

Images, Imaginations, and Beyond



Proceedings of the Eighth Native American Symposium

Southeastern Oklahoma State University

Edited by Mark B. Spencer

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**Proceedings of the
Eighth Native American Symposium**

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The cover painting “Kids in the Field” is by Norma Howard, a Choctaw painter who lives in Stigler, Oklahoma. A short biography and a selection of her other works can be found at http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~choc1885/norma_howard.htm.

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Putting together the conference every other year is a large undertaking requiring the assistance of many here in the Southeastern community, including faculty, staff, students, and local residents. Our heartfelt thanks go out to all who have contributed to this success in any way large or small.

This year we were privileged to host the Cherokee film producer and director Heather Rae as the speaker at our keynote banquet, and a new addition to the symposium was a film festival, in which over a dozen films of varying length by an assortment of Native professional, academic, and student filmmakers were screened. Forty-nine other papers, presentations, and readings on a wide variety of Native American topics were delivered in the regular symposium sessions by professors, students, and independent scholars from the United States, Canada, Germany, Montenegro, India, and Russia. The full schedule can be found on our website at <http://se.edu/nas/>. Our gratitude and appreciation extend to each and every one of them.

Special thanks are in order for the members of the Native American Symposium Committee, including Daniel Althoff, Betty Acevedo, David Barnes, Corie Delashaw, John Love, Alistair Maeer, Stanley Rice, Rachel Tudor, Susan Webb, Chris Wesberry, and Deana Williams. Institutional support was generous and enthusiastic, for which we thank Lucretia Scoufos, Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences, Camille Phelps, Dean of Students, Sharon Robinson, Vice President of Student Affairs, Bryon Clark, Dean of Graduate and University Studies, Douglas McMillan, Vice President of Academic Affairs, and Larry Minks, President of the University. Our primary in-house source of financial support was the Southeastern Cultural and Scholastic Lectureship Fund.

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M.B.S.

Introduction

Mark B. Spencer
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Once again, I am happy to report that our Native American Symposium continues to flourish and grow in a number of ways. The papers, presentations, and readings this year held firm at almost fifty, and we added a new film festival adjunct that proved very popular with both attendees and presenters. A wide variety of documentary films by professional, academic, and student filmmakers were shown. Our keynote speaker was the Cherokee film director and producer Heather Rae. Although the Dallas-area traffic delayed her arrival a bit, Heather delivered an engaging talk on her film career and the brief moment in the media spotlight she has enjoyed for her feature film *Frozen River*, which received two Academy Award nominations in 2008. We are especially pleased that the level of international participation in the symposium increases with each event, and essays by scholars from Germany, Montenegro, India, and Russia can be found in this issue. The papers presented here are intended as a generous sampling of those delivered at the conference, and they include the work of established academics, aspiring students, and independent researchers. As usual, complimentary copies of the proceedings will be provided to most colleges and universities with Native American Studies programs, and the entire contents will also be available both online at our symposium website (<http://www.se.edu/nas/>), and through links in the catalog entry of *WorldCat*.

The first four papers address educational issues. **Anne Grob** takes a look at tribally controlled colleges and, in particular, the success enjoyed by one such institution, Salish Kootenai College in Montana. **John B. Love**, **Melanie Price**, and **Michael Kallam** collaborate on two papers: the first explores cultural inclusiveness as a way to engage Native American students and offers a list of practical suggestions currently employed in some Oklahoma schools; while the second analyzes the different learning styles of Native American students and considers their implications for Native education. Finally, a historical perspective on the American Indian Boarding schools of the late 19th and early 20th centuries is provided by **Tabatha Toney Booth**.

Turning to the social sciences, **Phyllis I. Behrens** investigates telephone and computer communications systems in rural areas and how these generally leave Native Americans underserved with adverse effects on their education and employment opportunities. The conversion of large numbers of the Navajo, or *Diné*, to the Bahá'í Faith in the early 1960s is examined by **Linda S. Covey**, and she rather surprisingly demonstrates that this constituted less of a break from their original tribal traditions than one might think.

Two papers focus on Native American films, which is fitting given the new film festival adjunct to the symposium. **Jennifer L. McMahon** discusses Sterlin Harjo's *Four*

Sheets to the Wind in relation to the philosophical ideas of Martin Heidegger on death and authenticity, while Shelley Niro's *Suite: Indian* forms the subject of a study by **Laura Beadling**, in which she elucidates how the film responds to the orchestral piece *Suite: Indian*, composed by Edward MacDowell over a century earlier in 1896.

As always, papers on Native American literature comprised a large portion of the symposium this year, and seven are presented here. The borderlands of ethnicity and identity are explored by **Debashree Dattaray** in her study of *My Heart as a Stray Bullet* and *Standing ground* by the Anishinaabe poet Kateri Akiwenzie-Damm, and **Rachael Price** looks at Anzalduan *mestiza* consciousness in Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony*. **Shannon Rose-Vails** addresses a very timely and contemporary literary text in her analysis of Joy Harjo's "When the World as We Knew It Ended," while **Joseph M. Faulds** reveals how such a venerable classic of the Western canon as Virgil's *Aeneid* can still speak to the false images projected upon Native peoples today. A variety of readings on the ever-popular trickster are teased out from Sherman Alexie's *The Toughest Indian in the World* by **Marija Knežević**, and **Grace Chaillier** discusses the portrayal of Native American women in Larry Watson's *Montana* 1948. Finally, **Richard Moon** builds his paper upon remarks made by participants in a roundtable discussion hosted by the Native American Women Playwrights Archive in March 1999.

Three papers focus on other Native arts and media. **Paula Conlon** briefly illuminates aspects of the drum dances performed by the Iglulik Inuit of northern Baffin Island, and **Oksana Y. Danchevskaya** reviews the historical use of turquoise as a decorative gemstone in a number of world cultures, above all by the Native peoples of the American southwest. Finally, **Meta Carstarphen** looks at Native American newspapers published in Oklahoma, especially *The Indian Chieftain*, as a tool to examine issues of Native American identity formation.

The last paper by **Hester Brown** combines historical, literary, and contemporary news sources to highlight the injustice committed against Native peoples in the exploitation of American natural resources, especially oil.

In closing, I would like to thank again these contributors and all the participants in the Eighth Native American Symposium for making it such a success. Notices for the Ninth Native American Symposium and Film Festival in November 2011 will be sent out next spring. I invite anyone who might be interested in participating to submit a proposal or inquiry. All topics relevant to Native American studies are welcome. My regular and email addresses can be found on the copyright page of this volume above, and the call for papers will be posted on our website.