, Hotgun, Tookpafka Micco, Wolf Warrior, and Kono Harjo. Choela only appeared a short time in the letters before Posey killed him off in 1903. Hotgun and Tookpafka Micco are the main conversants, whereas Wolf Warrior and Kono Harjo are the grunters and spitters whose expectorations function as an Indian “harrumph” and, more importantly, who play a central role in dramatizing a listening audience. In other words, in the Fus Fixico letters we actually get to see the reactions of the audience to the storyteller. Further, as a literary device, the statements about the many forms the grunting and spitting function as effective dialogue
tags. Rather than the usual “he said” as an appendage at the end of quoted speech, we get a picture that develops character and scene and shows how listeners are responding to what they are hearing. There is one such line in the letter just quoted: “(Wolf Warrior and Kono Harjo they was grunt and Tookpafka Micco he was pay close attention and spit out in the yard again.)” This is a means of showing how stories are performed, the interactions between tellers and listeners, rather than just giving the facts of the story itself. It offers, further, little caricatures of traits easily recognizable by Creek readers as those of Creek men. We cannot recall how many talks we have heard proceeded by looking down at the ground, throat clearing, spitting, and shifting from foot to foot as part of the drama of starting one’s speech.

Posey, more pervasively than Moore, blurs the line between fiction and reality, another literary device. While Fus and friends are fictional, everyone else is real, and the events they discuss are real. Actual towns such as the metropolises of Bald Hill, Stidham, Fame, Lenna, and Canadian are named. Creek politicians like Chief Pleasant Porter are identified, as well as actual members of the Dawes Commission. In this regard, Posey invents an elaborate system of name caricatures where the name is disguised in such a way that it will lampoon the person it represents while, at the same time, no one can possibly mistake who it refers to (President Roosevelt, here “the Great White Father,” is more frequently referenced as “President Rooster Feather,” a caricaturization of his “cockiness”). Posey gives these nicknames to no less than ninety-six different political figures such as “Secretary Itscocked,” the secretary of the interior, Ethan Allen Hitchcock; Chief Make Certain, Choctaw Chief Green McCurtain; and Dam Big Pie, Tams Bigsby, a senator on the Dawes Commission. Representations of actual agenda items of territorial committees and meetings are discussed. Prominent political speeches are rendered in the letters. In Posey’s writing, fiction becomes the vehicle for a political forum, and the literary techniques of fictional representation are prominent.

Literary allusions, for example, are important. The first one in this particular letter is a gospel reference: “Well, so ’cause the Great White Father from Washington was suffered ’em to come unto ’im
on the grand stand, while he was showing his teeth and shaking the Big Stick before the multitude up to Muskogee.” This rich reference to Jesus’ admonition to “suffer the little children to come unto me” starkly contrasts Christ’s humility to Theodore Roosevelt’s “grand standing” (an obvious pun), as well as comments on federal paternalism in relationship to Indians in general, and territorial citizens in particular, as the federal government’s children who cannot make decisions on their own behalf and are thus in need of parental guidance from the Great White Father.

A second allusion, this one an aphorism that is often mistakenly quoted as scripture, is “the Lord helps them who help themselves.” When voiced through Tookpafka Micco, who applies his Creek sensibilities to the phrase, it becomes, “Well, so this time the Lord better help the grizzly.” Tookpafka Micco goes in for the kill with this line after Hotgun’s scathing indictment of the Great White Father as Great White Hunter whose idea of a sporting good time is running a coyote to death on horseback. In addition to depicting the arrogant ruthlessness of Teddy’s rough riding in relation to unfortunate mammals who cross his path, the whole “pull yourself up by your bootstraps” philosophy is shown in relation to those under the heel of the boot, the little guys who get run over, whose voices are not usually heard.

This is a major ploy in the Fus Fixico letters, one, we believe, with significant roots in Creek oral stories (which also have political readings), wherein little guys constantly face off with larger adversaries such as rabbit tricking wolf, turtle outrunning deer, turtle whose shell is busted by angry women, rabbit who is “doctored” by a buzzard who eats him, and so on. Littlefield has already commented on the other stylistic features of Posey’s work, which he describes as “his use of coined words, slang, western expressions, Latin phrases, puns and other plays on words, literary allusions, and understatement in reporting not only insignificant events and odd occurrences but more ordinary local news as well,” a body of work that he goes on to say constitutes “a tour de force of humorous effects.”

The ingeniousness of the literary allusions in Posey, we believe, is that they are so thoroughly Indianized that references to sentimental
British poets, scripture quotations, Latin phrases, characters from classical mythologies, and so on are often mistaken by readers as Creek cultural references. This is a process of transformation that shows how outside influences can be made Creek. It is almost as if Posey somehow intuited the theoretical debates around postmodern hybridities and prepared a contrary argument almost a century ahead of time that demonstrates that Indians can just as easily Indianize other cultural influences as be assimilated by them. Hybridity, to whatever degree this represents a useful literary concept, is certainly not a one-way street.

To get back to the narrative framework in Posey, the overheard conversation is important to comedy (think about the old schtick, “I heard a guy the other day . . .”). Hotgun and Tookpafka Micco comprise a comedic tag team, an aspect of humor that is fairly universal (Laurel and Hardy, Abbott and Costello, Lucy and Ricky, Beavis and Butthead, Victor and Thomas, Rudy and Mogie). Hotgun, true to his name, is quick to fire, and Tookpafka Micco responds to his spirited statements, providing the comedic sparring partner.

While in Moore’s work the narrative frame is simpler, usually from the perspective of a single viewpoint character, often an unnamed first-person narrator, and literary allusions and stylistic effects are less pronounced, the strength of Moore’s writing is representing spoken Este Charte. Moore, in our interview, commented on particular people who spoke the way he writes of them in Sour Sofkee, and he is as skilled at imitating them in person as he is in his column. Hearing him read his letters is a truly wonderful thing because one is reminded of what Posey might have had in mind in terms of his more stylized representation of Creek English speakers. Moore’s linguistic realism, in fact, exceeds Posey’s. We have already discussed Moore’s Muskogean subject-object-verb oriented English, and sentences of this type are more prevalent in his work than in Posey’s, which often concerns itself more with literary representations.

Other instances abound of authenticity of voice in Moore’s writings. Of Red Phillips’s gubernatorial inauguration speech, the poetic speaker says, “Nobody he don’t gonna poor,” making “poor” a verb rather than an adjective.27 Of the advantages of modern society, we are told, “Automobile, telephone, littlehouse-bathroom inside, radio
an' all that kind, everybody got it now.”28 The Muskogee word for bathroom translates literally into English as “little house,” and it is a carryover from the outhouse days. Literally, one now has an outhouse inside, not a very pleasant thought; nonetheless, that is the etymology. In reporting on a wife who ran off with a soldier who just got his government bonus, the unfortunate husband says, “Wife he don’t like to go with me no more,” confusing the appropriate gender pronoun, a common mistake among Creek English speakers since Muskogee does not employ gender pronouns and gender is indicated by other kinds of context (Posey also often employs this technique).29 Of the relative freedom of Florida Seminoles, a disgruntled Creek observes, “He might act like aint civilize, but he smartest fella you ever see aint got no civilize.”30 Here, a concept, that of race and culture, is personified as a “he,” and “civilize,” an abstraction, becomes something one can possess, as in “he aint got no civilize.”

A poem that speaks of a man’s complaint regarding his wife’s monopoly on driving their newly purchased vehicle while he pays all the bills reads, “He buy the car, pay license tag, git upside-collision insurance, pay driver license . . . for old lady too . . . an’ when wife git red police too-much-park tickets he has to pay that!”31 Car insurance becomes wonderfully imagistic with “upside-collision insurance” and “red police too-much-park tickets.” Referring to the purgative effects of medicine-taking at Green Corn, a speaker says, “Green Corn he’s sick Indian time,” making this most prominent Creek religious expression a person as well as the comic effect of understatement, of reducing a complicated ceremony that occurs over many days to “sick Indian time.”32 Of an unfortunate Creek and his dental problems we are told, “Hurt pretty much too, an’ jaw jus’ swell up like ripe punkin . . . excep’ punkin don’t lopsided.”33 Here, an adjective, “lopsided,” is used as a verb.

One of the most accomplished poems in *Sour Sofkee*, and a good representation of Moore’s mastery of combining authenticity of voice with the demands of rhymed poetic couplets, is “Katie Fixico is Dead”:

Bad news I git the other day,  
On road to town with Woxie Gray;  
Tah-pah-lee-chee on road was walk,
When meet, pull wagon over side to talk.
He stop too, on other side,
An’ say: “Katie Fixico was died!”

Before newspaper tell all about,
To Indians that news already out;
At Cussetah church all night they sing,
Church bell he just whole lot ring.
Folks understand what church bell said
’Cause Katie Fixico he’s dead.

Katie good to little girls an’ boy,
At Chris’mas time give lot o’ toy;
Plenty oil well Katie had,
All time help children aint got no dad.
That’s why so much children crie’
When Katie Fixico he die.

Old time Indian now was few,
You don’t know, nex’ might be you!
Old man March was died last fall,
Yahola, Pufney too, an’ Mekko Tall.
Now there’s ’nother by their side
Cause Katie Fixico was died.

Use’ to somebody after him all time,
Try to git his money—every dime!
Lawyers look for Katie every day,
Want to frame it up for lot o’ pay.
Now grafters have to somewhere else look instead,
’Cause Katie Fixico he’s dead.34

This haunting ode captures beautifully the rhetoric of the grounds
and churches where we are sometimes reminded that the next time
we meet one of us is likely to be missing, that with the joy of fellow-
ship comes the sad reminder of its transitory nature given the reality
of death. With the happiness of eating new corn or the camping in
at fourth Sundays in the churches is also the sadness of camps being broken and people not seeing one another for a long time, in some cases forever in terms of community members who will pass on in the coming year. The line “You don’t know, nex’ might be you!” might actually be spoken at any of these meetings—not simply as a threat to get right with God, in the case of Christians, or a warning about proper behavior at the grounds, in the case of ceremonialists, but a reminder that none of us will be around always. An effective poetic device is the use of the recurring refrain “Katie Fixico was died,” which drives home this point about the inevitability of death. Just as this poem elegizes not only Katie but March, Yahola, Pufney, and Mekko Tall, passed on community members are often spoken of at churches and grounds. The statements of past miccos, or pastors, and their visions for their grounds and church members are frequently referenced. Moore also describes cultural elements surrounding a Creek passing such as the hymn sings for church members, one of many funerary customs that distinguish Creek Christianity, and the tolling of the church bell, which signals events such as services and funerals for members within hearing distance—or not within hearing distance, since, as the poem indicates, the word will get around from Indian to Indian. In fact, the poem indicates that by the time the bell rings people will already know the reason for its clanging, another atmospheric element that adds to the poignancy of a poem in which the melancholy interacts in interesting ways with humor (the sad tolling bell is a “he,” e.g., who speaks). These juxtapositions give the poem depth of feeling.

This poem is one of a very few of its kind in the collection Sour Sofkee in that it follows Posey’s formula of the overheard conversation: “Bad news I git the other day” proceeded by the speaker’s report on Woxie Gray’s and Tah-pah-lee-kee’s discussion of Katie Fixico’s death. Moore evocatively captures time and place by having the two men pull their wagons over to the side of the road and visit with each other, a commonplace occurrence even up until the time my dad was growing up in eastern Oklahoma in the 1940s when people would see someone they knew and pull over to talk in the shade, giving the horses a rest. At the time Moore wrote this, of course, this would be standard practice in rural areas.
Katie’s generosity is spoken of, an appropriate way to remember someone who has passed. We think that even though Katie is referred to as a “he” we can assume the character is a woman. Usually Moore goes back and forth between “he” and “she” for the same person, though here he sticks to “he” throughout the poem. We do not know of Creek men named Katie, however, and she seems to have assumed a motherly role in the poem.

The poem ends with a familiar theme—the abuses that surround Creeks with money that comes from lawyers and relatives who want in on the windfalls from oil. Katie’s aid to orphans is significant because one of the groups of Creek citizens most vulnerable to abuse from outsiders after Oklahoma statehood was children whose parents had died. A famous example of such abuse occurred in 1909 when Oklahoma commissioner of charities and corrections Kate Barnard found three small children living in a hollow tree and scavenging for food. Their parents were dead, and it took Barnard six weeks to locate their court-appointed non-Indian guardian. Commissioner Barnard then discovered that the children owned large oil revenues because their allotments sat on the famous Glenn oil pool. Their guardian had lied to the court about the money he claimed to have spent on their education and support. He had been living off their oil royalties as well as those of fifty-one other children for whom he had been appointed guardian. In Moore’s poem even grafting must eventually end if for no other reason than the death of its victim. Moore, though, leaves us with a somber, realistic reminder that the abusers will simply find a new person to abuse: “Now grafters have to somewhere else look instead, ’Cause Katie Fixico he’s dead.” Not a very happy ending, but the speaker makes a powerful statement about the cyclical nature of avarice in relationship to its manifestations in Oklahoma in this compelling elegy.

After thinking for a number of years about Posey and other dialect writers, we find ourselves more interested in them than ever because of the implications for Native nationalism. The dialect literature balances both the techniques of fiction writing and a strong primary commitment to political analysis. A study of the dialect writers calls for a consideration of the possibility that there may be a
means of achieving aesthetically sophisticated fiction that also maintains a commitment to Native material, political, and social realities, that is, the articulation of specific causes and concerns, a challenge to the notion that nonfiction might be the most natural and direct link to Native experience, political and otherwise.

A further consideration of the dialect tradition is the challenge of placing someone like Will Rogers within the discipline of Native American studies. In Rogers’s case we have a significant body of writing that is very broadly American in scope; nonetheless, it is articulated by a man who spoke Cherokee, was in contact with Cherokee country, and who might have had the ear of the nation, that is, the United States, more than any other man of his time. Can we simply ignore the Rogers legacy because his comments are more frequently directed at Americans rather than American Indians? Rogers represents an amazing phenomenon—an Indian with real political clout in America. Where does he fit in Native studies?

Finally, the dialect writers continue to capture our imaginations because their authors found a unique language in which to present their stories. This is a profound consideration for Native literary nationalism today. All authors must negotiate a narrative language by choosing certain words and rejecting others, but Posey, especially, created a literary language that would particularly complement the Creek nationalism of his subject matter. He was able, further, to make this language thoroughly Creek without resorting to some naive isolationism—he was so confident in the Creek quality of his discourse, he was unthreatened by European cultural references, bringing them into his work and thoroughly Indianizing them. This, it seems to us, is a profound act of the imagination especially relevant for our consideration during a time period in Native literary studies when we are trying to decide if the critical language and theory we have inherited is appropriate for the texts we hope to illuminate. What creative approaches might emerge that highlight the “Indian” in Indian criticism without futilely attempting to hide from the rest of the world? I believe we have literary ancestors to look to for answers. The Muskogee dialect letters provide one of the most interesting combinations of fictional viewpoints and political commentary in American Indian letters.
NOTES


2. Posey 17.
4. Posey 43–44.
5. Posey 45.
9. This publication can be found in the Western History collection at the University of Oklahoma and accessed by doing any kind of search, including an author search from the OU or Western History library catalog using “Acee Blue Eagle” as the search term. The quote is from pp. 3–4.
11. This poem is also on an unnumbered page.
12. Thomas E. Moore, *Sour Sofkee* (Muskogee, OK: Hoffman Printing, 1983) 14. Though Moore took it upon himself to self-publish his collection many years after the letters appeared in the *Tulsa World* in the late 1930s, the book can be found in some places, one of which is the Western History Collection of the University of Oklahoma. There used to be copies for sale at the Creek Council House in Okmulgee, though I am not certain if this is still the case. Another possibility would be back issues of the *Sunday Tulsa World* from 1938 to 1941 and 1964 and 1965.
13. Posey 55.
15. Posey 152.

17. Williams and Meredith 11–12.


19. Alice Robertson (1854–1931) also appears in the Fus Fixico letters. Littlefield’s notes report that she “was a native of the Creek Nation and the daughter of well-known missionaries. From 1873 to 1880, she was a clerk in the Office of Indian Affairs in Washington and then served two years as secretary to Richard H. Pratt, superintendent of the Carlisle Indian School. She taught school in the Creek Nation from 1882 until 1900, when she became superintendent of public instruction for the Creek Nation, a position she held until 1905. She was later the postmaster at Muskogee (1905–13), a dairy farmer and businesswoman (1913–1921), and a member of Congress from Oklahoma (1921–1923)” (Posey 77).

20. For a good textual source, see the chapter on Jackson Barnett in Donald L. Fixico, *The Invasion of Indian Country in the Twentieth Century: American Capitalism and Tribal Natural Resources* (Niwot: UP of Colorado, 1998) 3–26. This is another interesting example of a Creek “character’s,” in this case a nonfictional character’s, intertextuality, appearing in the Moore poem and Muskogee author Donald Fixico’s work.


