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# Native Diasporas

Gregory D. Smithers

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# Native Diasporas

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**BORDERLANDS AND TRANSCULTURAL STUDIES**

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| EDITED BY GREGORY D. SMITHERS & BROOKE N. NEWMAN

# Native Diasporas

| Indigenous Identities  
and Settler Colonialism  
in the Americas

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## | Preface

This volume had its genesis in Hawai'i in 2008. While strolling through one of the Big Island's many lush, tropical gardens, we spotted an elderly gentleman taking pleasure in the solitude of his pickup truck and a quiet cigarette. Given that Hawaiians spend an unusually large amount of time sitting in their automobiles, this was not a particularly atypical early-evening scene. What was unexpected was the bumper sticker on the back of this elderly gentleman's vehicle: "Proud to be Cherokee." Here, in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, was a very public declaration of indigeneity. However, it was not an expression of indigenous identity that tied the owner of the vehicle to the native inhabitants of the Hawaiian Islands. Instead, this gentleman identified with a distant land, culture, and people. This chance encounter crystallized in our minds the importance that so many people attach to an indigenous identity—or, as this volume contends, to indigenous *identities*. These identities are as much geographically mobile and culturally fluid as they are fixed to a specific piece of land.

Since this fortuitous encounter, a number of the contributors to this volume have responded to our calls and joined us at professional conferences to discuss the interconnections between indigenous identity and human mobility; others have graciously agreed to our request to prepare essays specifically for this volume. It is our hope that this collection will contribute to the extension of a vibrant debate about the meaning(s) of indigenous identities in the Caribbean, the mainland Americas, and in those Pacific Islands touched by European and Euro-American colonialism. Having said that, we recognize that the comparative and transnational aspects of this volume constitute a departure from recent ethnohistorical studies, with the

majority focusing on localized indigenous identities. While a number of the contributors here present localized case studies of indigenous identities, the overarching thrust of this volume is to place these localized analyses into a larger comparative and transnational context.

We hope, therefore, that this collection highlights the value of collaborative scholarship and centers our historical gaze on indigenous understandings of self-identification, community, and culture. Additionally, the volume is designed to address the enduring conception in Western popular culture of indigenous peoples as unchanging historical relics. By focusing on indigenous identities since Columbus's initial voyage to the Americas in 1492, we aim to show how indigenous people were not "doomed" or completely "eliminated" from world history but crafted a multitude of identities to sustain and enrich indigenous life. In this respect, *Native Diasporas* represents the fulfillment of historian Alexandra Harmon's call for more historical analysis of indigenous identities.

This volume was completed while the editors enjoyed postdoctoral research support. Brooke Newman would like to thank the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University and the National Endowment for the Humanities for generously providing a long-term fellowship in 2010–11. The excellent staff members at the John Carter Brown Library were a pleasure to work with, and she would especially like to acknowledge Lynne Harrell, Kimberly Nusco, and Ken Ward for their frequent assistance with rare books and manuscripts and Leslie Tobias-Olsen and John Minichiello for help with images. Gregory Smithers would like to acknowledge the postdoctoral support he received from the Center for Historical Research at the Ohio State University during the 2010–11 academic year. He thanks Alan Gally in particular for being a warm and gracious host. Finally, we would both like to acknowledge the support this volume has received from the University of Nebraska Press. In particular, our thanks go to Matthew Bokovoy for championing the project from the beginning and for providing his own expert insights. Finally, our gratitude toward Paul Spickard and Pekka Hämäläinen, editors of the *Borderlands* and

Transcultural Studies book series, is boundless. Thank you both for the insights and guidance you brought to this collection.

Gregory D. Smithers

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# Native Diasporas

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## | Introduction

“What Is an Indian?”—The Enduring Question  
of American Indian Identity

*Gregory D. Smithers*

On May 26, 1826, the Cherokee leader and editor of the *Cherokee Phoenix*, Elias Boudinot, delivered “An Address to the Whites” at the First Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia.<sup>1</sup> Fresh faced, mission educated, and politically ambitious, the twenty-two-year-old Boudinot outlined his answer to arguably the most vexing question in American history: “What is an Indian?”<sup>2</sup> Boudinot delivered his answer at a time when debate over the removal of Native Americans from the Southeast raged. This seething political backdrop made his address as much a political argument about indigenous land rights as it was a statement on Indian identity. Boudinot understood that for most Native Americans in the American Southeast, land rights and indigeneity were intimately intertwined. He therefore defended Cherokee claims to ancestral lands by declaring: “You here behold an *Indian*. My kindred are *Indians*, and my fathers sleeping in the wilderness grave—they too were *Indians*. But I am not as my fathers were—broader means and nobler influences have fallen upon me.”<sup>3</sup>

