

# INTRODUCTION

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Once again more papers than ever before were presented at the Sixth Native American Symposium, a trend we hope will continue with the seventh symposium in November 2007. The papers included here are intended as merely a sampling of those read at the conference, and they range from the work of established academic scholars to the initial efforts of aspiring graduate students. Undoubtedly, many of the other excellent papers delivered at the symposium have been further developed by their authors and published elsewhere. The papers presented here form two groups: the first five deal with topics in keeping with our conference theme of Native Women in the Arts, Education, and Leadership, while the remaining seven address a number of other issues in Native American studies. The symposium committee has decided to provide complimentary copies of the proceedings to colleges and universities with Native American Studies programs, and they will also be made available online at our regular symposium website: <http://www.sosu.edu/nas/>.

The first paper, “‘Make Haste Slowly’: The Experiences of American Indian Women at Hampton Institute, 1878-1923” by **Jon L. Brudvig**, offers a detailed description and analysis of the educational aims and practices of an institution originally founded to serve the needs of emancipated slaves in Hampton, Virginia. The school’s mission was later expanded to provide a model for institutions seeking to assimilate Native American pupils into mainstream Euro-American life, in the hope that the graduates would return to their home reservations as “missionaries of civilization.” Brudvig focuses especially on the experiences of Native women at the school, as they were much more likely to actually finish the course of study and graduate than their male counterparts. The paper sensitively explores both the successes and failures of this remarkable institution.

**Richard Mize** in “‘Tubbee’ and His Nieces: A Colloquy on White Men, Choctaw Women, Intermarriage and ‘Indianness’ in the *Choctaw Intelligencer*, 1851” examines a rather curious series of letters to the editor that vividly illuminate gender issues in the early Oklahoma Indian Territory. The series began with a letter inviting eligible young white men of desirable character to come marry young Choctaw women and settle in the territory. It is difficult to say how much irony may have been intended in both the original invitation and the response it generates, for a number of the letters appear to have been written by members of the same family, suggesting that there is more than meets the eye at work in this exchange.

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“Re-Visioning Wildfire: Historical Interpretations of the Life and of Edmonia Lewis” by **Julieanna Frost** attempts to reexamine the oeuvre of this accomplished 19th-century neoclassical sculptor, who was born of an African American father and an Anishinabe mother and then orphaned as a child. Traditionally, her work has been viewed as representative of her Black heritage, but Frost seeks to illuminate it from the standpoint of her Native American roots. Lewis lived and studied in Rome for a number of years, and her sculptures cover a wide variety of political, historical, religious, and Native themes, including works such as *Abraham Lincoln*, *The Death Of Cleopatra*, *The Adoration of the Magi*, *Moses*, *Hiawatha*, *Minehaha*, and *Old Arrow Maker*.

Another talented artist of mixed ancestry is the subject of “Black Indian with a Camera: The Work of Valena Broussard Dismukes” by **Sarita Cannon**. Dismukes is a contemporary photographer, and Cannon discusses how ethnic identity can be read in her series of portrait photographs entitled “Red-Black Connection: The Cultural Heritage of Black Native Americans,” which displays “over seventy African Native Americans of all ages in a wide range of settings.” Striking portraits receiving special attention include that of Bo Glasschild sporting a Mohawk haircut and wearing a Malcolm X t-shirt, the Muscogee/Creek professor Richard Procello sitting in his office, and Melanie Midget, a Choctaw doctor from Los Angeles.

**Kyoung-Min Han** is the author of “Hope Leslie: Novelistic Rewriting of American History,” which discusses the historical romance *Hope Leslie; or, Early Times in the Massachusetts* (1827) by Catharine Maria Sedgwick. Set during the aftermath of the Pequot War, most critics have complained that Sedgwick’s plot and her portrayal of Native American characters reveals an essentially conservative and culturally biased view of Puritan and Native American relationships, but Han attempts to show that Sedgwick is actually engaged in a more complex historical negotiation, in which a fictional reading of history is used to challenge Puritan triumphalism without denying the indisputable fact of ultimate Native defeat.

“Notes on Russian Indianists” by **O. Y. Danchevskaya** reports on the flowering of interest in Native American life and culture in what might seem the most unlikely of places, namely, the countries of the former Soviet Union. Known there as “Indianistics,” the movement finds expression in an academic and a popular wing, and Danchevskaya briefly, but enthusiastically, introduces the people, institutions, publications, and activities of both. Given that another paper at the conference was delivered by a Native American studies scholar from Taiwan, and we usually have several from Canada, perhaps we should rename our event the International Native American Symposium.

Native American studies is still very much a vigorously growing field here at home, and “The Kentucky Center for Native American Art and Culture” details the foundation of this new institution, written by three of the key individuals involved, **Kenneth Barnett Tankersley**, **Steve Black Bear La Boueff**, and **Julia Youngblood**. It is very much to be hoped that other states will follow the admirable example of Kentucky in this regard and create similar centers of their own. This report certainly provides a model to show how it can be done.

**David Michael Smith** in “*Marxism and Native Americans Revisited*” returns to that 1983 collection of essays edited by Ward Churchill and reevaluates the issues addressed there, arguing that “continuing differences on important issues between Native Americans activists and Leftist activists need not constitute an insurmountable obstacle to reaching common ground.” The critique offered of both these “emancipatory social movements” is especially welcome following the collapse of the Cold War Communist Bloc and the supposed death and irrelevance of Marxist theory in our current era of late capitalist globalism.

“Social Welfare and Native Americans: Future Challenges” by **Thomas D. Watts** and **Joseph P. Bohanon** addresses the straightened circumstances social welfare programs for Native Americans will most likely face in the future given the severe budget constrictions imposed by increased military expenditures in the War on Terrorism, the expanding numbers of the elderly in the general population, and the doubtful commitment to social welfare in the current political climate, among other considerations. The essay assesses both the solid gains achieved by Native American over the last few decades as well as the sobering problems and inequities that remain.

A second article by **Joseph Bohanon** entitled “The Talking Circle: A Culturally Appropriate Group Work Perspective with Indigenous Peoples” describes the effort to bring a culturally sensitive approach to social service programs designed to help Native Americans. Bohanon introduces a technique called “The Talking Circle” that is based on values of sharing, respect, and honor in keeping with Native American traditions, and he discusses several occasions on which the technique has been successfully employed in counseling sessions.

Finally, a performance piece “Blood Quantum” by **Adrian Cook** rounds out this collection. Cook imaginatively recreates his experiences growing up as he attempted to reclaim the Native American heritage that was seemingly denied to him by the strict accounting of blood quanta established by the federal government. Although accompanied by gestures and images in actual performance, the piece reads very easily in print, and stage directions indicate the gestures and images that were used.

Once again, I would like to thank these contributors and all the participants in the Sixth Native American Symposium for making it such a success. The call for papers will be sent out early this spring for the Seventh Native American Symposium in November 2007, which will take the 100th anniversary of Oklahoma statehood as its theme. I invite all who might be interested in participating to send me a proposal or inquiry. All topics relevant to Native American studies are welcome.