24. A reference to the previously mentioned Alice Robertson.

25. Posey 203–05.


33. Moore 2.

34. Moore 25.
Guest Editor’s Remarks

AMANDA J. COBB

The essays in this special section represent what I hope is the beginning of a focused conversation about Indigenous women’s rhetoric in our discipline. As Devon Mihesuah (Choctaw) has reminded us, “Despite colonialism’s oppressions and pressures on women’s tribal cultural values, political system, and identities, hundreds if not thousands of Native women are actively making life more healthy, prosperous, and spiritual for their tribespeople.” Indeed, Native women have always worked for the well-being and continuance of their people. One of the ways this work has been accomplished is rhetorically—Native women have used and continue to use language to theorize their life experiences and effect change for us all. The rhetorical work of Indigenous women deserves not only recognition but also close and careful examination. It is in this spirit that the authors in this section have written.

In the first essay, “Translation Moves: Zitkala-Ša’s Bilingual Indian Legends,” Ruth Spack analyzes Zitkala-Ša’s translation of an Indian legend from Dakota into English. Significantly, Spack focuses on the ways in which Zitkala-Ša uses translation to reconstruct cultural identity. Although Spack acknowledges the ways in which Zitkala-Ša’s writing is an act of political subversion, she highlights the uniquely Dakota perspective revealed in Zitkala-Ša’s translation, thus focusing on the continuance of a distinctive oral tradition.

Like Spack, I also chose to consider a tribally specific rhetoric in my essay “Powerful Medicine: The Rhetoric of Comanche Activist LaDonna Harris.” In this essay, I examine Harris’s model of leader-
ship and activism—a model based on specifically on her exercise of core cultural values. I contend that Harris has used her advocacy organization, Americans for Indian Opportunity (AIO), as the means to exercise her core values in a contemporary setting. Through AIO’s publications, forums, workshops, and so on, Harris has created intellectual spaces for Native people to come together and philosophize about their own situations, thus engendering a rhetoric of decolonization. An examination of Harris’s rhetoric reveals that our most effective rhetorical practices may be the ones that spring from our own traditions.

Finally, in “I Give You Back: Indigenous Women Writing to Survive,” Elizabeth Archuleta (Yaqui/Chicana) considers the ways Indigenous women make meaning from life experiences as acts of theorizing. She argues that Native women’s rhetorical practices, which are grounded in life experiences, constitute “theory in the flesh.” By analyzing the writings of many Native women authors, as well as the activism of the Native Women’s Association of Canada (NWAC), Archuleta argues that Indigenous women are “refusing to remain silent about the violence perpetrated by repressive hierarchies and structural inequalities even when they exist in our own communities.” She posits that Indigenous women who “write to survive” broaden our notions of leadership and activism, arguing that the rhetorical practices “of writing and embodying a theory in the flesh empowers because it heals.”

Read together, these essays ask us to consider the ways in which Indigenous women’s rhetorics are grounded in tribally specific values and life experiences. They recognize the remarkable contribution Native women have made and continue to make in our communities, complicating how we understand leadership and activism.

NOTE

Until Zitkala-Ša (1876–1938) published “Impressions of an Indian Childhood” in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1900 and *Old Indian Legends* in 1901, most of the printed knowledge available to Euroamerican readers about the lives of Dakota people was transmitted by Euroamerican ethnologists.¹ The ethnologists’ work had significant limitations, for they were outsiders to Dakota language and culture, and the interpreters on whom they were dependent typically had weak translation skills. In contrast, Zitkala-Ša’s work was informed by intimate linguistic and cultural knowledge. Born and raised at the Yankton Agency as a speaker of the Nakota dialect, she brought native speaker intuition to the project of translation. She identified culturally as Dakota, as did other Yankton Sioux. And she was proficient in Dakota literacy, which she had acquired at a bilingual mission school.² Named Gertrude Simmons at birth, daughter of Táte I Yóhin Win (Ellen Simmons) and a French American trader, she extended her Sioux identity by giving herself a Lakota name, Zitkala-Ša, and by including transliterated Lakota in her writing.³ By the time she reached adulthood, Zitkala-Ša had three Native linguistic and cultural identities—Nakota, Dakota, and Lakota—and she was conversant in all three dialects.

Zitkala-Ša’s linguistic strengths were evident in other languages as well. Her 1895 graduation oration at White’s Indiana Manual Labor Institute, an English-only Quaker boarding school, was so compelling that the *Wabash Plain Dealer* called it “a masterpiece” that “has never been surpassed in eloquence or literary perfection by any girl
in this country” (qtd. in Parker and Parker 71). At Earlham College, where she spent two years, Zitkala-Ša excelled academically in every subject, including Latin, and in 1896 won first- and second-place prizes, respectively, in college and state oratory contests. A report of her performance in the *Indianapolis News* indicates that “her pronunciation was without trace of a tongue unfamiliar with English” (“Cheers”). The published version of her speech displays her linguistic, rhetorical, and intellectual sophistication (see Simmons). Her private letters to Carlos Montezuma, handwritten in 1901–02, show a dazzling control of the language, even in an unedited form (see Spack, “Dis/engagement”). Zitkala-Ša was thus a Native speaker of English in both senses of the term. Furthermore, she reportedly translated Dakota legends into Latin to meet a college requirement at Earlham (Hadley 14). Clearly, then, Zitkala-Ša’s translations can be viewed as the work of a gifted linguist.

In this article I examine Zitkala-Ša’s translation of an Indian legend from Dakota into English. My title, “Translation Moves,” refers not only to Zitkala-Ša’s rhetorical strategies but also to different meanings of translation, as well as to the complex and dynamic process that translation entails. First, of course, there is literal translation: the movement from one language to another. As many translation scholars have shown, the process of translating is complicated, involving much more than mere word substitution. When languages are translated, they encounter one another through a translingual process in which the differences between the languages are exposed and “ambiguities [are] dissolved or created . . . until new words and meanings emerge in the host language” (Liu 26). As Zitkala-Ša moves back and forth between languages to retell a story, she creates language anew, offering new insights into linguistic and cultural choices. As Zitkala-Ša’s choices show, translation inevitably demands a contextualized understanding of the two cultures in which oral and written traditions are situated.

Eric Cheyfitz extends the meaning of translation to include not simply the process of transferring ideas from one language to another but also the power to deconstruct cultural identity through the process. He examines how western European writing historically
translated Native cultures to the point where they were stripped of their humanity and how such writing both resulted from and fueled the imperialist impulse to gain political and cultural control over colonized people and territorial control over their lands. Such “scandals of translation,” as Lawrence Venuti calls them, reflected and reinforced unequal power relationships. Yet, because of the diverse and capricious effects of colonization, the practice of cultural translation also allows for the possibility of resistance and inventiveness (Venuti 68). Zitkala-Ša’s resistance and inventiveness are evident in her storytelling—and in her stories about storytelling. Her use of translation to reconstruct cultural identity reveals the importance of having an historical and political perspective on the art of translation and its place in American literature.

Yet another meaning of translation has implications for an understanding of Zitkala-Ša’s stories. Drawing on Patrick J. Geary’s Furta Sacra, Talal Asad explains this religious definition:

In its ecclesiastical usage . . . the removal of a saint’s remains, or his relics, from an original site to another site is also known as translation. . . . In medieval Christendom, the narratives relating such events were called translationes. . . . The transfer of relics involved retention of something essential despite the change of location. What was transferred was not merely a relic but the power inherent in it. (325–26)

In light of this historical meaning of translation, it is striking to read the first sentence of Zitkala-Ša’s preface to Old Indian Legends: “The legends are the relics of our country’s once virgin soil” (v, emphasis added). To a turn-of-the-century Anglo audience, the term “relics,” penned by a Native author, may have denoted only remnants: surviving traces of a people believed to be vanishing from the American landscape. In the context of Native oral traditions, however, the relics (legends) carry far greater significance, for language and literature hold potent “sacred matter,” as N. Scott Momaday puts it (13):

At the heart of the American Indian oral tradition is a deep and unconditional belief in the efficacy of language. Words are
intrinsically powerful. They are magical. By means of words one can bring about physical change in the universe. By means of words one can quiet the raging weather, bring forth the harvest, ward off evil, rid the body of sickness and pain, subdue an enemy, capture the heart of a lover, live in the proper way, and venture beyond death. Indeed, there is nothing more powerful. When one ventures to speak, when he utters a prayer or tells a story, he is dealing with forces that are supernatural and irresistible. (Momaday 15–16, emphasis added)

Similar to the production of the medieval translationes, Zitkala-Ša’s narratives first involved a search for the sacred relics: her journey from the east back to the Dakotas to hear the elders’ stories. Like the medieval relics, Zitkala-Ša’s relics were relocated in a “new shrine” (Asad 325), which in the case of the old Indian legends was a place in American literature. Like the medieval translationes, Zitkala-Ša’s translations of Dakota stories seek to convey the power of the relics in their new surroundings and to remain true to that power.

LANGUAGE THEFT AND RESTORATION

N. Scott Momaday argues that the Europeans who invaded Native lands were prepared by their history of conquest to perpetrate sacrilege, “the theft of the sacred,” for in robbing Native people of their land, they robbed them of their spiritual resources (91). Such invasion and appropriation extended to the Dakota language. In the 1830s Protestant missionaries took it upon themselves to create a written form of Dakota using the Roman alphabet and following English sentence structure (J. Williamson 3, 5). Having rendered the language in their own image, the missionaries then used it to reproduce their own literacy by translating the Bible and school texts that were originally produced for Euroamerican children. Zitkala-Ša, who attended the Dakota mission’s Santee Normal Training School, would likely have been exposed to bilingual texts such as this one, published in the mission’s newsletter, Iapi Oaye: The Word Carrier (E. Williamson 6):
Waihamnapi qa Waeconpi

1. Amy he wicincana waste
tehindapi heca, taku ota en;
tuka ohan wanji sica yuha: taku
econ kta ihanmnapi ecen anpetu
ihauke ecee. . . .

Dreaming and Doing

1. Amy was a dear,
good girl in many things;
but she had one bad habit:
she was too apt to waste
time in dreaming of doing,
instead of doing. . . .

Several of the translators were bilingual Dakotas who themselves had been educated at the Santee Normal School. A number of these teachers, for example, created a book that included translations of *Aesop’s Fables* and a biography of Abraham Lincoln (Gilman 43). Whether produced by Euroamerican or Dakota translators, the contents of these texts demonstrate that the mission schools used the Dakota language to promote Euroamerican rather than Dakota ways of knowing. The missionaries went even further, utilizing the language to characterize traditional stories as superstitious and Dakota or Lakota rituals and traditions as “evil and embarrassing” (White Hat 90). Their exploitation of Dakota language thus served to reinforce the idea that Dakota culture did not encompass ethical teachings. But Zitkala-Ša’s translations reclaim Dakota values, showing that Dakota culture is profoundly moral.

Most of the stories Zitkala-Ša relates in *Old Indian Legends* are about Iktomi, the Lakota name of an imaginary figure who is typically portrayed as a quick-witted trickster with no regard for moral values. According to Lakota writer James Lapointe, the Iktomi legends are tales of human frailties, from which a listener can draw a message (3). Elders tell these tales not only to entertain but also “to
illustrate what happens when one fails to heed the edicts and customs of social living” (4). In writing these stories down, Zitkala-Ša creates a literature that is comparable to the legendary of the moral systems privileged by the mission schools. She uses English to promote Dakota ways of knowing, inverting the missionaries’ use of Dakota to promote a Euroamerican worldview.

In her literary critique of Old Indian Legends, Jeanne Smith argues that many of Zitkala-Ša’s legends can be interpreted as identifying the “threat of devouring colonialism” (49–50). Analyzing Zitkala-Ša’s writing as an act of political subversion is crucial to understanding her overall project, and I have done such analysis elsewhere (see, e.g., Spack, “Transforming”). However, I recognize that viewing her writing only through a theoretical, postcolonial perspective can lead to neglect of a uniquely Dakota perspective. I therefore want to focus here on the Dakota way of life that is rendered in Zitkala-Ša’s work, at the center of which is the extended family unit, tiyospaye, bound together by blood and ancestral ties and widened through a kinship system that includes Dakota friends and neighbors (Deloria, Speaking of Indians 40). As Zitkala-Ša understood through her own experience, this community perpetuates the oral tradition and the life it reflects.

CULTURAL CONTEXT:
“IMPRESSIONS OF AN INDIAN CHILDHOOD”

Zitkala-Ša’s “Impressions of an Indian Childhood” was published the year before Old Indian Legends and can be seen as providing the cultural context within which the legends were actually told, the world they evoke. Significantly, “Impressions” opens with a description of the landscape, and thus Zitkala-Ša first uses English to claim historical and rhetorical ownership of the land, linking Indigenous culture to place. It is also significant that the first story in “Impressions” is not a traditional legend but a family story. In part 1, “My Mother,” the narrator’s mother does not shy away from telling her seven-year-old daughter painful memories of forced relocation:
Well, it happened on the day we moved camp that your sister and uncle were both very sick. Many others were ailing, but there seemed to be no help. We traveled many days and nights; not in the grand, happy way that we moved camp when I was a little girl, but we were driven, my child, driven like a herd of buffalo. With every step, your sister, who was not as large as you are now, shrieked with the painful jar until she was hoarse with crying. She grew more and more feverish. Her little hands and cheeks were burning hot. Her little lips were parched and dry, but she would not drink the water I gave her. Then I discovered that her throat was swollen and red. My poor child, how I cried with her because the Great Spirit had forgotten us!

At last, when we reached this western country, on the first weary night your sister died. And soon your uncle died also, leaving a widow and an orphan daughter, your cousin Warca-Ziwin. Both your sister and your uncle might have been happy with us today, had it not been for the heartless paleface. (10)

Here Zitkala-Ša reveals the important role family stories play in Dakota oral history, for the Dakota child’s identity is first shaped by knowledge of who she is within the family. She shows too that stories with troubling content are as valuable for a Dakota child as are the charming folktales that the ethnologists preferred to collect. In this particular scene, the child is treated with respect as a person who can learn at an early age that she must expect to deal with difficult circumstances and political realities.

In part 2, “Legends,” we learn about the ritual of storytelling and in the process see a demonstration of the community’s kinship. Stories keep families together, and families compose the community. As Zitkala-Ša explains it, legends are told during the evening meal, an experience shared by the extended family unit. Older men and women who live nearby are invited to partake of the meal. The child, whom the elders call “little granddaughter” (14), understands that she is to be silent during the meal and learns to listen patiently as the old people talk. Only when everyone is done eating and “the evening [is] fast deepening into twilight” do the legends and stories of
heroic deeds begin (15). It is the old folks who tell the stories, for elders are living repositories of knowledge and wisdom who bring the past into the present. And thus does the community create a shared consciousness.

Throughout “Impressions of an Indian Childhood,” we see that storytelling permeates Dakota life. Many lessons from mother to child take the form of story, for example. In part 5, “The Dead Man’s Plum Bush,” when the young narrator wants to pick some purple plums from a small bush, her mother stops her and tells her of the Indian brave whose love of the game of plum seeds was so great that, at his death, his plum seeds were buried with him, and from them this bush grew. Because the roots were wrapped around his skeleton, this space had become “sacred ground” and the plums had become “forbidden fruit” (32). As Martha Cutter has pointed out, this story of forbidden fruit would have resonance for a Christian audience steeped in the tradition of biblical storytelling. In her preface to Old Indian Legends, Zitkala-Ša does emphasize that she retells stories partly to suggest Native “kinship with the rest of humanity” (vi), and in “Impressions” she shows that the Dakota tradition teaches children in a way similar to the Christian tradition. But this story of the plum bush stands alone as a reflection of Dakota values, for here Zitkala-Ša makes a link between Native storytelling and landscape. With its geographical frame of reference, the story enables the child to imagine who and what she is with respect to the earth (see Momaday 47, 112). That the story makes a “lasting impression” on the child (33) reveals that the “Impressions of an Indian Childhood” (emphasis added) are not merely scattered remembrances but permanent imprints that are part of her consciousness. This same child later rejects an Indian bible—a written translation of Christian stories—and uses a pencil, a sign of a literate culture, to slash a hole through the text. Here Zitkala-Ša implies the power of the oral tradition. Unlike Christian stories, which are transmitted through written translations, Dakota stories, which are transmitted orally, cannot be scratched out or erased. Dakota stories thus allow for the continuity and survival of Dakota language, culture, community, and identity.

Zitkala-Ša writes about Dakota storytelling in English, but the ex-
Experiences she describes have taken place in her mother tongue, the “bloodline” of the culture, as Albert White Hat emphasizes (1). The English language soon intervenes, however, and we are reminded that translation is inexorably linked to the Dakota experience after European contact. “Impressions of an Indian Childhood” comes to a close in part 7, “The Big Red Apples,” with the description of a manipulative translation maneuver on the part of the missionaries. The narrator’s brother, Dawée, having had three years’ education in the East, is able to communicate with the Quakers who have come to the reservation to recruit students for their school. However, Dawée is against his younger sister’s going, and so the missionaries circumvent his translation by coming to her home when Dawée is not there, accompanied by a young “paleface” interpreter who can speak only “a smattering of the Indian language” (41). Here not only does a stranger replace a relative, which disrupts the family bond, but an inadequate grasp of Dakota (or Nakota) is used in place of fluent speech, and pressure is exerted until the mother is convinced to allow her daughter to be taken away to the mission boarding school so that she can learn English. In a line that links this translation scene to empire building and colonialist domination, Zitkala-Ša writes, “Alas! They came, they saw, and they conquered!” (41).