In the years following this speech, Elias Boudinot became an infamous figure in Cherokee history. His role in signing the Treaty of New Echota (1835), an agreement between the Cherokee Treaty Party and the United States government, which federal authorities used to justify Indian removal, earned Boudinot many enemies. Among the



Cherokees, Boudinot's political opponents believed that his about-face in championing emigration and signing the Treaty of New Echota had breached Cherokee blood law. Boudinot, like John Ridge and other prominent Treaty Party men, had thus given away land without communal consultation. For his sins, Boudinot ultimately met with a brutal death, his skull split open with a tomahawk in at least six places, his body brutally beaten, and his right hand "cut off."<sup>4</sup>

Embedded within this violent and very personal story is a complex tale of identity articulation, formation, and change. In May 1826 Boudinot set himself up as a model example of the modern Indian. He was educated, articulate, well dressed, and politically knowledgeable. These characteristics exemplified what he and other southeastern Indian leaders believed were the requisite qualities needed to legitimately claim their sovereign right to their homelands. Here was an appeal to land rights based on an identity, as Boudinot saw it, rooted in his biological connection to "my fathers sleeping in the wilderness grave" and to the social and cultural abilities of the nineteenth-century Indian to adapt and maintain a sense of Indianness amid the onslaught of the American republic's territorial expansion. However, the power of that onslaught, Boudinot came to believe, would eventually prove too great a threat to the continued existence of the Cherokee people. By the 1830s, therefore, Boudinot felt that the survival of a recognizable Cherokee identity rested on accepting terms with the Americans and emigrating west of the Mississippi River.

Boudinot's articulation of Indian identity was but one of many ways in which Native Americans adapted and rearticulated their indigeneity in the early nineteenth century. And given the violent manner in which his life ended, it is possible to glimpse just how contentious—indeed, life threatening—the embrace of one type of indigenous identity over another has been. If we reverse our historical gaze and survey indigenous history throughout the Americas in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, a litany of historical case studies emerges that underscores the importance of identity to life and death among American Indians. Similarly, shifting to the modern era, the nineteenth, twentieth, and the twenty-first centuries, one is struck

by how scholars, political activists, and American Indian leaders remained (and remain) divided over this deceptively simple question: “What is an Indian?”

The historical study of American Indian identity is no small matter. It is the very stuff of politics, economy, culture, and social being. Without identity, these elements of history are meaningless; their structures collapse. Beginning in the Americas of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, all attempts to answer the question of indigeneity have met with varying degrees of disagreement, dismay, and, more often than not, confusion.<sup>5</sup> Why? An answer must begin with the recognition that after Columbus unexpectedly arrived in the Americas in 1492, instigating multiple forms of European colonialism in the centuries that followed, the Americas became a confusing historical stage on which the most intense sorts of human dramas played out. Life/death, violence/peace, love/hate, hospitality/suspicion, and generosity/greed all existed in unequal and at times unpredictable measures in the colonial societies that Indians ultimately shared with Europeans and Africans. As Melissa Meyer observes, addressing the complexities of American Indian identity in such contexts demands that we keep in mind that “marrying across group boundaries, forming alliances, amalgamating, and splintering have characterized the social relations of human beings, American Indian groups among them, as much as cohesion and persistence, and perhaps more so.”<sup>6</sup>

*Native Diasporas: Indigenous Identities and Settler Colonialism in the Americas* examines how indigenous peoples articulated a sense of self, or more accurately from a Native American perspective, a “soul,” and community amid the changes wrought by European colonialism in the Caribbean, mainland Americas, and the Pacific Islands. The chapters in this volume explore the articulation and rearticulation of indigeneity through the speeches, cultural products and productions, intimate relations, and political and legal practices of colonizing and colonized peoples. The volume focuses therefore on the plurality of indigenous identities from the Caribbean, throughout the Americas, and across the vast Pacific world.<sup>7</sup> Grouped thematically, and in roughly chronological order, the chapters in this volume highlight how indigenous

identities after 1492 cannot be reduced to a single racial “essence” or in terms of cultural “otherness,” but were complex amalgams of Native and European worlds colliding, overlapping, and intersecting at different moments and places. Stated differently, the following chapters recognize the very different chronological, spatial, and ideological contexts in which indigenous identities have been constructed and contested since the early modern era of exploration, expansion, and colonialism.<sup>8</sup>

Acknowledging that American Indian identities were (and are) fluid tells us very little about those identities across space and over time. A more productive approach to indigenous identities demands that we analyze the social, political, economic, and cultural structures that produced both disjunctures and patterns in the way indigenous Americans spoke about themselves in relation to one another and in relation to colonizers. Understood in this way, we see how American Indian identities are, as Alexandra Harmon argues, “layered.”<sup>9</sup> For indigenous peoples, this layering of identity has been a product of their own adaptive social, cultural, and political skills. As Harmon explains, “Indianness has been defined and redefined in continual give-and-take between outsiders’ ascriptions and insiders’ self-representations, between government policy and actual practice, between national or international forces and local conditions, between the adverse and the beneficial consequences of being Indian, and between Indians with differing self-conceptions.”<sup>10</sup>

