

## Introduction

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Held on November 1, 2019 on Southeastern Oklahoma State University's Durant campus, the thirteenth iteration of the Native American Symposium demonstrated the vibrant future of Native American studies, history, and language. The Symposium's program was well represented by scholars of all levels and backgrounds from throughout North America and, indeed, the world. Of note, the Thirteenth Native American Symposium included panels dedicated to examining Native art, epistemologies, identities, education, economics, film, and history. Symposium attendees were delighted by keynote speaker Jane Semple Umsted (Choctaw), noted painter and sculptor, who discussed the new Native American Art Museum currently under construction to permanently house Southeastern Oklahoma State University's two major Native art collections, for which her family is the principal benefactor. She also spoke about with the new Cultural Center being built by the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma just south of campus along I-75.

The future of Southeastern's Native American Symposium is bright. With time, however, comes change. The 2019 Symposium was the final meeting coordinated by long-time Symposium steward Mark Spencer. With his retirement after the conclusion of the 2019-2020 academic year, leadership will transition into the hands of two co-directors, myself and Rolando Diaz. We are excited by this opportunity but are also appreciative for Mark's decades-long contributions and dedication to the Symposium.

The papers presented here are intended as a small sampling of those delivered at the conference, and they include the work of established academics, aspiring students, and independent scholars. As usual, complimentary copies of the proceedings will be provided to colleges and universities with Native American Studies programs, and the entire contents will also be available both online at our symposium website (<https://www.se.edu/native-american/native-american-symposium/>), and through links in the catalog entry of *WorldCat*.

This year's Symposium Proceedings offers a number of compelling comparisons of Western and Indigenous forms of knowledge. Our opening submission by East Central University's **Emily Angell** offers a thought-provoking analysis of storytelling and philosophy. This original work contemplates how Indigenous peoples utilize storytelling practices and traditions similar to what Albert Camus describes as "revolt against the

absurd.” Moscow State Pedagogical University’s **Oksana Y. Dachevskaya** considers the differences between Euro-American definitions of “good” and “evil” with various Native American beliefs emphasizing cosmological consequences. Similarly, **B. Steve Csaki**, former visiting professor at Centre College, offers a rejoinder to the ongoing debate regarding epistemological hierarchies, arguing that Westerners’ understanding of what they refer to as traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) fails to grasp the overall objective that any knowledge system seeks to provide. Indeed, this reticence is all the more alarming to him as we confront climate change, a situation in part fueled by the assumption that science – unlike TEK – created the present conditions for global warming. Should we collectively, he asks, continue to privilege science?

Identity is unsurprisingly at the center of many of these submissions. Southeastern Oklahoma State University’s **Rolando Diaz** skillfully traces the indigenous roots of Chicano identity. **Amy Madewell** and **Tara Hembrough**, also hailing from Southeastern, consider the nexus of rural and Native American veteran identities by examining writing curricula, concluding that social support proved key in predicting successful performances in the classroom, regardless of Native or non-native backgrounds.

Native American (mis)representations in popular culture also figured prominently throughout the Symposium. **Marc DiPaolo** of Southwestern Oklahoma State University considered the strange evolutions of the character Turok from dime comics in the mid-twentieth century to the video game representations of today. East Central University’s **Jennifer McMahon** also investigates Native American depictions in popular cultural, suggesting the 2017 film *The Rider* complicates assumptions regarding who acts as cowboy, and who as Indian.

The persistence of certain trends – both of affinity and oppression – also centered discussions of multiple panels at this year’s Symposium. There are three such examples included here. Concordia University’s **Samantha Stevens** traces how the imperially condescending “white saviour” trope shaped colonial policy in Canada. **David Michael Smith** offers a sobering examination detailing the systemic brutality deployed by police forces throughout the United States. Like Smith, who notes the parallels of violence directed towards Native Americans and the groups targeting the Black Lives Matters movement, **Michael E. Taylor** of the University of Mary in North Dakota outlines the history of the cross-cultural trans-Atlantic affinity that developed between the Irish and various Native American nations in the conclusion to our Symposium Proceedings.

It is never too early to think about the upcoming Fourteenth Native American Symposium at Southeastern Oklahoma State University. Notices and a call for papers will be sent out soon, as the unfolding COVID-19 pandemic complicates future scheduling. I invite anyone who might be interested in participating to submit a proposal or inquiry. As always, all topics relevant to any aspect of Native American studies are welcome.

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In closing, I would once again like to thank these contributors and all the participants in the Thirteenth Native American Symposium for making it such a success. Special thanks are due to the other members of the Native American Symposium Committee, which included Mark Spencer, Rolando Diaz, Associate Vice President for Tribal Relations and Academic Affairs Brad Ludrick, Director of our Native American Institute Marlin Blakenship, Director of Native American Excellence in Education Jennifer Kemp, Development and Recruitment Coordinator Lauren Rowland, and fellow Institute staff members Courtney Hutchins and Sheridan Burns.