TRANSLATING BACK

As a result of her own education in mission schools and at a Quaker college, Zitkala-Ša had to negotiate her identity through a new tongue and a new understanding of the world and the word. But that understanding did not denote a rejection of Dakota values. In fact, in her letters to her then-fiancé, Carlos Montezuma, she expressed a belief in the superiority of Native life: “Morally the Indian in his own state is cleaner than those city dwellers!” (June 1901), and she dreamed of writing “many volumes of Indian Legends” (June 1, 1901). To produce Old Indian Legends in 1901, Zitkala-Ša interviewed elders in the Dakota community and had “a good time talking Sioux with the old folks” (ca. June 4, 1901). She took down their stories in Dakota and later translated the stories into English.
Despite her ambitious plan for writing, Zitkala-Ša would publish only one volume of legends. But some of the other stories Zitkala-Ša produced are housed in archives at Brigham Young University, and P. Jane Hafen has included these stories in her edited book of Zitkala-Ša’s previously unpublished works, Dreams and Thunder. In one section Hafen has reproduced two versions of the same tale. One version, titled “Squirrel Man and His Double,” is translated into English, literally, from Zitkala-Ša’s handwriting in Dakota by a contemporary Dakota translator, Gary Cavender. The other version, titled “The Witch Woman,” was prepared for publication in English by Zitkala-Ša. As Hafen points out in the headnote, Zitkala-Ša changed the original language version rhetorically and substantively in the rendition that she prepared for publication as she moved from Dakota to English. Despite these modifications, the stories are similar in concept and conflict: “In both stories, the young woman acts heroically. She distinguishes between the good and the bad brothers, and she assists in conquering the evil forces of the witch woman” (Hafen 71). Thus Zitkala-Ša fulfills the goal she established in the preface to Old Indian Legends: to capture the “native spirit of these tales” (vi, emphasis added), not to establish a fixed canon. What is important is the essence of what the storytellers are trying to say. Zitkala-Ša explains that as she heard the elders’ stories, she “found the renderings varying in little incidents” (vi). She acknowledges and accepts that it is impossible to settle on one version of a story that has undergone multiple retellings over centuries. In the Dakota version, an eagle feather is a clue to identity, doves are shot in the head, the giant uses curdled blood and oak tree root to stop the old woman’s attack, and the woman falls through the earth. In the English version, a red earring provides a clue to identity, pigeons are shot in the body, the giant uses a pot and a tobacco pouch to stop the old woman’s attack, and the woman falls into a river. But precisely because Zitkala-Ša produced two renditions of the same story in two different languages, she left clues to the nature of the creative translation process that informed the publication of Old Indian Legends.

According to Walter Ong, one of the paradoxes of a written text is that, although its words are no longer part of the “the living human
lifeworld,” its fixed existence “assures its potential for being resurrected into limitless living contexts by a potentially infinite number of living readers” (81). In contrast, although oral utterance has potency because it “comes from inside living organisms,” its sound is “perishable . . . essentially evanescent” because it “exists only when it is going out of existence” (32). Why, then, do oral storytellers and their audiences remember words and stories that have survived for centuries? Why is neither writing nor tape recording needed to preserve these tales? Through a story of his own, Severt Young Bear suggests that the hearing of a story itself is the key to remembering it:

[The] spoken word and the memory that catches and keeps it are at the center of our tradition. When I was younger I once asked my dad to tape-record something for me because I wanted to be able to remember it. He refused and said, “Son, I will tell you all about it, but I don’t want you to record it. If it’s important enough to you, you will and must remember it in your mind. Concentrate and you’ll remember what you’re told and it will stay with you. If you record it on a machine, you’ll lose it. (16)

Applying relevant aspects of Ong’s “psychodynamics of orality” (31) to Zitkala-Ša’s Dakota text may demonstrate how that memory process works.

Ong’s research suggests that mnemonic patterns function to retain and retrieve words and ideas in oral cultures, that thought takes shape in “heavily rhythmic, balanced patterns, in repetitions or antitheses, in alliterations and assonances, in epithetic and other formulary expressions” (34). A familiar pattern of the oral style, for example, is the repeated use of an additive—rather than subordinate—expression to develop the story. This pattern is evident in Zitkala-Ša’s transcription of the oral Dakota version of “Squirrel Man and His Double”:

And so the three of them, the giant, the young man and the young girl were going back and here they came upon a red dressed hidden tipi standing they came upon and stood by.
And the giant said, “Older brother, sit down here and comb your sister’s hair” (he said). And so he combed his younger sister’s hair. “And then, I will go first,” the giant said, and he went and ventured there. (82, emphasis added)

This pattern does not appear in the English version, “The Witch Woman.” Instead, following the style of written texts that depend on linguistic structures in the absence of a live audience, Zitkala-Ša uses subordinative words to guide meaning: for example, “When the hunters had filled their bag with pigeons, they returned to the mother’s tepee” (75, emphasis added).

Another mnemonic device that aids oral storytelling is redundancy, “repetition of the just-said” (Ong 40), which keeps the speaker and listener on the same page, so to speak. Such repetition is natural to speech, of course, but what makes it especially useful in the oral tradition is that it both enables the listener to have multiple opportunities to keep track of the story’s plot and characters and allows the speaker to “keep going while he [or she] is running through his [or her] mind what to say next” (Ong 40). Such redundancy is evident from the first two sentences of “Squirrel Man and His Double”: “The young man lives with his younger sister. His younger sister he lived with alone” (77). The lack of such redundancy in “The Witch Woman” accounts in part for that story’s shorter length.

In addition to changing the additive and repetitive patterns of the oral version, Zitkala-Ša makes other changes in style that reflect her awareness of linguistic and rhetorical differences in the two languages and genres. For example, she eliminates instances of non-English word order such as “Four deer she cooked for them” (82) and omits the phrase “they say,” which links the narrator to past storytellers: “And the woman never came out again, they say” (85). She also omits appellations directed to the listener such as “Cousin, I will tell one again” (85, emphasis added), terms that reveal that the listener—in this case, Zitkala-Ša—is recognized and embraced as a member of the tiyospaye. Such authorial omissions remind us of what is lost in translation: Native ways of expression, historical links to tradition, and the dynamic relationship between storyteller and audience.
Like any translator, Zitkala-Ša is “constrained by an assessment of the domestic readerships [she] hopes to reach” (Venuti 16). Accordingly, to make her text comprehensible to a non-Dakota audience, Zitkala-Ša fills in some cultural gaps, explaining things to her Anglo audience for which a Dakota audience would need no explanation. For example, she provides definitions for Dakota words such as *tibdo* (elder brother) (72). She also reduces the cast of animals, a move that might help readers who do not have a lifetime acquaintance with these characters to focus on the central conflict. Further, Zitkala-Ša shapes the text into a story form recognizable to a Euroamerican audience. She changes the first line from a straightforward “A young man lives with his younger sister” (77) to a more romantic, fairy tale–like opening that introduces a character who would fulfill the desire and expectation of the turn-of-the-century Anglo audience for an exotic Indian princess: “In the village of the Dakotas there lived a very beautiful girl who was daughter of the head chief” (71).

Zitkala-Ša also concludes the stories differently. In the Dakota version, the narrator finishes the story with the head woman falling into the earth but then continues to talk to the listener with the intent of telling yet another story:

And the giant said, “All right.” And he stomped the ground very hard and the earth split very deep. And the woman fell in and the earth came back together. And the woman never came out again, they say, cousin! That is the end. Cousin, I will tell one again but it is just a common story, they say. The first people story is what it is they say, cousin. It is not a folktale but is an oral tradition, they say. (85)

The Dakota version thus perpetuates the ongoing vibrancy of the storytelling ritual, “the sense that stories never truly end” (Silko 50). That the next story to be told is a “first people story” reminds the listener that storytelling “comes out of an experience and an understanding of the original view of Creation—that we are all part of a whole” (Silko 50); each story lives within that larger story. In that sense, this story and its ending are about storytelling itself. In the
English version, in contrast, the narrator attaches a mythical significance to the tale and provides the kind of closure Anglo audiences would expect:

Iya took his long tobacco pouch from his belt. He smote the earth with this pouch and the earth cracked and a river ran there. The witch woman tumbled into this river.

“Hereafter,” said Iya, “you and your children shall live under the water. You shall be called Unktehi.” And so it happened. The river still runs a great distance. It is the Minisose, the Missouri.” (76)

The most substantive and striking change from the oral to the written version, however, is that Zitkala-Ša “softened some of the sexual and physical threat” (Hafen 71). In Zitkala-Ša’s English version there is one line that suggests assault, but it is not explicitly sexual: “This man acted very badly and abused her” (73). In the Dakota version, in contrast, there are several references to attempted rape:

- A young man came while the young lady was home alone and made advances to her and halfway through he attacked her and was trying to make her lie down with him; she cried and resisted, they say. (79)
- The young man was bothering her again, but she refused his advances and he couldn’t force her so he quit and went away. (79)
- The same young man who looked like her older brother came in and made advances and attacked her, but she protected herself crying. (79)
- Again the one who looked like her older brother turned and came back in. He made advances to her and halfway through, he attacked her again. (79)
- The young girl was strong and when the young man attacked her he couldn’t take her, so finally again he gave up and left. (80)

Why Zitkala-Ša omits the references to attempted rape in her English-language version can only be a matter of speculation. Nevertheless, it seems clear that she does not want to share this aspect of the story
with a Euroamerican audience. The reason might be that telling such a story outside the Dakota community was unthinkable or prohibited. But only two or three decades later, Dakota writers Amos Oneroad (Wahpeton) and Ella Deloria (Yankton), both of whom were fully bilingual and biliterate in Dakota and English, translated stories with sexually charged themes. One of the Iktomi tales in Oneroad's Being Dakota, for example, begins with these lines:

Once as Iktomi was strolling along he saw two girls in swimming on the opposite side of a lake. He immediately uncoiled his member, and submerging it beneath the water thrust it into the body of one of the girls whom he held prisoner while the other fled screaming up the bank. (123)

Among Deloria’s translations is the story “Incest,” whose title speaks for itself.

We know that Zitkala-Ša was sensitive to the narrow views held in much of Euroamerican society about Native female sexuality. Her narrator in “The School Days of an Indian Girl” is “embittered” and becomes depressed when she is labeled “squaw” by a group of non-Native students after she delivers a speech at a state oratory contest (79). Rayna Green’s “The Pocahontas Perplex,” which traces competing images of Native women in Euroamerican history and culture, helps to explain the pain this term engenders. At one end of the spectrum, the Native woman was viewed romantically as a “princess”: a light-skinned figure imagined along classical lines. At the other, she was viewed ominously as a “squaw”: a “dark,” “savage,” “lewd” woman of vice who served as a mere sexual commodity at the whim of men (701–02, 711). It may be the case that, within the context of the times in which she was writing, Zitkala-Ša feared that her Anglo audience might use the story of sexual assault as another opportunity to misrepresent Native people, for similar deeply ingrained stereotypes existed about Native men. At one end, as Robert Berkhofer illustrates in The White Man’s Indian, Native men were viewed as “noble”: brave, hospitable, and physically strong. At the other, they were “savage”: wild, cruel, lecherous, and disturbingly naked (28, 16). These dichotomized images persisted into the twentieth cen-
tury, when Zitkala-Ša was writing, making it impossible for Native women and men to be understood in their full complexity. Rather than taking the risk of confirming the worst assumptions and suspicions of the Euroamerican readership, Zitkala-Ša opts for a fairy-tale quality, creating a princess and minimizing male aggression, and thus reduces the possibility of being translated back.

Zitkala-Ša does not always capitulate to the needs or fears of her Euroamerican audience, if that is indeed the case. Her old Indian legends are replete with untranslated terms (transliterations from her first language), as well as with unexplained cultural practices that leave non-Dakota readers such as myself with the sense of a different world, one that is understood only within the Dakota community and that may never, could never—or should never—be made fully accessible to another group. Her translation from one language to another demonstrates that differences in language go far beyond grammar or literary convention to yield insight into different ways of thinking and being.

Whatever the reasons for Zitkala-Ša’s treatment of Dakota stories, it is obvious that she makes much more complex use of English than her teachers might ever have expected or intended. Being multilingual gave Zitkala-Ša a deep understanding of the variety, purpose, and power of language. Her translingualism reflects the way cultures and languages actually interact and engage with one another and shows how a writer can create culture and language anew. Having mastered English, she rhetorically reconstructs Native life and makes Dakota language and culture an enduring presence in American history and tradition. Having mastered Dakota, she takes ownership of its literacy, using the language not to promote Euroamerican values, as the missionaries had done, but rather to reflect a Native worldview, transforming it in the process—and thus keeping it alive. Then by translating the Dakota to share the old Indian legends with an Anglo audience, she shapes and revitalizes English to accommodate new and powerful forms of expression and belief. While non-Native writers had attempted to translate Native ways of knowing out of existence, Zitkala-Ša translates them into existence in the U.S. canon, using English to show that no true history or understanding
of American literature can exist without the Native story. By relocating her relics in their new site, Zitkala-Ša does not simply add to the canon. She releases the power of the stories, challenging us to examine the extent to which U.S. literature has been created translingually, the result of a vibrant, historical interaction not only between cultures but also between languages.

NOTES

1. Zitkala-Ša was the first Native writer to use English to tell Dakota stories directly, rather than through an interpreter. Dakota writers who followed Zitkala-Ša’s lead include Charles Eastman, Red Hunters and the Animal People (1904); Marie McLaughlin, Myths and Legends of the Sioux (1916); and Ella Deloria, Dakota Texts (1932). Lakota writer Luther Standing Bear published Stories of the Sioux in 1934.

2. Zitkala-Ša acquired literacy in Dakota because that was the only available written form at the time. The Dakota alphabet system was created by missionaries in 1834 and was not modified for Lakota until 1939. Zitkala-Ša occasionally produced her own Lakota transliterations, however.

3. Zitkala-Ša’s father’s surname was actually Felker, but she carried the surname of her mother’s previous husband because, as she wrote to Carlos Montezuma in the summer of 1901, “Once my own father scolded my brother; and my mother took such offense from it that eventually it resulted in a divorce parting—So as I grew I was called by my brother’s name—Simmons.” She chose to rename herself after her sister-in-law became angry that she “insisted upon getting an education—said I had deserted home and I might give up my brother’s name ‘Simmons’ too. Well you can guess how queer I felt—away from my own people home-less—penniless—and even without a name! / Then I choose [sic] to make a name for myself . . . ‘Zitkala-Ša.’” Carlos Montezuma Papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Division of Manuscripts and Archives, Madison, Wisconsin.

4. The Record of Examinations of College Students shows that Zitkala-Ša received straight As in all subjects in the two years she attended Earlham, with the exception of a C in zoology. Zitkala-Ša file, Lilly Library, Earlham College, Richmond, Indiana.

5. Of course, as Barbara Chiarello points out, such a characterization smacks of condescension. I quote this line here for the purpose of establishing evidence of Zitkala-Ša’s oral language proficiency.
6. Zitkala-Ša reports on her travel from Boston to meet with the Dakota elders in her letters to Carlos Montezuma. Carlos Montezuma Papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Division of Manuscripts and Archives, Madison, Wisconsin.

WORKS CITED


Powerful Medicine

The Rhetoric of Comanche Activist LaDonna Harris

AMANDA J. COBB

BEGINNINGS:
PAYING RESPECT TO OUR TRADITION

Histories of Native American rhetoric that focus on the strategies of our contemporary leaders and activists are still surprisingly rare. At this point, the majority of our work on American Indian rhetoric has focused on tribally specific oral histories and traditions or the practices of nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century figures such as William Apess, Red Jacket, Sarah Winnemuca Hopkins, Zitkala-Ša, and others.¹ These studies are absolutely critical to our understanding of Native American rhetorics and the ways in which Native people have dealt with devastating colonial practices and policies. However, the lack of attention to more contemporary figures is of real concern because these leaders and activists have been—and are still—teaching our communities how to move through the processes of decolonization and nation building to more fully exercise our sovereignty. In other words, they have been teaching us how to recover and how to flourish. And they have done so, by and large, without the benefit of graduate courses in Native American studies and postcolonial theory. They have done so by using language, rhetorical practices, to find insight into their own situations. As Robert Warrior (Osage) has pointed out, “Reading critically our own tradition is a matter of respect.”² In that spirit, I have chosen to focus in this article on one person in particular who has devoted her life to advocating for and working with tribal communities—Comanche activist LaDonna Harris.
Harris is the former wife of Senator Fred Harris of Oklahoma, a strong supporter of Indian issues in Congress during the late 1960s and early 1970s. Drawing on her life experiences and identity and values as a Comanche woman, Harris played a critical role in shaping and influencing American Indian policy from “inside” the system during the Red Power era. Importantly, her activism did not end with the end of that era or with the end of her marriage to Fred Harris. Harris’s work has continued to the present day, predominantly through Americans for Indian Opportunity (AIO), a non-profit tribal advocacy organization she founded in 1970.