The use of the term “diaspora” in the title of this volume is designed to underscore how the contributors endeavor to center indigenous identities in the context of colonialism’s many regimes of power and knowledge throughout the Caribbean, the Americas, and the Pacific.<sup>11</sup> The term diaspora is derived from the ancient Greek term *diasperien*, meaning “to sow or scatter seed.”<sup>12</sup> For some of the indigenous groups and individuals described in this volume, this definition certainly applies. Individuals such as Acee Blue Eagle (see Bill Anthes’s essay) and groups such as the Cherokees, Shawnees, Comanches, and Seminoles were, to borrow a phrase from James Clifford, “traveling cultures.”<sup>13</sup> Forced by the pressures of intertribal conflict and the exclusionary impulses of settler colonial regimes of power, indigenous individuals and groups strove to maintain a coherent sense of group

identity by transporting, innovating, and adapting their concepts of land, kinship, spirituality, cultural self-representation, and so forth to new homelands and different mediums of communication. Eliminated from the land of their ancestors, as many were during the early nineteenth century, they endured as indigenous peoples through creative and adaptive processes.

Increasingly, scholars of diaspora theorize that different forms of transnational encounters can be highlighted to better understand the formation of diasporic communities. These scholars contend that a nuanced approach to transnationalism opens analytical spaces for us to examine the flow of ideas and cultures across natural and politically constructed borders. Such analysis helps us understand how the larger structures of colonialism impacted the ways in which indigenous people envisioned, heard, and experienced the world around them. This type of analytical focus also illuminates the small, localized, and/or individualized ways in which specific aspects of larger colonial structures were reinterpreted and incorporated into indigenous cultural practices and self-representations.<sup>14</sup> For some of the indigenous groups and individuals presented in this volume, transnational processes of diplomacy or economy had profound consequences for identity formation at the local level. These groups did not have to migrate away from the lands that their ancestors once knew to feel the pangs of uncertainty that migration underscored for those American Indians who found themselves migrating to a new land and an uncertain future. For “the people who stayed,” to borrow the title from a recent anthology, the overlapping European and African diasporas made familiar coastlines, landscapes, and river systems seem utterly foreign.<sup>15</sup>

It is also worth remembering, as several of the chapters in part I of this volume indicate, that the social, cultural, or political boundaries designed to place points of demarcation between the colonizer and colonized were still very much up for grabs in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This should remind us that the history of Native America, as with all history, is more than the linear retelling of contact, “middle ground,” violence, population decline, and forced adaptation. For many Native Americans, the story of identity is much more

complex and challenging than this standard formulation of Western historiography can imagine.<sup>16</sup>

In contrast to the methodological agility that the contributors to this volume are proposing, a different, more rigid paradigm has emerged among colonial and postcolonial scholars. This paradigm anchors analysis of colonialism around concepts of land and the “elimination” of indigenous peoples. The leading proponent of this paradigm is Patrick Wolfe. Wolfe argues that settler colonialism was a “zero-sum game” that aimed solely to eliminate indigenous populations. According to Wolfe and the scholars who follow his lead, European settler colonialism in North America and elsewhere imposed structures that effectively worked to eliminate Native populations. Settlers, Wolfe argues, wanted the land inhabited by indigenous communities so they could expand their own colonial economies and sociopolitical systems.<sup>17</sup> While there were moments in the history of the Americas when European colonists committed social, political, and economic abuses against Native peoples in the Americas, when an “eliminationist” or “exterminationist” motive no doubt animated the actions of colonists and colonizers, we must be careful not to overlook the important roles that indigenous people played as actors in, for example, trade, diplomacy, and labor. If the history of settler colonialism in the Americas is presented as one long example of indigenous peoples succumbing to the onslaught of colonialism, we run the risk of presenting a tidy narrative in which “natives” are essentially eliminated, to borrow from Wolfe, from the histories of the Americas by the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>18</sup>

Tidiness of historical narrative, however, should not be confused with completeness of story.<sup>19</sup> There is no question that settler colonialism—and other forms of colonialism, for that matter—had profound impacts on the lives of indigenous peoples throughout the Americas. But understanding what it meant to claim an indigenous identity in the Caribbean, the mainland Americas, and the Pacific Islands after 1492 demands that we carefully and respectfully endeavor to recover those aspects of life that gave meaning to the cultural, socioeconomic, political, and biological identities of Native peoples. The historical

study of indigenous identity is not an exercise in cultural boosterism or historical exoticism; instead, it should constitute an attempt to cut to the very heart of what has made life meaningful for indigenous peoples in the Caribbean, Americas, and Pacific Islands since the arrival of European colonizers and colonists in the early sixteenth century. The “contest of cultures,” as one scholar puts it, had very real social, economic, and political implications for American Indian identities.<sup>20</sup>