Known for her tremendous personal warmth, powerful charisma and style, and graciousness and charm, LaDonna Harris is loved and respected throughout Indian Country and has certainly received her share of honor outside of Indian Country as well. However, her name is not necessarily as well known as the names of other contemporary Indian activists. The names of Native men like Dennis Banks (Ojibwe), Russell Means (Oglala Sioux), and Leonard Peltier (Ojibwe), for example, are much more familiar. Their activities as leaders of the American Indian Movement (AIM) in the 1960s and 1970s have been well documented by scholars and filmmakers—as they should be. Their demonstrations, takeovers, and marches set against the backdrop of the tumultuous civil rights protests of that era raised the profile of Indian issues and forced the public to acknowledge that the needs and rights of Native peoples could no longer be ignored.

Other Native women are perhaps also better known. Many, many people, Native and non-Native, know Wilma Mankiller (Cherokee) as the first woman to serve as the principal chief of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma. Mankiller’s focus on nation building not only resulted in many new businesses and a revitalized economy but also in a reinstituted judicial system and district court. Those who follow politics closely probably also remember Ada Deer (Menominee) as the first Native woman in the position of assistant secretary of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA). Her appointment to the BIA rewarded her hard labor as the force behind the restoration of her tribe, the Menominee Nation. Deer’s efforts led to the end of the disastrous termination era for all U.S. tribes.
However, it is easy to identify as leaders those individuals who served as the public face and voice of larger, well-recognized institutions or movements. LaDonna Harris is different. Her name is not as well known as others because she does not fit neatly within the Western conceptualization of leadership, which tends to privilege one person in a hierarchical position of power. Too often, when a woman is given attention as a leader, it is because she is a woman, frequently the “first” woman to do a job or hold a position that has traditionally been held by men. Harris cannot be associated with only one job or position, however. She instead exemplifies a model of leadership that, I will argue in this article, springs directly from her Comanche worldview and value system. Harris has never led protest and demonstrations. She has never held an elected or government-appointed office, tribal or federal. Yet, Harris’s work has easily been as important as the work of her peers. While constantly drawing on her Comanche values, Harris used her position as the wife of a U.S. senator as a springboard for her advocacy of Indian initiatives. Her efforts in the restoration of the sacred Taos Blue Lake to Taos Pueblos and in the restoration of the previously terminated Menominee Nation represent some of her best-known work. However, Harris’s other accomplishments are more difficult to place on a specific and discreet list. In fact, an analysis of her work demands that we complicate current definitions of leadership. Her accomplishments are less about what she did, for example, held office, than about what she created.

LaDonna Harris is significant as a leader because she created new networks and relationships, new social spaces for Native issues and Native people, and new words, ideas, and philosophies. Because of the networks and relationships she created and sustained in Washington, D.C., she was able to influence policy makers’ decision to include Native Americans in the War on Poverty, a decision that ultimately paved the way for future government-to-government relations between tribal nations and the United States. At the same time, while members of AIM frequently focused on reclaiming stolen lands and spaces, for example, reclaiming Alcatraz Island or taking over the BIA headquarters, Harris turned her attention to
creating new spaces, using her abilities to identify needs to bring together the right people—both Native and non-Native—to work on them. Oklahomans for Indian Opportunity, Americans for Indian Opportunity, the Council of Energy Resource Tribes, the National Indian Business Association, the establishment of numerous “Indian desks” in federal agencies—all of these very real physical spaces and more can be traced to the work and influence of LaDonna Harris. But unlike many leaders, she created these spaces with sustainability in mind rather than personal control, making sure that they would be left in place for others to continue.

Harris not only worked to create new spaces but to also create and shape words and definitions, that is, to “reinvent the enemy’s language.” During Harris’s tenure in Washington, D.C., words like “self-determination” and “sovereignty” were new terms in federal Indian policy. Harris toiled from inside the system to bring positive shape and meaning to what were then very nebulous and, frankly, potentially harmful terms. After all, federal policy was only beginning to shift away from damaging policies of containment and oppression like assimilation, termination, and relocation. That “self-determination” and “sovereignty” have the positive connotations and implications they do today is largely the result of the work of Harris and other Native people like her, who provided spaces for Native Americans to cast off colonial “victim” mentalities and philosophize about their own situations. Thus, Harris has not only created physical spaces but intellectual, philosophical spaces as well.

Indeed, Harris’s model of leadership is significant for us to examine, not only because of what she created, but also because of how she did so. I contend that Harris’s leadership style and rhetorical practices grow directly out of her Comanche values as she has defined them. In fact, in many ways, her leadership style and rhetorical practices constitute an exercise of those values. For Harris, being Comanche is not merely something you are; it is something you live. Therefore, in order to examine Harris as a leader and rhetorician, I will first offer a description and discussion of Harris—her background, her life choices, and most importantly, what she articulates as her core Comanche values. In this discussion, I draw on close
readings of Harris’s writings, personal interviews I have conducted over the last six years, and personal experience working with Harris first as a participant in AIO’s leadership program and now as a board member of the organization.

**RHETORICAL CONTEXTS:**
**LIFE CHOICES AND COMANCHE VALUES**

Born on a Comanche allotment in southern Oklahoma near the town of Walters and Cache Creek, Harris was raised primarily by her grandparents, Wick-kie and John Tabbytite, whom she cites as the source of her Comanche values. According to Harris, the biographical “facts” of her life cannot be understood without some understanding of her Comanche values and worldviews, as these values have guided all of her decisions: “I filter everything through Comanche values.” Harris has spoken and written widely about her value system, and it is important to note that Harris does not subscribe to an essentialist notion of what it means to be Comanche or believe that all Comanche people know and manifest these values in precisely the same way. She has chosen to articulate these values as she was taught them and as she experiences and exercises them.

Harris’s upbringing and particularly her close relationship to her grandparents brought the value of kinship and responsibilities to the forefront for her. She writes,

> Perhaps one of the most important elements of Comanche culture for me is our system of kinship—we understand our own identities through our families and clans and the particular responsibility that comes with each relationship. . . . For Comanches, a child is brought up by the entire extended family, as well as the larger community . . . we learn our way to contribute through our relationships to family members.5

For Harris, acknowledging those relationships by “being a good relative” or having “good manners” is of prime importance, as the functioning of the entire community is based on those relationships and the special responsibilities that come with them.
Another value Harris identifies as having special meaning to her, equality, is manifested through relationships. According to Harris, “Relationships among men, women, and children were based on harmony, and women and children were equal partners to men in Comanche culture.” Her belief in and exercise of equality as a value is evidenced in the early years of her marriage.

She married Fred Harris, a high school sweetheart, in 1949 and moved to Norman, where Fred attended the University of Oklahoma. After receiving his law degree in 1954, Fred and LaDonna moved to Lawton, Oklahoma, and started their family, which includes three children Kathryn, Byron, and Laura. Fred practiced law and served on the Oklahoma State Senate for eight years until 1964, when he was elected to the U.S. Senate. LaDonna and Fred Harris were highly touted as a team, and she was extremely involved in Fred’s political life, not merely as a campaigner, but as a true partner, giving advice, helping Fred read people and situations (they spoke to each other in Comanche on the Senate floor for privacy), taking her own stance on issues, and becoming a public advocate for Indian issues first at the state and then at the national level.

LaDonna and Fred worked together to establish Oklahomans for Indian Opportunity (OIO). Both became ardent and effective advocates and strategists for Indian issues on the national stage, garnering much attention for their work on the return of Taos Blue Lake, Menominee restoration, and the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act.

Through her experiences as a senator’s wife and Indian advocate on the national stage, LaDonna Harris began to come to a fuller understanding of how she could best contribute—another Comanche value. Harris firmly believes that “every person in the society, even a child, has something to contribute, some special role to play.” She writes, “The role any person plays is based on that person’s own inner strength or ‘medicine.’ Everyone’s medicine is different, and the tribe recognizes that it needs different kinds of leaders with different strengths for different types of societal responsibilities.” Contribution indicates a sense of continuance and ongoing community as well as the importance and recognition of individual identity within a collective tribal identity. Significantly, Harris views relationships as an ever-widening spiral. Seeing all things as being
part of a web of relationships, she feels a responsibility to her family and clan, to the Comanche nation, to other tribal nations, and to society. Identifying her own special strength or medicine as an ability to bring people together, Harris established Americans for Indian Opportunity in 1970.

During this period, Fred Harris maintained an ambitious senatorial agenda, becoming increasingly outspoken on poverty and civil rights. After eight years in office, Fred, chose not to seek re-election to the Senate and instead began campaigning for the 1976 presidential primaries as a New Populist candidate. After the election, Fred and LaDonna moved to New Mexico, where Fred began a much-respected career as a political scientist at the University of New Mexico. LaDonna and Fred divorced soon after, and LaDonna returned to Washington, D.C., where she truly blossomed as an activist, actively participating in the National Urban Coalition and Common Cause and ultimately running for vice president in 1980 on the Citizen’s Party ticket with Barry Commoner.

Throughout this time, LaDonna continued to develop and expand the work of AIO, producing many programs and initiatives, as well as a notable body of literature on Indian issues. She felt and continues to feel driven by a need to share—a value she sometimes calls “redistribution.” Sharing, or redistribution, is based on the belief that “Comanches are not supposed to own anything we are not willing to give away. . . . As a matter of fact, the greater the wealth a person has, means the greater the responsibility that person has to the rest of the community.” For Harris, sharing wealth is not merely referring to material resources but the sharing of perspectives and ideas, personal skills and medicine, and the special obligations that come with relationships. AIO became the vehicle through which Harris shared her medicine by creating physical and intellectual spaces to bring people together to effect change.

RHETORICAL PRACTICES: COMANCHE VALUES AND THE WORK OF AIO

Drawing on her Comanche values, Harris found the most natural way to bring people together was to use AIO as the means by which
to create an enormous system of kinship. Harris sees AIO as a family and treats everyone involved in it according to her own belief in kinship and responsibilities. Notably, one of Harris’s rhetorical strategies has been to try to bring virtually everyone she encounters—Native, non-Native, friend, and opponent—into the AIO family by treating them as family and expecting them to “show good manners” or “be good relatives” in return. For Harris, treating others warmly and with respect, courtesy, and graciousness is paramount. She has maintained that “friends come in unlikely places” and has advocated for Indian issues by talking to people as if she were sure they would agree with her and would want to agree with her. Harris insists that people must have a sense of ownership in something in order to be moved to action. Welcoming people into the AIO family shows them that they too can have a stake in the cause and “allows them to come around to a way of thinking without losing face.”

Through AIO, Harris has increased her circle of kinship primarily through two mechanisms: (1) the production of a variety of types of publications designed to inform and persuade and (2) the organization of forums and conferences for the purpose of creating space to philosophize.

BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER: AIO PUBLICATIONS

These publications loosely comprise four major categories that include the following: (1) Red Alerts, the AIO Newsletter, (2) “Red Papers,” position papers on a variety of topics, (3) reports for commissions, panels, and so on, and (4) scholarly papers for seminars, conferences, and journals. It is somewhat difficult to refer to Harris as the “author” of these publications. Although Harris, as the director and visionary of AIO, served as AIO’s public face and voice, not all of the publications cite her as specifically as the author. Occasionally, particular individuals are credited as authors. It is more usual, however, for the document to cite the author as AIO as an organization. I bring up the complexity of authorship of many of these texts in order to underscore the collective nature of the writing produced as part of any social movement and, more particularly, Harris’s Comanche value of sharing and redistribution. As she has emphati-
cally stated, “You shouldn’t own anything you can’t give away, even ideas.” This comment demonstrates a tendency to credit the collective rather than the individual as well as a resistance to marking a document, and the ideas in it, as belonging only to one person, which in Harris’s view is not possible. Therefore, although Harris is certainly chiefly responsible for shaping the content, style, and voice of AIO’s publications, in an effort to respect Harris’s desire to credit the collective, I frequently refer to AIO as the author, unless the publication specifically states otherwise.

AIO published its newsletter, Red Alerts, at least monthly and distributed them to their entire network, which included both Native and non-Native audience members, organizations, institutions, and governments. The newsletters predominantly focused on news from Washington, D.C., regarding congressional bills, executive decisions, and Supreme Court decisions in addition to news from tribal governments and communities throughout Indian Country. Red Alerts was designed to inform and persuade both Native and non-Natives and particularly policy makers to support specific Indian issues as a sample of newsletter headlines from 1978 demonstrates: “Oliphant and Wheeler Cases and the Abourezk Bill” and “For Some of Our Best Friends—and Others: Indian Tribes are Separate Government Units.”

AIO also regularly published “Red Papers,” that is, position papers on a wide variety of topics including colonization, mental health, environmental justice, and government-to-government relationships, to name a few. Red Papers sometimes give credit to a specific author or authors and frequently to Harris. Occasionally a Red Paper did not list a specific author but was credited to AIO as an organization. Interestingly, Red Papers almost always focused on the debilitating effects of colonization and long-term consequences and implications for the health, well-being, and continuance of Native peoples. Always persuasive in nature, Red Papers, although effective for non-Native audiences, seem to be written more to help Native audiences gain insight into internalized oppression. A few examples from the late 1970s include “Messing with Mother Nature Can Be Hazardous to Your Health” and “Colonization of Indian Economy.”

In addition, AIO published many reports produced specifically
for presentation before a government commission or panel. These lengthy documents, such as “A Good Day to Live for One Million Indians” (1978) and “Position Paper on Indian Mental Health” (1978) list either AIO or Harris as the primary author or presenter but also list other individuals, institutions, and organizations as providing research and data integral to the development and completion of the report.

The body of Harris’s work also includes several scholarly papers for journals, seminars, and conferences. These papers cite Harris and any cowriters as authors in a “traditional” academic sense. In these papers, Harris is writing as the director of AIO but not speaking on the organization’s behalf, that is, as the voice of AIO. Many of these articles, generally coauthored with scholars Stephen Sachs and Barbara Morris, describe the damaging impacts of colonialism on tribal governments as well as strategies for coping and revisioning governmental practices.

Examined as a body of literature, AIO’s publications since 1970 demonstrate just how much Harris’s circle kinship has broadened over time. In addition, the extent to which the exercise of tribal sovereignty and the process of nation building have developed since 1970 is striking. Another notable feature of the publications is the strong emphasis on decolonization and recovery. Finally, an emphasis on living by core tribal values permeates all of the publications, demonstrating the consistency of Harris’s rhetorical practices.

**BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER: AIO FORUMS**

As the director of AIO, Harris has organized a variety of kinds of seminars, conferences, workshops, and forums. Because bringing people together to share their experiences, philosophize, and gain insight is the main objective, not all of these events have resulted in published articles. Consequently, understanding the rhetorical processes at these events is difficult to examine. One series of events, however, did lead to a publication of some length—a publication particularly distinctive in nature: *This Is What We Want to Share: Core Cultural Values*. Therefore, in order to examine the ways in
which Harris’s rhetorical practices exemplify her Comanche values in action, I turn my attention to this unique publication.

*This Is What We Want to Share* is a monograph published in 1992 that grew out of a series of forums organized by AIO in the 1980s. Through the 1970s and 1980s, AIO’s publications consisted chiefly of *Red Alerts*, Red Papers, and reports. In the 1980s, as tribes struggled to sort out what sovereignty and self-determination meant for their communities, Harris appropriately directed AIO toward issues of tribal governance, holding a series of forums with individual tribes, including the Comanche Indian Tribe, the Menominees of Wisconsin, the Poarch Creek Band of Indians, and the Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska. The purpose of the forums was to bring together a cross section of the particular tribal community to discuss how to make tribal governments (frequently based on cookie-cutter IRA constitutions, which mimicked the U.S. system) more culturally appropriate and, therefore, more self-determining. Because AIO’s philosophy, borrowing from Harris’s Comanche values, is that every member of the tribe has something to contribute and a different perspective to share, the cross section included tribal leaders, economic developers, program directors, community members, elders, youth, and so on, all placed on an equal footing in the forums.