American Indian history and indigenous studies have both enjoyed something of a renaissance over the past two decades. Historians of colonial America, for example, have busied themselves emphasizing how America’s original peoples negotiated new challenges to community, family, and personal identity in the wake of European expansion and the formation of nation-states throughout the Americas. Scholarship by Richard White, James Lockhart, Anthony Pagden, Daniel Usner, Jean O’Brien, Karen Ordahl Kupperman, Amy Turner Bushnell, Daniel Richter, Inga Clendinnen, Kathleen Duval, Alan Taylor, and Pekka Hämmäläinen has produced important new insights that broaden our historical understanding of how indigenous peoples responded and adapted to different forms of European colonialism.<sup>21</sup> Much of this recent literature emphasizes the importance of cross-cultural encounters and negotiations between European settlers and indigenous peoples in sixteenth-, seventeenth-, and early eighteenth-century America. Using treaty minutes, correspondence, and travelers’ accounts, historians have highlighted the changing fortunes of Native American peoples in colonial America by presenting a more indigenous-centered perspective on trade relations, political meetings, treaties, and the dispossession of tribal lands.

This flurry of scholarship represents an important intervention in the historiographical debate about Indian-European relations in the colonies of early modern America. While the above-named scholars do not uniformly agree with each other’s arguments, collectively they have offered an important counterbalance to a previous generation of scholarship that focused on the racial (and racist) attitudes of European colonizers toward American Indians, and the death and

destruction visited upon indigenous communities through disease transfer and outbreaks of colonial violence. One of the most famous examples of this type of scholarship was Francis Jennings's seminal (and recently re-released) *The Invasion of America* (1976). Jennings's work, a major contribution to the "new social history" of the 1960s and 1970s, detailed how English colonizers constructed an image of themselves as the carriers of "civilization," a grandiose self-perception that contrasted sharply with the English characterization of indigenous peoples as "savages."<sup>22</sup> Jennings, like many of his contemporaries during the 1960s and 1970s, constructed the racial binary of civilized-savage to describe colonial relations between Europeans and Indians, and to explain what one scholar termed the "American Holocaust" of Native Americans.<sup>23</sup> If there existed any sense of Indian identity in the historiography from this era, it was an identity characterized by death, disease, violence, dispossession of land, and a collective sense of victimization.

The writing of history has always been, and remains, a political act. This was especially the case for Francis Jennings and many of the fellow historians of his generation who were unhappy with the teleological, unproblematic, and smugly progressive narratives that dominated American history writing during the first half of the twentieth century. The "new social history" that Jennings and his contemporaries made such profound contributions to challenged American readers with a darker version of their colonial and national histories. The rise of the American Indian Movement (AIM) played a significant role in fueling this challenge. AIM was a pan-Indian political effort to challenge past interpretations of Native American history and culture. AIM activists also asserted a sense of cultural autonomy and political independence. In 1972 representatives from AIM brought a list of their demands to lawmakers in Washington DC. This twenty-point manifesto, entitled the "Trail of Broken Treaties," demanded:

1. Restoration of treaty making (ended by Congress in 1871).
2. Establishment of a treaty commission to make new treaties (with sovereign Native Nations).

3. Indian leaders to address Congress.
4. Review of treaty commitments and violations.
5. Unratified treaties to go before the Senate.
6. All Indians to be governed by treaty relations.
7. Relief for Native Nations for treaty rights violations.
8. Recognition of the right of Indians to interpret treaties.
9. Joint Congressional Committee to be formed on reconstruction of Indian relations.
10. Restoration of 110 million acres of land taken away from Native Nations by the United States.
11. Restoration of terminated rights.
12. Repeal of state jurisdiction on Native Nations.
13. Federal protection for offenses against Indians.
14. Abolishment of the Bureau of Indian Affairs.
15. Creation of a new office of Federal Indian Relations.
16. New office to remedy breakdown in the constitutionally prescribed relationships between the United States and Native Nations.
17. Native Nations to be immune to commerce regulation, taxes, trade restrictions of states.
18. Indian religious freedom and cultural integrity protected.
19. Establishment of national Indian voting with local options; free national Indian organizations from governmental controls.
20. Reclaim and affirm health, housing, employment, economic development, and education for all Indian people.<sup>24</sup>

Coming on the heels of the civil rights movement, the activism of AIM's participants emphasized concepts such as "renewal," "resurgence," "self-determination," and "sovereignty."<sup>25</sup> This activism inspired a generation of historians to reconsider the importance of these concepts against a backdrop of disease, violence, and dramatic declines in indigenous populations. For example, historians and demographers highlighted how the American Indian population in the United States fell sharply, from approximately 600,000 to 228,000, between 1800 and



1890. Scholars used such data to support historical representations of American Indians as the victims of settler colonialism's train of evils, which began with disease transfer, continued with racism, violence, and the loss of ancestral homelands, and culminated in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries with the "cultural genocide" perpetrated by the Bureau of Indian Affairs' system of boarding schools.<sup>26</sup>

Until very recently, then, historians have portrayed American Indian history in particularly grim terms. Thus, historians of early America such as White, Richter, Usner, and others have over the past two decades breathed new life into American Indian history by building a more nuanced scholarship. The vigorous application of ethnohistorical methodologies and the influence of late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century racial politics have driven these changes. For scholars of colonial America, American Indian identity was the product not simply of disease transfer and frontier violence but also of the delicate diplomatic relations between Europeans and Indians, and the agency of Native Americans to tie their identities consciously to individualized and group-centered connections to the land, spirituality, migration, language, cultural practices, work, and so forth.<sup>27</sup>

But perhaps the fastest growing (and largest) body of recent research on American Indian societies comes from an interdisciplinary group of scholars devoted to understanding Native American identity in fresh, meaningful, and methodologically innovative ways. For example, Eva Marie Garrouette has proposed that "radical indigenism," a methodology that requires scholars to "enter," not merely observe, indigenous philosophies, represents a framework to move us beyond simplistic descriptions of Native American identities and illuminate the content that gives indigenous identities their meaning.<sup>28</sup> Other scholars, such as C. Matthew Snipp and Daniel Heath Justice, have discussed the resilience and adaptability of Native American identities by exploring issues such as rates of reproduction, accessibility to healthcare facilities, the importance of English and Indian literacies in the articulation of Native American identities, and the incorporation and/or exclusion of mixed-race people (white-Indian, black-Indian, or Latina/o-Indian) from tribal membership.<sup>29</sup>

Given the rapid growth in scholarship about Indian-European and Indian-African intermixture, the broader historical significance of mixed-race indigenous identities warrants our considered attention. Since the early modern era, mixing between Native Americans and European outsiders has occurred on many levels. These interactions took place at the level of the political, the social, the economic and mercantile, and the intimate. Such categories of analysis often overlapped in the lived experiences of Indians, Africans, and Europeans. These relations were shaped by the charged and regularly changing power dynamics of colonial and settler colonial societies. From the mixed-race “go-between” who acted as interpreter and mediator in trade and political transactions between indigenous and colonial Europeans, to the syncretism of many Native American spiritual belief systems and changes in the gendered social structures of indigenous communities since the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, American Indian identity has demonstrated its resilience, dynamism, and adaptability. As John and Jean Comaroff note, the forces unleashed by colonial ventures in the early modern and modern worlds “played into local forms and conditions in unexpected ways, changing known structures into strange hybrids.”<sup>30</sup> This was the case for the indigenous as well as for European- and African-descended peoples of the Americas.

The concept of hybridity has become central to most recent studies of racial and ethnic groups, communities, and the development of nation-states in the Americas. Implicit in this analysis has been an increasingly sophisticated appreciation for the importance of race and gender in restructuring Native American identities.<sup>31</sup> Scholarship by Ann Marie Plane, James Brookes, Theda Perdue, Lucy Murphy, Jennifer Spear, Tiya Miles, Fay Yarbrough, Katherine Ellinghaus, Gregory Smithers, and Eva Marie Garrouette has explored the intricacies of interracial sex and marriage from the early modern period of colonization to the present, and from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean worlds.<sup>32</sup> This research has shed important light on the historical, sociological, and cultural dimensions of a “hybrid,” “half-blood,” and/or “mixed-race” identity. Thus, the historical significance of racial and cultural mixing in Native American history has, to borrow from

the Russian linguist M. M. Bakhtin, provided us with even clearer evidence that “the idea of metamorphosis (transformation)” is critical to understanding the formation of Native American identities.<sup>33</sup>

At the dawn of the twenty-first century, the idea of human hybridity and the metamorphosis of identities are generally celebrated as markers of an inclusive and accepting society. This was not always the case. Among early modern Spanish, French, and English colonizers, human metamorphosis was both a source of curiosity and a concern. Building on medieval cultural traditions in which Europeans identified people on the basis of “*gens, natio*, ‘blood,’ ‘stock,’ etc.,” early modern Europeans strove vigorously to fit the landscape and peoples of the Americas into their proto-racial and proto-ethnic worldviews.<sup>34</sup> There existed a degree of comfort, as Stephen Greenblatt has explained, in colonizers setting themselves apart and above indigenous peoples by envisioning “the radical otherness of the American lands and peoples.”<sup>35</sup> However, as the categorical hardening of human identities quickened after the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, the realities of colonial encounters among Indians-Africans-Europeans belied Enlightenment classifications by producing a dizzying array of creole cultures and biologically mixed peoples. Far from such hybridity being a source of celebration, it became, particularly in the Anglo-colonial world, a point of deep social and governmental anxiety. How does one govern a colony, for example, when it is virtually impossible to clearly identify discrete groups of human beings?<sup>36</sup>