The stated goal of *This Is What We Want to Share*, which was written expressly for tribal readers, was to “capture the essence of conversations with Tribal leadership . . . over the last six or seven years.” Significantly, the notion of authorship is complicated on the very first page, the title page, in a statement reading that the document is authored “by LaDonna Harris in collaboration with Jacqueline Wasilewksi, Ph.D.” The phrase “in collaboration with” indicates that Wasilewski, a non-Native scholar, wanted to express that although she was a primary writer of the document itself, that is, the *actual words*, she was not a primary source for the *content* of the document—importantly highlighting that the content came from Harris. In the next few pages, however, Harris, as in previous publications, demonstrates her resistance to the ownership of ideas as well her commitment to tribal collective identity in accordance with her Comanche values. Using “we” rather than “I,” Harris carefully articulates her responsibility as writer/speaker and noting its limitations.
We realize, in the Indian way, that no person can speak for another. . . . Authorship of this work is rather complex. This document was created by everyone who participated in the discussions which generated the document. The role of the scribe in this work is that of the orator in the Comanche community, or, perhaps, of the interpreter in Pueblo life, a person skilled in words and language who has the responsibility of articulating as clearly and as eloquently as possible the collective voice.18

The next few sentences continue in this vein, noting, “this is an interactive document . . . we need your comments. Please write all over this document,” further demonstrating the monograph’s inclusive, collective voice.19 Therefore, throughout my analysis of this text, I frequently refer to the author in the plural; however, I recognize Harris as the primary shaper of the document.

The document is divided into five major sections: (1) “Foreword,” which describes how the document came into being; (2) “Introduction,” which explains the context of tribes in the United States; (3) “This Is What We Want to Share,” which lists and describes four core cultural values; (4) “How We Identified These Values,” which describes their method of analysis; and (5) “Reflecting on Our Complexity,” which includes discussions of self-perception, tribal histories, identity issues, core tribal values, and problem solving and decision making in terms of community building. Harris’s purpose is presented in the foreword as follows:

• [to] provide the occasion for collective reflection,
• [to] assist us in differentiating ourselves out of our collective mess,
• [to] enable us to realize that in the dynamic world in which we live, even when we fix our present mess, it will not stay fixed, and
• [to] enable us, out of our five hundred years of experience in dealing with enormous change, to contribute to the global discussion on the emerging new world order.20

It is important to note that Harris and the members of the AIO forums constructed this document organically. This was not a work
produced by an outsider “professional” who studied these tribal “subjects,” applied to those observations the disciplines of an analytic framework, and then published the resulting conclusions. Instead, this document arose wholly from a gathering of tribal citizens who shared knowledge and collective wisdom, assessed their own situation, and made plans for future action.

We need everyone’s perspective, as each of us and each of our communities reexamines its own line or lines of history, reflects on the past and chooses what to carry forward into the 21st century. We believe that these acts of reflections and analysis will result in an important Tribal intellectual contribution to the discussion about the integration of diversity into the merging new world order.21

This statement is particularly significant: Harris and the members of the forums believed that, although they were not necessarily anthropologists or PhDs in some field of Western, academic expertise, their work was intellectual work, work that would make an important contribution, work that, in essence, demonstrates the notion of intellectual sovereignty that Warrior has urged us to examine.22 Furthermore, Harris’s This Is What We Want to Share is an excellent example of what Scott Lyons (Ojibwe) has called “rhetorical sovereignty.” According to Lyons, “Rhetorical sovereignty is the inherent right and ability of peoples to determine their own communication needs and desires in this pursuit, to decide for themselves the goals, modes, styles, and languages of public discourse.”23 Harris and the forum members did not wait to have their work, reflections, and insights declared credible or significant by outsiders, nor did they choose to follow conventional academic guidelines in the writing of the text. They exercised rhetorical sovereignty by determining their own needs and deciding upon their own style of discourse.

In addition, by acknowledging that “we need everyone’s perspective” as “each of our communities . . . reflects on the past and chooses what to carry forward” demonstrates that This Is What We Want to Share is a powerful example of a communitist text. As defined by Jace Weaver (Cherokee), communitism “is formed from a combination
of the words community and activism or activist. Literature is com- munitist to the extent that it has a proactive commitment to Native community, including the wider community. He goes on to say, “In communities that have been . . . rendered dysfunctional by the effects of more than five hundred years of colonialism, to promote communitist values means to participate in the healing of the grief and sense of exile felt by Native communities and the pained individuals in them."

Harris’s communitist monograph, This Is What We Want to Share, with its stated goal of “differentiating ourselves out of our collective mess” is designed to help Native communities, and specifically tribal governments, heal from the trauma of colonialism through the rhetorical acts of talking and writing collectively. Consequently, This Is What We Want to Share is an exercise in decolonization and now serves as a significant example of a sort of “decolonizing methodology” similar to the model presented by Linda Tuhiwai Smith (Maori). In Decolonizing Methodologies Tuhiwai Smith presents a model that makes use of the Maori equivalent of the four directions and a metaphor of ocean tides, appropriate to the Maori experience. She explains her model at length:

The four directions named here—decolonization, healing, transformation and mobilization—represent processes…. They are processes which connect, inform and clarify the tension between the local, the regional, and the global…. Four major tides are represented in the chart as: survival, recovery, development, self-determination. They are the conditions and states of being through which indigenous communities are moving.

As in Tuhiwai Smith’s model, Harris and the forum members’ process is based on cultural values. In addition, Harris and her co-authors seem to move through a series of processes and states of being, not necessarily in sequential order. Specifically, I have identified the following four rhetorical acts that characterize the processes through which Harris and her coauthors move in the text: self-assertion, bearing witness, developing counter-consciousness and building community, and sharing gifts.
Self- Assertion

This Is What We Want to Share begins with a declaration or assertion of self, establishing just who the “we” in the title is referring to. Significantly, this assertion is an act of self-definition. Because people who have been internally or psychologically colonized are not people who have written their own life stories but people whose stories have been written for them by the colonizer, seizing the pen is an important first step in the healing process. Furthermore, the act of self-definition provides a chance for the authors to assert themselves as “different” but not different—as has so often been suggested by the colonizer—because of some deficiency or other degrading quality. Instead, the authors embrace the notion of difference, focusing on qualities they see as positive, strong, and unique. Indeed the title itself, This Is What We Want to Share, indicates that the authors have qualities that others not only lack but actually need.

Because this is a collective document, representing many people and many tribes, the declaration of self comes in the form of a list of “core tribal values.” According to Harris and other forum members, “the quality which has enabled the North American Tribes to persevere for the last 500 years has been the degree to which they have been able to manifest core Tribal values . . . [these values] seem to manifest themselves across both Tribes and time.” The four values identified in this document are being a good relative, inclusive sharing, contributing, and noncoercive leadership. By stating these as core cultural values “across Tribes and time,” Harris and forum members assert a pan-Indian collective voice—a sort of strategic essentialism used to achieve a stronger voice in a particular moment. Consequently, the declaration of self or statement of “We are” applies to more than one tribe. “We are” means “We [all the North American Tribes] are.” Furthermore, by asserting “we-ness” Harris and the coauthors indicate that it is not the outward trappings of culture—such as music, traditional dress, and so on—that define contemporary cultures. Instead, cultures are defined by the way they manifest their values in any setting.

Harris and the coauthors further exercise both intellectual and rhetorical sovereignty by using the core cultural values as the foun-
dation and even the method of analysis for the rest of the monograph, writing, “one of the major difficulties in analyzing Tribal issues is that we have often used other cultures’ frameworks of analysis to do so . . . the analytical ‘camera’ has often been pointed in the wrong direction.” Thus, through the rhetorical act of self-definition, Harris and the other forum members have set the terms of the debate.

Bearing Witness

This Is What We Want to Share acknowledges the pain Native communities have experienced and continue to experience. Criticizing the silence of tribal communities, the Harris and forum members state:

We . . . do not articulate and make explicit to ourselves and our children the degree of ethno-stress . . . we have endured for the last 500 years and the moments of original hurt that we have experienced as communities. It is necessary to identify what this stress is and what these moments are and make them explicit because they not only affect the individual, but the whole Tribal social order, including governance. If we do not . . . we are doomed to carry all kinds of unresolved issues forward into the future. . . . We have to . . . set this history aside in order to deal with current reality, in order to fully comprehend the range of our current options and make effective decisions in the present.

The rhetorical act of making the pain of colonization explicit is what Gloria Bird (Spokane) has called an act of “bearing witness to colonization . . . a testimony aimed at undoing those processes that attempt to keep us in the grips of the colonizer’s mental bondage.” Bird’s next comments demonstrate that bearing witness collectively is an important element of the act. She writes, “There is truly strength in the number of witnesses who can carry our stories outward.” Importantly, This Is What We Want to Share contends that the stress of colonization affects not only “the individual, but
the whole Tribal social order,” making the act of bearing witness a social responsibility linked to Harris’s value of contribution. If collective stress requires collective healing, then it is the responsibility of each individual to participate in bearing witness for the ongoing health and continuance of the whole.

Developing Counter-Consciousness and Building Community

After moving through the catharsis and empowerment of bearing witness, Harris and the other forum members engage in a third, crucial, rhetorical act—developing a counter-consciousness. At this stage, the authors insist that no choice the United States has offered (or tried to force) is a viable vision for tribal life in America. Instead, a collective vision must come from the very foundation of the collective. According to *This Is What We Want to Share*:

The common assumption in the United States has been that Tribes have only two choices: to assimilate to the stronger economic and political order to remain “pristine” in a kind of hostile isolation from all outside cultural encounters. The Tribes, however, have chosen another path which emerges from our core Tribal values.33

Harris and the forum members adamantly maintain that the other “path” is based on core cultural values, thus ensuring that the counter-consciousness is created organically by the collective rather than given by well-meaning outsiders. However, the authors acknowledge that adapting old ways to contemporary life is not easy and is even our “greatest challenge,” writing that we must “find ways to bring our values as distinct peoples to bear on contemporary existence.”34 Again, Harris and the forum participants insist that the term “values” is not synonymous with “tradition,” noting, “we are speaking of values, not ‘beads and braids’ or ‘back-to-the-Buffalo’ ideas. The latter are historical manifestations of values, not the values themselves.”35

Significantly, *This Is What We Want to Share* not only asks tribal readers to consider their core cultural values but also provides a plan of action for doing so, asking each tribe to “write their own story”
and ask itself difficult questions, making explicit what is often felt but inarticulate. The document asserts that “we need continuous histories . . . which articulate both the positive and negative aspects of our communal experience . . . we must make recollecting and collecting our histories a high priority task in order to do our development planning well.” Accordingly, the text provides a heuristic for communities by asking the following series of questions and explaining how the answers can be important:

What is our contemporary Tribal identity? What are our core Tribal values? What is it to be a Tribal person at the end of the twentieth century? We need to go back to the oldest stories, trace our identities and follow the manifestation of core values throughout all historical periods. Each Tribe’s sociopolitical history must be reviewed particularly in terms of the selection of the strategic options in relation to 500 years of political encapsulation . . . each Tribe’s contemporary mix of collective values . . . must be identified and made explicit. It is only then that kinship and political structure can be put together in a contemporary manner.

This Is What We Want to Share presents a powerful consciousness-building message, made even more effective by the rhetorical style of the document. The ninety-two-page monograph is broken down into many, many sections. It is not professionally bound but copied and stapled together. The writing is readable and efficient but not particularly elegant. At various points hand-drawn—not computer-generated—charts and graphs are included. Consistent with its organic, collective genesis, it does not seem to maintain a cohesive, unified voice throughout but instead uses multiple styles and voices. Yet, all of these elements serve to make the monograph more rather than less rhetorically effective.

As described earlier, Harris stated that the document grew out of a series of conversations, and, indeed, the text reads like a series of conversations in often very plain language. Readers, who are invited to join in the conversation, can almost hear different people putting in their two cents, sorting out how they feel and why, and sharing
what has worked and what has failed in their communities. *This Is What We Have to Share* builds a powerful consciousness among its writers and readers because it does not pretend to have all of the answers or even all of the questions. The monograph does not present itself as a polished, completed community action plan to be added to never-ending list of programs, task-force findings, expert opinions, and so on, to which tribal communities are supposed to adhere. Instead, *This Is What We Want to Share* literally shares its ideas with tribal readers, asking them to join in the problem solving, encouraging (even insisting) that the answers—our core values—are within our own communities and have always been there. Indeed, *This Is What We Want to Share* argues that those values are why we are still here at all. The monograph then turns from consciousness building or reflection to community building, saying “By recognizing and owning our complex reality we can empower ourselves to act on our own behalf.”

The second half of the monograph is devoted to nation or community building based on counter-consciousness. This half of the monograph includes very practical discussions of community building, specifically in the areas of leadership, tribal governance, and economic development, using extended examples from tribes that participated in the forums. In each example, Harris and the forum participants demonstrate how core cultural values can be used to problem solve or find the appropriate behavior in a given situation.

This section begins by tying economic development to the collective vision established in the first half of the monograph, asserting that tribal economic development without reflection is no different than any of the economic plans forced on Native peoples by the federal government. Because this type of economic development, the authors argue, will only lead to assimilation—not survival or continuance—they urge tribes to consider the overarching purpose of economic development. They state their position at length:

In the Allotment era at the end of the last century we were all to become farmers. In the Relocation era we were all to be factory workers. In the 1960s it was grantsmen, and now in
the Reagan/Bush era we are supposed to become individual entrepreneurs or members of corporations. These are all imposed economic categories carrying imposed values. . . . While it is true that people must have an economic base in order to live, it is also true . . . that Tribal people cannot flourish without a . . . Tribal vision. For what end is the economic development? . . . The true criterion of development is the viability of the social unit, the continuation of The People. 39

Harris and the forum members cite the lack of a tribal vision as the cause for failed economic development, writing, “Economic development projects, however, usually do not resonate with any traditional processes. This is probably why economic development for economic development’s sake meets with less success in Indian Country.” 40

According to the document, economic development is directly tied to self-government. If the people do not directly contribute to and participate in the system of government, and if the system of government does not reflect core tribal values, then economic development can never succeed.

At this point, the monograph turns its attention to tribal governments, critiquing the cookie-cutter constitutions of the IRA era, as well as tribal factionalism. Harris and forum members believe that tribal governments “have an immense responsibility to create institutions and organs of government (like constitutions) which accurately reflect sociopolitical orders culturally appropriate for contemporary Tribes.” 41 Again, the monograph does not leave tribal readers to figure out for themselves how to reform governmental systems using core values. Instead, This Is What We Want to Share provides a plan of action and heuristic to make what could be an abstract idea more concrete and applicable, stating, “Each Tribe must ask itself, ‘Do our institutions and organs of government enable the Tribe to effectively govern itself as well as participate in the larger, more complex political and economic systems of which we are a part?’” 42

This Is What We Want to Share insists that if tribal governmental systems were more culturally appropriate, factionalism would de-
crease significantly, in large part because all community members would be stakeholders in and even owners of the government. Given the collective nature of tribal citizenship and identity, such community ownership over the mechanisms of government are especially critical, particularly when compared to the more individualistic norms of Western, “representative” democracies, which, in practice, separate governance from community and personal investment and ownership. The text suggests that one of the four core tribal values is noncoercive leadership. Therefore, according to Harris and her coauthors, “much of the so-called factionalism . . . is simply people responding oppositionally to ‘a single directing voice,’ people not being able to find a way . . . to spontaneously contribute to the collective enterprise and/or people feeling actively shut out of any participatory role.”

Throughout this community building section, Harris continues to further develop collective consciousness, reminding us to “turn the camera around” looking at tribal dysfunction from a Native perspective, rather than giving in to internal colonization by swallowing whole outsiders’ perceptions of Native issues. This Is What We Want to Share suggests that it is not always tribal people that need to conform, noting, “Maybe what at mid-century looked like Tribal dysfunction will turn out to be the manifestation of the frustrated aspirations of Tribal people requiring a higher degree of adaptation by Euroamerican society to Tribal ideas of personal autonomy.”

Sharing Gifts

The fourth rhetorical act made by Harris and the forum participants—sharing gifts—can be clearly linked to two of Harris’s Comanche values: (1) contribution, that is, having a special responsibility to those with whom you are in a relationship and (2) redistribution, that is, having a willingness and even obligation to share. As the title of the document indicates, sharing is perhaps the most important purpose of the paper.

Harris and her coauthors contend that it is their obligation—indeed their desire—to share tribal core cultural values with the rest
of the world. This important thread is woven throughout the monograph. In a strong, collective declaration of self, the multiple authors of *This Is What We Want to Share* write:

We Tribal peoples want to participate at every level in the contemporary world: locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally. As co-creators of the universe, we want to contribute, and it is our very differentness which gives us something to contribute. While we want to become self-determining within larger systems and independent of federal intervention, we also want to share with the larger society our understanding of the mutual reciprocal exchange obligations which have enabled Tribal societies to continue through the millennia.  

The use of a term like “co-creators” sweeps away any preconceived notions of victimhood and indicates a strong sense of self-determination and sovereignty. Using “co-creators” demands not only that tribal readers (re)shape their own collective consciousness to a position of strength but also that nontribal readers recognize the inherent powers of tribal peoples. Furthermore, the acknowledgment that differentness is a good thing, the thing that has enabled tribal peoples to continue, indicates recognition of inward beauty in spite of the damaging psychology of internalized oppression. The need to share this differentness connotes not only sharing the results of the forum with tribal readers but also sharing core cultural values with the rest of the world’s communities.