Indigenous Americans were not immune from these concerns. For many, the value of centuries-old traditions of diplomacy, adoption, kinship, and seasonal migrations suddenly changed as Native Americans scrambled to make sense of their place in a much broader, more interconnected world.<sup>37</sup> For tribes occupying land on the Spanish colonial borderlands, or along the eastern seaboard of British and French North America, and what ultimately became the American South, once-nurturing community environments became “shatter zones” where disease and warfare altered human relations. The result was a restructuring of indigenous societies and governance, and the initiation of the process of ethnogenesis, or the social and cultural creation of new identities.<sup>38</sup>

“History,” Don José Ortega y Gasset once observed, “is the ever flowing river of ethnogenesis.”<sup>39</sup> This has been the case for Native American groups such as the Catawbas, Shawnees, Comanches, Creeks, and Navajos, among many others. The identities these groups nurtured after 1492 revolved around the interconnections between colonial politics and economy, migration, cultural adaptation, and sexual intermixture with Europeans and Euro-Americans.<sup>40</sup> For instance, Susan Sleeper-Smith contends that in seventeenth-century New France, Native American women enjoyed relatively greater opportunities to assert their own conceptions of identity and influence over the colonial context. Some of these women married French traders, and the European men they married in turn became dependent on indigenous women for supplies of fresh food.<sup>41</sup> In other cases, indigenous women suffered a considerable loss of social influence and political power within Native communities. This was the case for Cherokee women during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. For the Cherokees, long caricatured by European observers for practicing what they saw as a “petticoat government,” the transition to a patriarchal society put an end to matriarchal concepts of property inheritance and clan membership. The Cherokees, as Boudinot insisted in 1826, had changed and adapted to the “modern” world. They were now a “civilized” patriarchal society.<sup>42</sup>

Recent studies of racial and cultural mixture have highlighted historical changes in the “living web of interrelationships.”<sup>43</sup> From the early modern era to our present day, the manner and context in which individuals preserve and act on these “interrelationships” has shaped, and been shaped by, the way bodily features were/are read by others and in language and cultural practices, and also by where—and with whom—Indians, Europeans, Africans (and African Americans) lived. In other words, this recent scholarship has opened new vistas to our understanding of how racial and ethnic identities were mapped onto Native America, and how indigenous Americans engaged in their own social remapping.<sup>44</sup>

One of the most famous historical examples of the contested nature of this mapping and remapping of indigenous identities is the

Seminole Indians. For much of the nineteenth century, the Seminoles strove to maintain a sense of themselves as distinctive from the neighboring Creek Indians. They did this, much as the Cherokees and other southern tribes did, by jealously guarding their land and slaves.<sup>45</sup> This determination, and their close, daily interaction with people of African descent, in turn fueled tension between the Seminoles and their slaves. Some of these slaves absconded from their Seminole masters and formed maroon communities in Florida. In these contraband communities, the Seminole maroons gave birth to a new identity: the black Seminoles.

Historian Kevin Mulroy has devoted his academic career to studying the Seminoles. His research reveals how the black Seminoles self-consciously differentiated themselves from other enslaved people of African descent by emphasizing “the term *Seminoles*” in articulations of their identity.<sup>46</sup> Such assertions of indigenous identity remain to this day a point of contention between Seminoles and black Seminoles, much as it remains controversial in Cherokee, Creek, and Choctaw communities.<sup>47</sup>

It is worth noting, however, that while Seminole leaders attempt to invalidate the indigenous identities of the black Seminoles by emphasizing their biological connection to a distant African ancestry, the black Seminoles have, since at least the nineteenth century, insisted on a group name, language, and cultural practices that underscore their self-identification as indigenous.<sup>48</sup> There exist other historical examples of such self-identifications, for instance, the Garifuna in Central America, the modern-day descendants of the Black Caribs, whom British settlers delegitimized as a Native people before forcibly removing them from the Caribbean in the late eighteenth century (see Newman’s essay in this collection).

So what is an Indian? What makes one “indigenous”? Is it blood or culture? Language or spirituality? The possession of a fixed homeland, or geographical movement and mobility? The answer is not simple. All these things can constitute the component parts of an indigenous identity in the twenty-first century, just as they did in previous centuries. If we begin to look beyond Western constructions of indigeneity—those

concepts that became embedded in New World colonial cultures and continue to resonate today—and re-center Native American actors in our histories of colonialism, we start to see these complex “layered” and adaptable cultures for what they are: meaningful expressions of indigenous identities that structure the lived experiences of individuals and communities. There are many examples of such expressions in our twenty-first-century world. One testimonial strikes me as particularly poignant. It is the autobiographical reflections of Steve Russell. Writing of his mixed Cherokee-Scottish lineage in 1999, Russell explained that while he has nothing against the Scots, he has no notion of what it is to be Scottish. “I was born and raised in Oklahoma,” Russell reflected, “and it is Cherokee language and Cherokee lore and Cherokee people that tell me who I am.”<sup>49</sup> Russell’s self-consciously chosen identity is rich with the themes that run through this volume. His personal family history, the location of his birth, the acquisition of Cherokee language skills, and the internalization of Cherokee folkways tell Russell who he is and where he has come from.

Russell’s personal account of indigenous identity echoes Greg Denning’s insistence that “our pasts suffuse our presents.” These “pasts” are “transformed, translated, interpreted, and encapsulated” in ways that help us to make sense of our identities in the present.<sup>50</sup> Of course, this process does not happen in a vacuum; it occurs in relation to other people and their articulated understanding of the past. For indigenous peoples across the Caribbean, the Americas, and into the Pacific, this relational articulation of self occurs amid an enduring cacophony of stereotypes—some of which are flattering, others offensive. In the United States, some of these stereotypes are embedded in the nation’s racial culture. Indians are supposed to look, act, and speak one way, Euro-Americans another. In many cases, the tourism industry perpetuates these racial stereotypes. Take a trip to Cherokee, North Carolina, for instance, and one will see “authentic” Eastern Cherokees selling souvenirs from roadside tepees. The Cherokees did not live in tepees, but never mind the details, an “authentic” holiday experience awaits. Indeed, the word Cherokee is splashed on everything from children’s underwear to automobiles and aircrafts. If such crude

consumerism is not to one's taste, then perhaps solace can be found at collegiate and professional sports venues throughout the United States. Here one will find teams with nicknames like the "Chiefs," "Braves," "Sioux," and "Seminoles." Presumably, nicknames of this nature are meant to evoke masculine qualities of leadership, courage, and a warrior spirit. That Native Americans are branded and introduced to the vast majority of Americans in this way suggests that white Americans remain disengaged from the settler colonial history that made the appropriation of these symbols of indigeneity both possible and palatable.<sup>51</sup> And for indigenous Americans, this milieu of historical amnesia and simplistic stereotyping makes the presentation of Native American identities—like that articulated by Steve Russell—that much more challenging.<sup>52</sup>

The contributors to this volume confront the historical and contemporary complexities of indigenous identities. The following chapters are grouped in a thematic and roughly chronological order. In part I, "Adapting Indigenous Identities for the Colonial Diaspora," the authors analyze the construction and reconstruction of indigenous identities during the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries. Rebecca Horn and Michael McDonnell analyze the complex and diverse Native cultures, political structures, and notions of identity encountered by early Spanish and French explorers, traders, missionaries, and colonialists, respectively. Brooke Newman, Linford Fisher, and Felicity Donohoe extend the narrative of Native identities into the eighteenth century and the era of revolutions that transformed settler colonial and plantation societies in North America and the Caribbean. Newman, Fisher, and Donohoe present original arguments based on groundbreaking research that force us to rethink the nature of indigenous identity in relation to concepts of race and human difference, Christianity, gender, and sexuality.

As a whole, part I demonstrates that the formation of colonial societies and nation-states in the Americas from the seventeenth to the early nineteenth century bore witness to various forms of European expansion and settlement in the Caribbean islands and mainland Americas. These included efforts to establish trading and military

posts, plantation agriculture, and missionary schools, the creation of permanent sites of European colonial settlement, and the negotiation of racial and gendered identities in the nascent American republic. Through their engagements with Spanish, Dutch, French, and British colonizers, and ultimately, the founding generation of the American republic, indigenous Americans negotiated different forms of European expansion, economic and political systems, and varying degrees of violence. With an emphasis on the ways in which indigenous peoples adapted their identities to the colonial worlds encircling them, part 1 thus attempts to integrate historical discussion of what Michael McDonnell has referred to as “stories from the bottom up, [and] facing east.”<sup>53</sup>

Part 2, “Asserting Native Identities through Politics, Work, and Migration,” takes us into the long nineteenth century, a period of dramatic and at times traumatic changes for American Indians. The authors focus on the challenges that confronted Native American people and their collective understanding of identity following the political rise of the United States. Much has been written on Native American policy in the American republic, from the policy of “expansion with honor” to the Removal Act (1830), Dawes Severalty Act (1887), and beyond.<sup>54</sup> The chapters in part 2 provide fresh insights into American relations with Native Americans during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Chapters by James Taylor Carson, Claudia Haake, Joy Porter, Katherine Ellinghaus, and Vera Parham focus on Native American articulations of identity in letters, speeches, political documents, oral traditions, work practices, and cultural self-representations, through movement over space and time and with reference to the lens of racial “purity” and concepts of “mixed-race” identity. These chapters provide original insights into indigenous identities in the context of changing political structures, the law, “Indian” policies, and the migration of English- and Spanish-speaking peoples into Native American lands.