The desire to share with these outside communities is consistent with the first of the four cultural values the monograph lists, being a good relative. According to Harris and forum members, “Tribal people define themselves in relationships,” and those relationships come with shared responsibility. They continue, “We do not feel that we have to change ourselves, that is, alter our identity, in order to participate in these various relationships. In each of these relationships we want to contribute that which is unique about ourselves.” Harris and the coauthors go on to explain that the desire of Native peoples to be autonomous and self-determining does not mean that Native peoples want to be isolated from the outside world. They write:
There is . . . something about crises which energize[s] (if you survive the crisis) . . . what we seek at this time in history is not a return to the dominance we enjoyed . . . but a return to being a dynamic presence in our ecological and social niche, of being a valued contributor in all our contexts. . . . We do not want to be dependent. We want to contribute this personal and collective energy to the larger whole.48

In fact, they argue that tribal peoples not only acknowledge their relationships with outside communities but also believe all peoples should flourish, writing that “the world’s Tribes are the miners’ canaries of the global system. If we create a system which nurtures us, then probably we will have created a system capable of nurturing everyone.”49

This Is What We Want to Share serves as a powerful example of a rhetoric of decolonization. The text and the forum from which it grew exemplify the LaDonna Harris’s model of leadership—a model based specifically on the exercise of core cultural values. What she has ultimately shared in this document may be that our most effective rhetorical practices are the ones that spring from our own traditions—that is, indeed, powerful medicine.

NOTES

3. LaDonna Harris, LaDonna Harris: A Comanche Life, ed. Henrietta Stockel (Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 2000).
5. Harris, LaDonna Harris, dedication page.
8. Harris, LaDonna Harris.
13. Harris, Ladonna Harris 110–16.
17. LaDonna Harris and Jacqueline Wasilewski, This Is What We Want to Share: Core Cultural Values (Albuquerque, NM: Americans for Indian Opportunity, 1992) 4. LaDonna Harris has recently donated her papers to the University of New Mexico Libraries.
20. Harris and Wasilewski 5.
22. Warrior 97–98.
25. Weaver 49.
27. Harris and Wasilewski 7.
29. Harris and Wasilewski 8.
32. Bird 29.
33. Harris and Wasilewski 6.
34. Harris and Wasilewski 34.
35. Harris and Wasilewski 34.
36. Harris and Wasilewski 17.
37. Harris and Wasilewski 17–18.
38. Harris and Wasilewski 15.
39. Harris and Wasilewski 12.
40. Harris and Wasilewski 48.
41. Harris and Wasilewski 13.
42. Harris and Wasilewski 13.
43. Harris and Wasilewski 53.
44. Harris and Wasilewski 34.
45. Harris and Wasilewski 6.
46. Harris and Wasilewski 11.
47. Harris and Wasilewski 11–12.
48. Harris and Wasilewski 35.
49. Harris and Wasilewski 5.
The University of Alberta recently hosted a conference called Indigenous Women and Feminism: Culture, Activism, and Politics. Although the call for papers stated that “indigenous women and feminist issues remain undertheorized within contemporary feminist critical theory,” a colleague reminded me that Indigenous women and feminist issues have not been undertheorized, at least not in our own communities; we have always theorized our lives. After considering her standpoint, I recognized how the academy has led Indigenous women to believe that the various ways we use language to interpret the world or produce knowledge are not acts of theorizing, a tendency that points to problems in the way academics think about knowledge production. Because mainstream research has not used Indigenous women’s intellectual traditions—constructed and utilized within our own communities—are we to believe that the ways in which we make meaning of our lives or understand the world are not theory? Research methods are socially constructed, and communities decide what constitutes knowledge. Therefore, Indigenous women should not accept the notion that our rhetorical practices do not constitute sites of knowledge production or that we cannot use our own words and experiences to reconceptualize the processes and epistemological bases of our research to create an Indigenous women’s feminist theory.

This article corrects the assumption that “indigenous women and feminist issues remain undertheorized” by demonstrating that we do theorize our lives but that we theorize differently, meaning, Indigenous women do not rely solely on Western tools, worldviews,
or epistemologies as methods of interpretation. Indigenous women reject paradigms that ask us to disassociate ourselves from our lived experiences before we can claim to have the skills and knowledge to theorize. We believe theory comes not from abstract written ideas but from the collective knowledge of Indigenous women whose lives have not informed feminist theories, methods, or policy concerns and whose lived experiences mainstream feminists will continue to ignore unless Indigenous women question and deconstruct existing methodologies. What are Indigenous women claiming as different from existing paradigms? An examination of Indigenous women’s primary rhetorical practices demonstrates that communication and sharing through writing constitutes an important location where Indigenous women theorize our lives, a claim that raises additional questions. What does it mean to theorize, what tools does one use to theorize, and who is given the authority to theorize? Theorizing involves analyzing facts and their relationship to one another. Therefore, Indigenous women’s work that produces knowledge based on one’s lived experience is a form of theorizing. One tool Indigenous women use to theorize is writing, which provides a space for women to make sense of the world and their place in it. Additionally, Indigenous women’s rhetorical practices produce knowledge that Cherríe Moraga refers to as “theory in the flesh,” a concept that grounds struggles for knowledge in women’s bodies. Consequently, if Indigenous feminist scholars hope to empower Indigenous peoples, we have a responsibility to acknowledge and integrate the many insights offered by Indigenous women, meaning we should recognize that everyone has the authority to theorize. An Indigenous feminist theory also presents strategies that empower, which includes naming the enemy, “reinventing the enemy’s language,” and writing to survive. An Indigenous feminist theory also reveals overarching characteristics such as responsibility, the promotion of healing, and a call for survival, all features this article explores.

REINVENTING THE ENEMY’S LANGUAGE

Analyzing Indigenous women’s appropriation, reinvention, and use of English and writing as rhetorical sites of power allows us to be-
gin conceptualizing alternative methodologies for articulating an Indigenous feminist theory. Indigenous women demonstrate that theory happens when we speak out and voice opposition to oppression and the many injustices we have experienced. An Indigenous feminist ethos of responsibility compels Indigenous women to write and speak to ensure survival, to empower, and, most of all, to heal, but what if our only language is Spanish, French, or English? What if the only language we know is the colonizers’ language? For too long, Indigenous peoples have been led to believe that English and writing are our enemies. It is common knowledge that Indigenous languages are dying out, and English now constitutes the first language for many of us. Therefore, if we continue to perceive English as an enemy and writing as an activity that make us “less than Indian,” then many will be left without a language or a position of power from which to speak; many will be rendered silent even by some from within their own communities. We need to challenge the belief that we are “less than Indian” if we speak or write in English. Rather, we should see this charge as a strategy of domination, a method to silence voices that might question or resist the status quo in Indigenous or non-Indigenous communities.

According to Janice Acoose (Sakimay/Saulteaux and Marival Métis), “recognizing that language can and does shape our experiences, it is vitally important that Indigenous women appropriate the English language in order to represent our experiences.” Joy Harjo (Mvskoke/Creek) embraces language in general, claiming that the centuries of war in which Indigenous peoples have engaged and in which we continue to fight have left many of us using the “enemy [sic] language’ with which to tell our truths, to sing, to remember ourselves during these troubled times.” Likewise, Aileen Moreton-Robinson (Koenpul/Australian Aborigine) notes, “learning to speak English and mimicking the customs of the colonizer does not fundamentally transform subjectivities that have been socialized within Indigenous domains.” She reminds us that we have had to acquire new knowledge in order to survive in circumstances not of our own choosing. Therefore, acquiring Western knowledge or speaking English does not mean we have become assimilated. Rather,
she states, it points to Indigenous subjectivity as multiple. Acoose, Moreton-Robinson, and Harjo encourage Indigenous women “to speak, at whatever the cost,” because to speak and to use language “is to become empowered rather than victimized by destruction,” ensuring our long-term survival.

As a child, Berenice Levchuk (Navajo) grasped the significance of language when she interpreted between Navajo and English for her parents as well as “traders, teachers, missionaries, and others.” Translating taught her the importance of accuracy when moving between two languages where “barriers to communication” can result from “inaccurate information and misinterpretations based on biased beliefs.” She notes,

Over the years, non-native so-called experts have been responsible for putting into print and sustaining far too much flawed writing and beliefs concerning native thought and symbolism. It is crucial that our native children and youth be given correct information about where they came from and who they are.

While writing and English remain suspect, revisioning and reinventing the enemy’s language emphasize that the power of English lies in our hands. For Indigenous women, English often reflects the power of language to heal, to regenerate, and to recreate, correcting misinformation and stereotypes long advocated by outsiders.

Acoose uses English to convey Indigenous peoples’ reality; she writes in English because she finds that it “encourages [the] recreation, renaming, and empowerment of both Indigenous peoples and non-Indigenous peoples.” Connie Fife (Cree) reinforces the notion that language does not necessarily have to be an enemy. She contends that the written word “can convey the resilience of our survival.” Our use of English reflects a “both/and” standpoint rooted in our everyday experiences of being Indigenous and speaking English. Reinventing the enemy’s language signals our refusal to be defined by anyone else but ourselves.

In spite of the power language holds, colonization has effectively silenced many Indigenous women. Lee Maracle (Salish/Cree) connects this silence with the trauma that has accompanied colo-
nization, and through her writing she helps women still afraid to speak to recognize the root cause of their fear. She believes that “being colonized is the internalization of the need to remain invisible.” The trauma of colonization and threats of violence against aboriginal women created fear in Maracle, who admits that, at one time, she tried to remain invisible until another young Indigenous woman showed her that she needed to accept her responsibility as an Indigenous woman, speak out against injustice, and become a visible role model for younger women. Lila Tabobondung believes far too many Indigenous women have remained silent, insisting, “it is our responsibility to speak up because it is our children’s future that is at stake.” When Indigenous women speak out against oppression and become visible we politicize our continued existence and signal to the United States, Canada, Australia, and other colonized nations that assimilation or continued threats of violence have not worked despite more than five hundred years of trying to erase, ignore, or keep us silent. Although each wave of assimilationist tactics has created new struggles for Indigenous peoples, Kim Anderson (Cree/Métis) reminds us, “we may be struggling, but we are still here,” an affirmation that celebrates our survival.

NAMING THE ENEMY

Although Indigenous women face numerous enemies from the past and into the present, we realize that healing and empowerment cannot take place until we identify the many sources of our oppression. Speaking out and naming the enemy reveals the central role language can play in our empowerment and continued existence. Maracle understands that before we can focus on resurgence and recovery, we need to identify outside forces that have created our current conditions. As Scott Lyons (Ojibwe-Bullhead Clan) notes, the cultural violence against Indigenous peoples “was in many ways located at the scene of writing.” Thus, through writing Indigenous women identify the poisons that threaten to destroy us. To promote survival we must name our enemies. According to Harjo, “the moment we are able to identify the source of pain, [the enemy], we are free of
its power over us.” Even Indigenous women’s scholarly research identifies enemies that poison our communities. Kim Anderson describes her book *A Recognition of Being: Reconstructing Native Womanhood* as “a gift to Native women, children, and men” because it contributes “to an evolving scholarly and popular body of work that is naming the poisons that have infiltrated Native womanhood, documenting Native female paths of resistance and defining a positive Native female identity.” While Acoose describes her attempts to name the enemy as a process that often left her “angry, frustrated, and confused,” she admits that it eventually led to her “liberation and empowerment”:

> At numerous times throughout my journey, I felt overwhelmed by negative feelings, and confused because my own way of seeing, being, knowing, and understanding the world . . . which has sustained my ancestors for thousands of years, had continuously been assaulted by the canadian nation’s ideological forces.

Her writing became a way for her to name the enemy, resist it, and critically examine the ideological forces that have sustained it.

The phrase “naming the enemy” points to the war metaphors common in Indigenous women’s writing. Characterizing lived experiences through metaphors of invasion and attack and using the language of war and colonization provides a model for Indigenous women to reflect on their peoples’ ongoing struggles with the United States. At the same time, the use of war metaphors serves a political function because it implies that enemies with battle plans and strategies for victory must exist. For Paul Gunn Allen,

> War stories seem to me to capture all the traditional themes of Indian women’s narratives: the themes of love and separation, loss, and most of all, of continuance. Certainly war has been the major motif of Indian life over the past five centuries, so it is perfectly fitting that we write out of our experience as women at war, women who endure during wartime, women who spend each day aware that we live in a war zone.
As Allen suggests, wars represent loss, but they also illustrate our resiliency and capacity to survive.

The enemies Indigenous women face are numerous, but we name them, nevertheless, as a sign that we recognize them and to identify them for later generations. Scott Kayla Morrison (Choctaw) claims Allen prepared her for war by naming an enemy others have faced and would continue to face. Morrison, who named racism as her first enemy, describes her foray through law school as an act of war:

At law school, I felt prepared to begin walking the red road (the Choctaw concept of going to war). I knew my weapons. Paula Gunn Allen named our enemies: colonization, assimilation, acculturation. Naming the enemy is powerful. To name the enemy allows no room for interpretation or misunderstanding. The first enemy I named was called racism. . . . Naming the enemy of racism, and naming my weapons to combat this enemy of hate, was a powerful experience.19

Because Allen felt compelled to identify and make visible several enemies, Morrison was prepared to encounter them and empowered to name them. Words were Morrison’s weapon, and words prepared her for combat. Harjo identifies the enemy as “hatred . . . self-doubt, poverty, alcoholism, depression, and violence against women, among others,” insisting that “to speak . . . is to become empowered rather than victimized by destruction.”20 The war is not over, so those of us who have survived battles, who have seen and named the enemy, are responsible for preparing the next generation to go to war.

Cartography is another common metaphor Indigenous women use to describe our experiences, and many describe the process of survival in terms of following maps, paths, or markers as if they too were preparing the way for others who would follow them. Harjo and Gloria Bird (Spokane) describe their anthology as a product of Indigenous women’s “ongoing journey,” and they refer to Indigenous women’s dialogue as a “path” to empowerment.21 Kimberly Blaeser (Anishnabe) describes Indigenous women’s writing as a journey of homecoming: “Whatever mystery we are exploring, we tell our way, and in the telling find our way. That search called writing leads us home.”22 Tiffany
Midge (Lakota) also describes her writing as a personal journey that leads to healing. “In a very true and literal sense,” she says,

my writing became the center of my salvation. I’ve found much peace through the creative process by risking to speak of the stories that strike hard into the locked internal landscapes—the scariest cupboards—of my being. Through releasing them, I’ve learned the true meaning of forgiveness.23

The first path many Indigenous women take as they begin writing leads to the past and to their grandmothers’ words and to future generations. Yvonne Lamore-Choate (Quechan/Mojave) describes her grandmother as her “rock, the one stable person in [her] life [she] could depend on.”24 Anderson identifies Indigenous elders as a collective voice she uses to “map out a resistance that might be useful to other people,” and she “draw[s] upon . . . [Indigenous] women’s stories to create this map.”25 Maracle describes the grandmother image in *I Am Woman* as the multiple women she has known in the past whose lives she describes as “a composite of the reality of our history and present existence.”26 Her poem, “Creation,” conveys her personal journey, following a path back in time and looking into the future:

... the farther backward in time that I travel the more grandmothers and the farther forward the more grandchildren I am obligated to both.27

For guidance, Maracle looks to grandmothers for examples on how to live her life, and she looks to future generations as the motivation for her current activities, reflecting her sense of responsibility to them. Her legacy of survival becomes their hope for the future, giving her work a purpose. Anderson also presents in her book’s dedication her sense of responsibility for generations to come. She writes, “To all the Aboriginal baby girls being born this minute, this book is for you. With recognition and thanks for the tremendous work of your grandmothers, who have so lovingly provided the way.”28
Indigenous women look to the past for guidance on how we should repair the broken threads of our lives. They refer to journeys as backward-looking in order to see what has shaped us. In looking back, we find knowledge and traditions that have sustained our ancestors. Haunani-Kay Trask uses her native Hawaiian language to explain how the past represents the future for her people: “We face our past: ka wā mamua—the time before. The past holds our wisdom and our kūpuna (elders’) knowledge. As our culture tells us, we are guided in the present on the path so well followed by our ancestors in the past.”

Emma Lee Warrior (Blackfoot) disregards advice to keep her eyes fixed on the future, saying, “I’ve been advised to ‘look to the future,’ but my head keeps turning around to the wisdom back there, away from 7-Elevens and twenty-four-hour video stores.” Warrior suggests that modern conveniences have destroyed something significant for which she has been looking. Ruth Roessel (Diné) identifies this something as the strength Indigenous women have lost or stand to lose by following non-Indigenous paths. She insists, “We must look backward at our strength, which is in our traditions, so that we can look forward with confidence—not fear.”