Part 3, “Twentieth-Century Reflections on Indigenous and Pan-Indian Identities,” addresses some of the major twentieth-century challenges to indigenous identities. Chapters by Duane Champagne,



Kerri Inglis, Bill Anthes, Daniel Cobb, and a brilliant retrospective by Donald Fixico, explore Native American notions of individual and group identities by focusing on changing indigenous conceptions of sovereignty and self-government, education, medicine, cultural self-representation, political activism, and self-reflection. These chapters demonstrate the richness of Native American identities and highlight how different historical forces throughout the Atlantic and Pacific worlds contributed to the reshaping of American Indian identities during the twentieth century.

Many stories of indigenous life remain untold, some of which may never be told for lack of archival sources or absence of collective memory to breathe renewed life and meaning into them. But if the chapters in this volume demonstrate anything, much like the life and death of the Cherokee leader Elias Boudinot, it is that economic, political, and sociocultural structures at a “macro” level of analysis can reveal new historical insights when interpreted at the “micro,” or local, level of human interaction. As the forthcoming chapters highlight, the intersection and overlapping of these different levels of analysis are shaped and reshaped by changes in colonial power, by the impact of disease and violence, and by the myriad ways in which indigenous peoples adapted, interpreted, and/or discarded the material and intellectual elements of colonialism. Indigenous peoples from the Caribbean to the Pacific Islands might have suffered dramatic declines in population and the dispossession of land after 1492, but as this volume insists, indigenous identities have not been “eliminated.” Standing Bear, the Ponca chief who doggedly resisted late nineteenth-century American imperialism, expressed this sentiment when he declared, “I am a man.”<sup>55</sup>

## Notes

1. Elias Boudinot, *An Address to the Whites: Delivered in the First Presbyterian Church, on the 26th of May, 1826* (Philadelphia: William F. Geddes, 1826).

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3. Boudinot, *An Address to the Whites*, 3–4.
4. Brian Hicks, *Toward the Setting Sun: John Ross, the Cherokees, and the Trail of Tears* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2011), 236–27. On Cherokee removal, see John Ehle, *Trail of Tears: The Rise and Fall of the Cherokee Nation* (New York: Doubleday, 1988); William Anderson, ed., *Cherokee Removal: Before and After* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1991); Robert Conley, *The Cherokee Nation: A History* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005); Theda Perdue and Michael Green, *The Cherokee Removal: A Brief History with Documents* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2005).
5. On the theoretical aspects of this point, see Arturo J. Aldama, *Disrupting Savagism: Intersecting Chicana/o, Mexican Immigrant, and Native American Struggles for Self-Representation* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2001); Eva Marie Garrouette, *Real Indians: Identity and the Survival of Native America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003). For a poignant example of personal reflections on the issue of identity, see Patricia Hilden, *When Nickels Were Indians* (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institute, 1997).
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7. Katrina Gulliver, “Finding the Pacific World,” *Journal of World History* 22, no. 1 (2011): 83–100.
8. N. Jayaram, “Introduction: The Study of Indian Diaspora,” in *The Indian Diaspora: Dynamics of Migration*, ed. N. Jayaram (New Delhi and Thousand Oaks CA: Sage, 2004), 20; Robbie F. Ethridge, *From Chicaza to Chickasaw: The European*

*Invasion and the Transformation of the Mississippian World, 1540–1715* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 1–3.

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10. Harmon, “Wanted: More Histories of Indian Identity,” 255.

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14. M. Kearney, “The Local and the Global: The Anthropology of Globalization and Transnationalism,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24 (1995): 548; Hae-Kyung Um, “Listening Patterns and Identity of the Korean Diaspora in the Former USSR,” *British Journal of Ethnomusicology* 9, no. 2 (2000): 121–42; Alisse Waterston, “Bringing the Past into the Present: Family Narratives of Holocaust, Exile, and Diaspora: The Story of My Story,” *Anthropological Quarterly* 78, no. 1 (2005): 57; Gabriel Sheffer, “Transnationalism and Ethnonational Diasporism,” *Diaspora* 15, no. 1 (2006): 121–45; Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2008); Ted C. Lewellan, *The Anthropology of Globalization: Cultural Anthropology Enters the 21st Century* (Westport CT: Greenwood Publishing, 2002); Stuart Hall, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora,” in *Theorizing Diaspora: A Reader*, ed. Jana Evans Braziel and Anita Mannur (Malden MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 233–46.

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