Despite the past’s significance and the importance of following our ancestors’ ways, Indigenous women also caution us to look to the past with a critical eye. Anderson and Bonita Lawrence (Mi’kmaw) warn us to avoid putting elders on pedestals, because this generation of elders was harmed. They also caution us about reclaiming traditions and rebuilding nations that mimic patriarchal ways. They point out that contemporary Indigenous male leaders put much of the responsibility for healing our communities on women, which Anderson and Lawrence find problematic because they feel we do enough already. The constant focus on women as the backbone of the nation forestalls any discussion about men’s role and responsibility in reclaiming traditions and rebuilding the nations. Not talking about men’s roles and responsibilities makes it easier to chastise and discipline women.

By speaking out and naming the enemies we have faced, Indigenous women share the many paths we have taken, and our lives become a roadmap to the future. Our journeys through writ-
ing represent a form of activism because our collective narratives
demonstrate that traditions are being renewed, revitalized, or ques-
tioned. Writing provides directions to help the lost find their way
home. Anderson perceives Indigenous peoples to be “in a state of
confusion,” but, she goes on to explain, “We are trying to work our
way out of it.”37 We are extracting ourselves from confusion by find-
ing balance, and “when we find the balance we will know it because
the women won’t be lost.”38

**SHARING OUR STORIES OF SURVIVAL THROUGH**
**DIALOGUE AND WRITING**

When Indigenous women begin to speak out, a simultaneous de-
sire to dialogue with other Indigenous women surfaces. Before the
advent of computers, chatrooms, and e-mail, and before the wide-
spread publication of Indigenous women’s writing, it took us longer
to learn that we have many shared experiences and have not been
alone in our struggles. Beth Brant’s (Bay of Quinte Mohawk) an-
thology *A Gathering of Spirit: A Collection by North American Indian
Women* became a way for her to find women like herself whom the
forces of colonialism have silenced. As she began to write and speak,
she claims, “I wanted to hear from the women yet unheard. I wanted
the voices traditionally silenced to be a part of this collection.”
Moreover, she insists, “I am doing this because I have to. I am doing
this because no one else will do it.”39 Brant’s words express a tremen-
dous need to write or create, a common refrain voiced by Indigenous
women. When Indigenous women speak up and seek each other out,
communities of women begin to form who share stories and reveal
a common legacy of struggle against violence and oppression. Our
histories have included many of the same lethal forces, transforming
our experiences into a collective voice.

The publication of Indigenous women’s writing has allowed us
to dialogue with one another in creative, intellectual, and academic
spaces that we have created. Harjo’s introduction to *Reinventing the
Enemy’s Language* notes, “We learn the world and test it through in-
teraction and dialogue with each other,” and anthologies limited to
Indigenous women’s voices, including *Through the Eye of the Deer*, *My Home as I Remember*, *Sister Nations*, *Writing the Circle*, and *Everyday Is a Good Day*, reveal the significance we place on the exchange of ideas. Like Brant, Harjo and Bird “wanted to know about the lives of women throughout the hemisphere who were writing [and] creating.” Indigenous women’s writing connects us in a common struggle because our shared stories demonstrate recurrent patterns of differential treatment. Harjo and Bird created their anthology to dialogue with other women, but, more importantly, they “wanted to see how well we had survived the onslaught of destruction.” They wanted to compile stories in order to help Indigenous women “to become empowered rather than victimized by destruction.”

Our conversations with one another have challenged paradigms that disallow lived experience in intellectual conversations because Indigenous feminist discourse and theory is grounded in our collective experience. Therefore, we dialogue with one another, an act that is primary when engaging in Indigenous feminist research and assessing knowledge claims. Betty Louise Bell’s (Cherokee) protagonist in *Faces in the Moon* professes, “I was raised on the voices of women. Indian women. The kitchen table was first a place of remembering, a place where women came and drew their lives from each other.” Dialogue reflects relationships based on equality rather than mainstream research practices that create subjects and objects. Dialogue takes place at kitchen tables or over meals between women who hear and respond to one another’s stories whether they are verbal or written.

Writing becomes a path to healing, and an Indigenous feminist ethos of responsibility compels women to share their stories and personal pain with one another to promote healing for everyone. Bird claims she writes because she realizes the power of language and uses it as a tool to strengthen her people: “One of the functions of language is to construct our world. We are the producers of this world who create ourselves as well as our social reality, and we do this through language.” Many Indigenous women credit writing for their healing and survival, and they want to share this discovery with others. Maria Campbell (Métis) confesses, “I went
out one night and sat in a bar . . . and I started writing a letter because I had to have somebody to talk to. And that was how I wrote *Halfbreed*. Lois Red Elk (Fort Peck Dakota) began writing in order to understand what she calls the “white man’s hell” she experienced: “When I was twelve years old,” she says, “the hell’ turned me inward (to resist under my breath), then I wrote and rewrote my thoughts (poems) to resolve the pain of stuffing their prejudice against us.” Red Elk also “wrote notes to encourage [her] Indian friends—‘Stay in school, keep your baby, don’t take your life, you can quit drinking.’” Chrystos (Menominee/Lithuanian/Alsace Lorraine) gave up writing after she suffered a mental breakdown and lived on the streets. After a ten-year hiatus from writing, she again picked up pen and paper, and her journals reflect her personal and political struggles and her concern with making Indigenous peoples visible. The people with whom Chrystos shared her work admitted to her that her books saved their lives. To this she responds, “I can think of no greater honor than to help others fight to survive, despite all the forces arrayed against them.” Indigenous women acknowledge the empowering effect that writing has on them, knowledge they hope to pass on to others.

Laura Tohe (Diné) writes to reclaim herself and the power her culture offers women because “the act of writing is claiming voice and taking power.” Roessel writes to empower young Navajo women whom she feels are lost in the morass of cultural imperialism and cannot seem to find their way out: “It is for the young people that I write this book about the heart of Navajo life, which is Navajo women.” Emma LaRocque (Plains Cree/Métis) began writing in eighth grade out of her need to express herself because, as she says, “there was so much about our history and about our lives that . . . has been disregarded, infantilized, and falsified.”

Indigenous feminism’s ethos of responsibility includes making one’s voice heard in order to reclaim and rewrite the collective history of our peoples. Inez Peterson (Quinault) writes to remember and to reclaim her Indigenous identity and history. She is just one of the many children stolen from their families and placed in white foster care, so for her “the very act of removal prompted an intense de-
sire to remember, and later record. This act of writing gathers for me my family, gives me back a history, and places me within my tribe, the Quinault Indian Nation.”

Peterson broadens the meaning surrounding “removal” to include herself. She rhetorically connects her personal experience of removal from her home and family with the many other Indigenous peoples removed from home and homeland during the Trail of Tears or the Long Walk. Janice Gould uses writing to actively engage in a process of self-definition: “These days I feel a kind of urgency to reconstruct memory, annihilate the slow amnesia of the dominant culture, and reclaim the past as a viable, if painful entity.”

Indigenous women also write to speak for the many individuals who cannot speak. Bell writes, she says, “because my mother could not, but also I write because it is there that I speak with conviction and connection. And it is there that I hope to recover the gentleness of my mother’s face.”

Writing allows Indigenous women to counter misinformation and share stories that mainstream historians have sanitized or glossed over. Linda Noel (Concow Maidu) writes about a painful era in history, explaining that the California gold rush impelled her to write “to tell the stories that sometimes seem too painful, are too stark and sharp for most who are ignorant of truthful history. I have to tell it.” The history of which Noel speaks includes a campaign aided by a state government that “subsidized military campaigns against Indians, allowing for the indiscriminate killing of Indian women and children, as well as men, and justifying the slaughter as protecting settlers from Indian threat.”

Lee Davis points out that this “program of genocide, ‘extermination’ in the California press, was carried out by a group calling itself the California Volunteer Militia and by temporary bands of miners and ranchers—all organized for the purpose of killing Indians.” Then Governor Peter H. Burnett encouraged these genocidal practices. In his 1851 message to the legislature, he stated, “That a war of extermination will continue to be waged between the races, until the Indian race becomes extinct, must be expected. While we cannot anticipate this result but with painful regret, the inevitable destiny of the race is beyond the power or wisdom of man to avert.”

Noel shares these painful histories because no one else will do it.
SPEAKING FOR THE POWERLESS—INDIGENOUS FEMINIST THEORY IN THE FLESH

According to Cherríe Moraga, “A theory in the flesh means one where the physical realities of our lives—our skin color, the land or concrete we grew up on, our sexual longings—all fuse to create a politic born out of necessity.” Following colonization, fighting race, class, and gender violence, oppression, and injustice became a politics of necessity for Indigenous women whose bodies marked them as different and, therefore, violable. Indigenous women’s social location or positionality contributed to their critical understanding of the world and generated a critical consciousness of oppression. Yet, Indigenous women have always theorized from positions of power, and colonization ignited a first wave of Indigenous feminist rhetoric and activism that reflected the physical realities of Indigenous women’s lives affected by patriarchy and racism. Forming a chronology of early Indigenous women’s activism enables the process of recovering and developing an Indigenous feminist theory grounded in women’s bodies. Such a chronology presents Indigenous women as responding to multiple, shifting, and dynamic sets of social relationships that developed after conquest.

Early on, Indigenous women threatened the positions and rhetorical sites of power white men claimed. They did so by embracing presumably male roles such as warrior or politician. Nancy Ward (Cherokee), for example, fought alongside her husband in a battle between the Creeks and Cherokees, which earned her the position of Ghighau, or Supreme Beloved Woman, the institutionalized female leadership role that was a distinguishing feature of the Cherokees’ matrilineal kinship system. As early as 1755, Ward recognized, identified, and named patriarchy as the enemy, and through English she communicated with colonists as she worked diplomatically to better the lives of her people and to protect a Cherokee worldview and practices. While evidence of her rhetorical practices lay hidden until recent recovery efforts, the courage and strength she exhibited in life were undoubtedly passed down orally, contributing to an ongoing tradition of strong Cherokee women working for their people.
In her position of Supreme Beloved Woman, Ward stood as a symbol of peace, embodying the concept of a theory in the flesh. Her responsibilities included negotiating peace to ensure the Cherokees’ survival, a position that granted her the authority to speak for and represent her people during political negotiations with foreign governments, a role denied to women in patriarchal societies. Ward’s role as peacemaker, woman, and mother influenced her rhetoric and blurred gender roles as white, patriarchal society had defined them. An Indigenous feminist standpoint determined the rhetoric she used in each of her roles, all of them leading to an inclusive paradigm that accounted for women’s differences. In a speech to U.S. treaty commissioners in 1781, Ward stated, “You know that women are always looked upon as nothing; but we are your mothers, you are our sons. Our cry is all for peace; let it continue. This peace must last forever. Let your women’s sons be ours; our sons be yours. Let your women hear our words.” Ward pointed out to the commissioners that the nature and relationship of patriarchal practices disempowered all women, a recognition evidenced when she told white, male treaty commissioners, “You know that women are always looked upon as nothing.” Ward’s statement translated into a challenge that asked white men to deconstruct and to understand their power and privilege, which more often than not they used to oppress. She challenged patriarchal society’s treatment of women by calling on all men, including Cherokees, to reject sexist attitudes toward women.

Equally significant, by asking white men to let “their” women hear Cherokee women’s words she offered Cherokee womanhood as a new kind of subjectivity, and she urged white women to recognize the links she made between patriarchy, gender, and oppression. She began by correcting western European modes of descent, tracing the commissioners’ sons through their mothers’ line rather than their fathers’ line and reclaiming matriarchy and matrilineality as sites of power for women. Again, in a petition from Cherokee women to President Franklin, Ward positioned women in a position of power when she stated, “I am in hopes if you Rightly consider it that woman is mother of All—and that woman Does not pull Children out of Trees or Stumps nor out of old Logs, but out of their Bodies,
so that they ought to mind what a woman says, and look upon her as mother.262 By elevating the status of motherhood and validating a matrilineal line of descent, Ward attempted to modify interpersonal relationships based on patriarchal models, thus changing the structural forces that support dominance and subordination. In the connections Ward made between women’s debasement, war, and the responsibilities associated with motherhood, she created a framework for resistance among all women by dissecting Western social structures and connecting women’s oppression and subordination to a broader social framework.

Ward aimed her short speech at the treaty commissioners with the goal of dismantling oppressive practices, presenting insights about patterns of treatment toward women that encouraged gender subordination. She recognized, identified, and rejected patriarchy and its annihilation of women’s sites of power, emphasizing the significance and importance of self-definition for women. As mothers, women exerted great power to modify their children’s behavior, which could in turn change gendered power relations in the future. Through their intimate connection with men, women also had the power to work to actively suppress violence by refusing to support war, a choice that would have demonstrated their responsibility to protect and preserve all life.63 Her construction and definition of what it meant to be a woman and the concept of womanhood through a Cherokee lens opposed a Western patriarchal ideology that subordinated women to men. By naming patriarchy as the enemy, reinventing the meaning of “woman” and “womanhood” for white women, and promoting women’s empowerment, Ward’s early Indigenous feminist rhetoric highlights connections between women’s diverse experiences and the resulting group knowledge that results from living in a colonial nation-state and working in white-male-controlled social institutions that suppress or neglect social justice issues important to most all women.

Today, communities of Indigenous women follow Ward’s example when they identify and name our enemies, taking theory into practice, and deriving it from lived experience. While Indigenous women still experience the consequences of patriarchy and the subordina-
tion and oppression of women, many more are speaking out against the violence Indigenous women have endured since Ward’s time. In response to the alarmingly high rates of violence against aboriginal women today, the Native Women’s Association of Canada (NWAC) an organization committed to the concerns and needs of aboriginal women, launched the national Sisters in Spirit campaign. The NWAC grew out of an Indigenous feminist epistemology, reflecting the belief that it is our responsibility to speak up and care for those who are powerless. The NWAC broke aboriginal women’s silence surrounding the epidemic of violence that literally threatens their survival in Canada and formed a community based on a shared history and the threat of continued violence. They recovered Indigenous women’s voices, even those who have gone missing or have been found dead, focusing on the experiences of women who are not white, upper- or middle-class, or educated. Their decision to speak out constitutes a significant act in which many Indigenous women engage: breaking the silence that allows violence to continue and speaking out against oppression, injustice, and indifference that allowed a nation to ignore a murder for over a decade. Much of Indigenous women’s creative and scholarly work and political activism challenge stereotypes as a way to fight violence because stereotyped images influence men to see Indigenous women as objects to be used and abused as the case of a nineteen-year-old student, Helen Betty Osborne (Cree), illustrates.

On the evening of November 13, 1971, four white men abducted, sexually assaulted, and brutally murdered Osborne near The Pas in Manitoba, Canada. When they first spotted her, Osborne’s murderers had been “cruising,” a term locals use to describe white males’ attempts to pick up aboriginal girls, some underage, for drinking and sex. Although the Royal Canadian Mounted Police were aware of this practice, during the trial they admitted that they had never stopped cars to inquire if the girls were of age or even if they were willing participants. On the night she was murdered, Osborne had not gone willingly, so the men forced her into their car, drove her out of town, sexually assaulted her, then murdered her and hid her dead and naked body in a remote location.
It took sixteen years before her perpetrators were brought to trial, an event whose attention led to calls for a public inquiry into the Canadian government’s implementation of justice regarding aboriginal peoples. According to reports by the Aboriginal Justice Implementation Commission,

[Osborne’s] attackers seemed to be operating on the assumption that Aboriginal women were promiscuous and open to enticement through alcohol or violence. It is evident that the men who abducted Osborne believed that young Aboriginal women were objects with no human value beyond sexual gratification. . . . There is one fundamental fact: her murder was a racist and sexist act. Betty Osborne would be alive today had she not been an Aboriginal woman.  

In a nation that would not admit to believing in aboriginal women’s inferiority, insignificance, or worthlessness, the commission’s findings make visible the presence of racist and sexist attitudes and behaviors that transform Indigenous women into sexual targets for men.

Ideological justifications motivate cruising, and stereotypical images of aboriginal women as promiscuous provided Osborne’s murderers with the rationalization they needed to abduct, brutalize, and then murder her. Dehumanizing images of Indigenous women are widespread, and the physical and sexual abuse of aboriginal women demonstrates that they are more than symbolic. Emma LaRocque makes a connection between stereotypes, Indigenous women’s debasement through these degrading images, and Osborne’s murder:

The “squaw” is the female counterpart to the Indian male “savage” and as such she has no human face; she is lustful, immoral, unfeeling and dirty. Such grotesque dehumanization has rendered all Native women and girls vulnerable to gross physical, psychological and sexual violence. . . . I believe that there is a direct relationship between these horrible racist/sexist stereotypes and violence against Native women and girls. I believe, for example, that Helen Betty Osborne was murdered in 1972 by four young men from The Pas because these youths
grew up with twisted notions of “Indian girls” as “squaws.” . . . Osborne’s attempts to fight off these men’s sexual advances challenged their racist expectations that an “Indian squaw” should show subservience . . . [causing] the whites . . . to go into a rage and proceed to brutalize the victim.67

In spite of the brutality and injustice represented by Osborne’s murder and the length of time before her perpetrators were brought to trial, hers is not an isolated incident. Estimates range from over five hundred to as high as one thousand aboriginal women who are currently missing and thought to be dead in Canada.68

Because the NWAC values the lives of women whom white Canadian others have forgotten or silenced, their project resists historical amnesia and dedicates itself to remembering the voices and lives of women whom Canadian society would rather the public forget. Moreover, their project represents an act of resistance and responsibility by giving voice to previously silenced spaces. Indigenous women’s work such as that done by NWAC introduces specialized bodies of knowledge that Western rhetorical sites of power exclude from mainstream intellectual traditions. Nevertheless, Indigenous women have continued to express and validate their worldviews and experiences, producing knowledge in alternative sites of power and transforming aboriginal women’s lives by empowering them to speak out against violence.

Many women have not yet reached a place where they can release their fear, so their lack of voice renders them invisible. A need to stay invisible makes obvious the racialized and spatialized violence that remains a by-product of colonialism. According to Sherene Razack, dominant racist ideologies have resulted in spatial practices such as cruising in places Indigenous women are known to frequent. Razack’s exploration of Pamela George’s (Salteaux Ojibway) murder, much like Osborne’s, led her to conclude that white settler societies have otherized Indigenous spaces, portraying them as primitive and wild, thus transforming them into sites where white men can engage in acts of sexual violence against Indigenous women, reenacting strategies of domination.69 Osborne and George might have tried to remain invisible, but their lives beyond their reserves, in white,
urban space, illustrates the threat aboriginal women continue to face when they leave their homes and move through racialized space. By walking through what whites encode as "wild and primitive" space, they become sexual objects in white men's minds, indicating that white settler societies continue to maintain and police spatial and symbolic boundaries through threats of violence.

Altogether, Indigenous authors, scholars, and activists form a collective of women who are refusing to remain silent about the violence perpetuated by repressive hierarchies and structural inequalities even when they exist in our own communities. The NWAC's Sisters in Spirit campaign forced the Canadian government to address the high rates of violence against aboriginal women and the continued indifference of legal authorities in combating violence. Although their modes of discourse differ, the political work of Ward and the social justice work of the NWAC represent a "theory in the flesh," a politics of coalition, and a paradigm that unites an ethos of responsibility with community as characteristic of Indigenous feminist discourse.

Indigenous women's rhetorical practices foreground our individual and collective histories, methodologies, and cultural practices, creating a body of collective knowledge that informs Indigenous feminisms' methods and concerns. By centering our experiences in our rhetorical practices, we demonstrate that writing constitutes a central location where we theorize their lives. Writing allows us to understand the past, the present, and our place in it. It also allows us to imagine a better future. Because Indigenous feminist scholars honor our commitment to the past and recognize our responsibility to ensure a better future for generations to come, we experience a tension between our scholarship and our everyday lives. Rather than read books that challenge oppressive structures and ideologies, Indigenous feminist scholars have put theory into practice, producing knowledge grounded in our struggles. As a result, Indigenous feminist theory presents strategies that empower, including naming enemies that protect the status quo, making language reflect our experiences, and writing to survive. The characteristics of Indigenous
feminist theory reveal its purpose: promote a sense of responsibility, healing, and survival. Because Indigenous women still contend with violence and oppression—the physical violence that threatens us and aims to keep us silent and the oppression we feel as scholars whose work goes unacknowledged simply because it refuses to follow Western methodologies—we continue to fight for justice.

Although not always recognized as political, Indigenous feminist rhetorical practices engage in a kind of political activism because they provide a commentary on Indigenous peoples’ resurgence and recovery and because they instill in the younger generation pride, activism, and the power to resist injustice. Rather than view Indigenous women as victims, we should focus on their coming to voice and telling stories as a healing process. Rather than live in fear, Indigenous women speak out to promote resurgence and recovery as Joy Harjo does in her poem “I Give You Back.” While violence still informs many of our lives, the poem’s unnamed narrator refuses to live in fear by returning it to those who created it:

I give you back to the white soldiers who burned down my home, beheaded my children, raped and sodomized my brothers and sisters.
I give you back to those who stole the food from our plates when we were starving.
I release you, fear, because you hold these scenes in front of me and I was born with eyes that can never close.

The narrator refuses to claim responsibility for a fear that has kept her paralyzed. The narrator connects the fear she feels with the violence of an ongoing colonialism, and following the action that Ward had implicitly advised white women to take, the narrator refuses to participate in a relationship that fosters fear and terror any longer. This unnamed narrator, who can represent any one of us, resists violence and fear, illustrating a “theory in the flesh” and representing the embodiment of knowledge as she connects her fear to patriarchal violence and racism.

As Harjo’s poem illustrates, Indigenous women are refusing to remain silent about the epidemic of violence that occurs both inside
and beyond the borders of our communities. Yet, many of us fail to consider the violence language can perpetuate and too often use language in ways that reveal the remnants of colonization. Harjo illustrates how language can harm rather than heal, choosing instead to release words and images that caused a fear she once held close but no longer claims as her own:

I release you, my beautiful and terrible fear.
I release you.
You were my beloved and hated twin, but now, I don’t know you as myself.
[. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .]
Oh, you have choked me, but I gave you the leash.
You have gutted me but I gave you the knife.
You have devoured me, but I laid myself across the fire.
I take myself back, fear.
You are not my shadow any longer.

Throughout the poem, the unnamed narrator chants in English the healing phrase “I release you” in order to liberate herself from words, histories, and images that fostered a fear that choked, gutted, and devoured her.

Harjo’s poem exemplifies a strategy of resistance that fosters an Indigenous feminist discourse. She portrays an Indigenous woman naming forces that have held her hostage and that have attempted to devour her humanity, and it portrays a woman releasing the power these forces have held over her and refusing to be a willing participant in her own oppression, both of which are acts that empower her to reclaim and revision herself on her own terms. Harjo presents an Indigenous woman who has “reinvented the enemy’s language” in order to appropriate and redefine words and to resist images that white “others” have used against us. Indigenous women generate feminist theory through everyday verbal interaction and through creative endeavors such as poetry, and Bird reminds us of the power that writing wields:

I hear people say that poetry won’t make any difference, but I know that isn’t true. In 1988 the Nicaraguan poet Ernesto
Cardenal was denied a visa to tour the United States to read poetry. . . . Cardenal is a Catholic priest and poet, and the threat he poses, I think, is representative of the threat Native American writers pose in this country.\textsuperscript{72}

Indigenous women who write to promote survival broaden the notion of political activism for those who interpret writing and reading as a passive form of recreation or entertainment. For Indigenous women, the rhetorical practice of writing and embodying a theory in the flesh empowers because it heals.

Currently, Indigenous women are moving toward more balanced states through activism and writing that reflects our experiences. The activities in which Indigenous women engage are always already informed by some theory or worldview, so we should regard Indigenous women’s activities as forms of theorizing, as ways of practicing that which we believe based on theories of how we should live our lives. Gloria Anzaldúa asserts that “we [non-white feminists] need to de-academize theory and to connect the community to the academy. . . . We need to give up the notion that there is a ‘correct’ way to write theory.”\textsuperscript{73} Therefore, this article perceives the voices of all Indigenous women as constituting multifaceted and multidimensional sources of data that theorize the racialized, sexualized, and gendered dynamics of Indigenous women’s lives. However, to claim victimhood reinforces the belief that we are inferior and unable to assert agency. The physical realities of Indigenous women’s lives include daily struggles for survival and the threat of violence, but our realities also “convey the resiliency of our survival.” Whether living lives isolated on reservations, segregated in urban areas, or caught up in the world of wage labor, Indigenous women have crafted oppositional knowledge designed to resist oppression. Indigenous women’s participation in various settings has created the conditions for our resistance. In turn, acts of resistance against oppression have influenced Indigenous intellectuals, creating a dialectic of oppression and activism that contributes to the development of an Indigenous feminist discourse. Indigenous feminist discourse refashions images of Indigenous womanhood, using our lived experiences and
cultural traditions as alternative meanings to current notions of the feminine. Our efforts to find a collective, self-defined voice appear in writing and activities that bring women together in friendship, family relations, or organizations of women with like-minded goals, forming a “theory in the flesh” made up of Indigenous women writing to survive.

NOTES

2. I am referring to Dr. Glenabah Martinez (Taos Pueblo/Diné), assistant professor in the University of New Mexico’s College of Education. An excerpt from the conference call for papers reads, “Developments in feminist theory and practice since the late 1980s and 1990s have enabled scholars to recognize how nationality, race, class, sexuality, and ethnicity inform axes of gender differentiation among women as a social class. Despite these interventions, indigenous women and feminist issues remain undertheorized within contemporary feminist critical theory.”
3. The phrase “reinventing the enemy’s language” comes from the title of Joy Harjo and Gloria Bird’s anthology Reinventing the Enemy’s Language (New York: W. W. Norton, 1997).
7. Berenice Levchuk in Harjo and Bird 176.
8. Acoose 12.
15. Harjo and Bird 22.
19. Scott Kayla Morrison in Harjo and Bird 98, 100.
22. Kimberly Blaeser in Harjo and Bird 113.
23. Tiffany Midge in Harjo and Bird 211–12.
24. Yvonne Lamore-Choate in Harjo and Bird 214.
27. Maracle 8.
29. Maracle xii.
31. Emma Lee Warrior in Harjo and Bird 72.
33. Anderson 267.
34. Anderson 269.
35. Anderson 271.
41. Harjo, introduction, Harjo and Bird 21.
42. Harjo, introduction, Harjo and Bird 21.
44. Gloria Bird in Harjo and Bird 40.
45. Maria Campbell, *Halfbreed* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973)
46. Lois Red Elk in Harjo and Bird 188.
47. Chrystos in Harjo and Bird 232.
48. Laura Tohe in Harjo and Bird 41.
49. Roessel ix.
51. Inez Peterson in Harjo and Bird 104.
52. Janice Gould in Harjo and Bird 52.
53. Betty Louise Bell in Harjo and Bird 74–75.
54. Linda Noel in Harjo and Bird 234.
56. Davis 94–98.
59. Nancy Ward is her anglicized married name.
65. The viciousness of Osborne's murder is outlined in a report by the Aboriginal Justice Implementation Commission: “Along with well over 50 stab wounds, her skull, cheekbones, and palate were broken, her lungs were damaged, and one kidney was torn. Her body showed extensive bruising. The massive number of puncture wounds to the head and torso confirmed other evidence that was presented at the trial which suggested that a screwdriver was at least one weapon used. The other weapon or weapons presumably were hands or feet or some other blunt instrument.” From chapter 3, “The Murder,” in Death of Helen Betty Osborne, The Aboriginal Justice Implementation Commission, http://www.ajic.mb.ca/volumell/chapter3.html (accessed November 1, 2005).


70. This does not deny that violence exists on reserves.


72. Gloria Bird, foreword, Harjo and Bird 39.

Contributor Biographies

Eлизabeth Archuleta (Yaqui/Chicana) teaches in the Women and Gender Studies Program at Arizona State University. She has current and forthcoming publications in Wicazo Sa Review; the UCLA law journal, Indigenous Peoples’ Journal of Law, Culture, and Resistance; American Indian Quarterly; Studies in American Indian Literature; New Mexico Historical Review; and the tentatively titled The Smithsonian’s National Museum of the American Indian: Critical Conversations, forthcoming from the University of Nebraska Press. She is currently working on a book manuscript, “Grandmothers’ Voices Hold Me: Articulating Indigenous Feminisms,” under contract with the University of Arizona Press.

Amanda J. Cobb (Chickasaw) is an associate professor of American studies at the University of New Mexico. She currently directs the Institute for American Indian Research at UNM and serves as the editor of American Indian Quarterly. In 2007 Cobb is returning to the Chickasaw Nation to serve as the administrator for the new division of history, research, and scholarship, which encompasses the Center for the Study of Chickasaw History and Culture and the Chickasaw Press.

Timothy Petete (Seminole) is a doctoral candidate in the English program at the University of Oklahoma. He earned a bachelor’s degree in Native American studies at the University of Oklahoma and a master’s degree in American Indian studies at the University of California, Los Angeles. Moreover, his research interests include American Indian drama, film, and literature.
Ruth Spack is a professor of English and director of the English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) program at Bentley College. She has published widely in the ESOL field. Her scholarly work in Native American studies includes *America’s Second Tongue: American Indian Education and the Ownership of English* (U of Nebraska P, 2002), which was awarded the 2003 Mina P. Shaughnessy Prize by the Modern Language Association and named a CHOICE Outstanding Academic Title by the Association of College and Research Libraries.

Craig S. Womack (Oklahoma Creek-Cherokee) teaches American Indian literature in the English department of the University of Oklahoma and is the author of *Red on Red*, a literary history of the Muskogee Confederacy; *Drowning in Fire*, a novel; and *Reasoning Together: The Native Critics Collective*, a communal work on Native literary ethics that features eleven other Native writers, forthcoming from the University of Oklahoma Press.
Major Tribal Nations and Bands Mentioned in This Issue

This list is provided as a service to those readers interested in further communications with the tribal communities and governments of American Indian and Native nations. Inclusion of a government in this list does not imply endorsement of or by SAIL in any regard, nor does it imply the enrollment or citizenship status of any writer mentioned; some communities have alternative governments and leadership that are not affiliated with the United States, Canada, or Mexico, while others are not recognized by colonial governments. We have limited the list to those most relevant to the essays published in this issue; thus, not all bands, towns, or communities of a particular nation are listed.

We make every effort to provide the most accurate and up-to-date tribal contact information available, a task that is sometimes quite complicated. Please send any corrections or suggestions to SAIL Editorial Assistant, Studies in American Indian Literatures, Department of Writing, Rhetoric, and American Cultures, 235 Bessey Hall, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI 48824-1033, or send e-mail to sail2@msu.edu.

Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma
P.O. Box 948
Tahlequah, OK 74465
918-456-0671/800-256-0671
http://www.cherokee.org
Chickasaw Nation
P.O. Box 1548
Ada, OK 74821
580-436-2603
http://www.chickasaw.net

Comanche Nation
P.O. Box 908
Lawton, OK 73502
580-492-4988
http://www.comanchenation.com/

Muscogee (Creek) Nation of Oklahoma
P.O. Box 580
Okmulgee, OK 74447
918-756-8700/800-482-1979
http://www.muscogeenation-nsn.gov/

Pascua Yaqui Tribe
7474 S. Camino De Oeste
Tucson, AZ 85757
520-883-5000
http://www.pascuayaqui-nsn.gov/

Yankton Sioux Reservation
Yankton Sioux Tribal Business Committee
P.O. Box 248
Marty, SD 57361
Boarding School Blues
Revisiting American Indian Educational Experiences
Edited and with an Introduction by Clifford E. Trafzer, Jean A. Keller, and Lorene Sisquoc
$20 paper 978-0-8032-9463-9
$45 cloth 978-0-8032-4446-7

The Canoe and the Saddle
A Critical Edition
BY THEODORE WINTHROP
$13.95 paper 978-0-8032-9863-7

Land of the Spotted Eagle
BY LUTHER STANDING BEAR
Introduction to the new Bison Books edition
by Joseph Marshall
$12.95 paper 978-0-8032-9333-5

My People the Sioux
BY LUTHER STANDING BEAR
Introduction to the new Bison Books edition
by Virginia Driving Hawk Smeve
$12.95 paper 978-0-8032-9332-8

My Indian Boyhood
BY LUTHER STANDING BEAR
Introduction to the new Bison Books edition
by Delphine Red Shirt
$11.95 paper 978-0-8032-9334-2

Stories of the Sioux
BY LUTHER STANDING BEAR
Introduction to the new Bison Books edition
by Frances Washburn
$9.95 paper 978-0-8032-9335-9
UCLA’s American Indian Culture and Research Journal is a quarterly academic publication dedicated to scholarship about American Indian peoples. AICRJ publishes articles and reviews of recent work from a variety of disciplines, including history, literature, health, anthropology, sociology, political science, and others.

Subscriptions:
Individuals $30 per year ($55 for two years)
Institutions $70 per year ($130 for two years)
Single Issue $15

Foreign Subscriptions Add $20

Make checks payable to the Regents of the University of California
Studies in American Indian Literatures

SAIL is the only journal in the United States that focuses exclusively on American Indian literatures. SAIL defines “literatures” broadly to include all written, spoken, and visual texts created by Native peoples. With a wide scope of scholars and creative contributors, the journal is on the cutting edge of activity in the field.

U.S. subscriptions:
Quarterly, issn 0730-3238
Individuals $37 per year
Institutions $90 per year

For addresses outside the U.S., add $20. Single issues are available. Call for pricing and specific issue availability.
Prices are subject to change.

SAIL is available to institutions through Project MUSE. For more details on Project MUSE, including information on how to subscribe, visit http://muse.jhu.edu.

SAIL is the official journal of ASAIL. For ASAIL membership or member subscription rates information, please contact Siohban Senier at ssenier@cisunix.unh.edu.

University of Nebraska Press
PO Box 84555, Lincoln, NE 68501-4555
PHONE 800.755.1105 • FAX 800.526.2617 • www.nebraskapress.unl.edu