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SPACE

Fall/Winter 2025

Night Sky

Kashona Notah

It has taken me a lot of years to process, but I sometimes think of myself as the same person I was back in San Bernardino. Although my life has changed exponentially, I am still sitting with my dad out underneath the stars, I am still that kid watching his father speak Diné to the sky, I am still dreaming. But I am different too. Because of the Native writers that preceded me, those who are part of my story too, I am no longer destined only for labor. Instead, I am living my life as a writer. I am everything before me, everything behind me, I am everything below me, and everything above me.

GO

Spring/Summer 2024

Partnership Toward a Better Understanding

Dr. Shelly C. Lowe, Chair of the National Endowment for the Humanities

“For the country’s Indigenous peoples, the era of federal Indian boarding schools remains an extremely painful chapter in our history, with communities and families still dealing with the long-term effects of a system that separated children from their families and homes, severed their connections to their Native languages, cultures, and traditions, and stripped them of their Native identities. In addition to this forced removal and assimilation, many students within the federal boarding school system also experienced abuse, harsh conditions, malnutrition, neglect, and disease. The humanities have an important role to play in helping us understand this history and its impact on Native Americans today, and in providing a platform for discussion, healing, and reconciliation.”

Chilocco: Native American Resilience within the Indian Boarding School System

Dr. K. Tsianina Lomawaima

“Located between Arkansas City, Kansas, to the north and Ponca City, Oklahoma, to the south, Chilocco (pronounced shī-law’-kō) enrolled thousands of Native American children and young adults from 1884 until 1980. If we judge the school by federal attempts to dissolve Native identity and erase beliefs and practices, Chilocco both succeeded and failed. Boarding schools unquestionably did serious damage. Students fell prey to disease, accidents, abuse, and malnutrition. Among survivors, experiences and recollections vary tremendously; positive and negative and often both, they remind us of the resilience of Native youth. We must honor them all, those who were lost, those who were scarred, all who survived. One reality unites boarding school alums: they grew up in an institution, not at home. That marked everyone.”

Federal Indian Boarding Still Exist, but What’s Inside May be Surprising

Sequoia Carrillo and Allison Herrera

Originally published by NPR

“On a hot afternoon last summer, Riverside Indian School drew a crowd from all over Oklahoma. Elders and family members drove hours to pile into the residential school’s gymnasium. They filled the space with rows of chairs and stuffed the bleachers up to the rafters, but when the meeting was called to order, everyone was silent. Facing the busloads of tribal citizens were U.S. Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland and Assistant Secretary Bryan Newland. They traveled from Washington to listen for as long as people wanted to speak. The subject at hand? The very place they were sitting.”

STORIES

Fall/Winter 2023

Shaping Cultural Memory

Sarah Milligan

“If we have learned nothing else from the long history of collecting objects to reflect our past, it might be that everyone has a role. Representation matters in these history-saving spaces. When we empower everyone to shape their own story, when we gather these narratives and objects with a conscious eye for who and what is missing, the result is more than a collection to be visited. It is a living cultural trust through which we remember and better understand the stories of *us*.”

FOOD

Spring/Summer 2023

Corn and Cacao: Twins of Sun and Shadow

Bruce Dean Willis

Willis explores the importance of corn and cacao in Mesoamerican mythology and how it provides “insight into the ways the Maya thought, and still think, about the cycle of life, death, and rebirth.” It sustained them physically as well as spiritually and figured prominently in their creation stories and culinary concoctions.

Corn Dance: Inspired First American Cuisine

Loretta Barrett Oden with Beth Dooley

In this exclusive excerpt from the University of Oklahoma Press publication, Potawatomi chef Loretta Barrett Oden shares recipes and revelations about the diversity of Indigenous cuisine and the importance of food sovereignty. “My work is more than just creating dishes and talking about them. I believe we are connected to life when we sit down together over a good meal. Psychologists posit that each of us has one or two primary means by which we communicate (and receive) love, but they don’t typically include food as a love language. I use food as the forum to speak to my own community, the broader Native community, and to non-Native people. If we can come together at the table, we will come together in peace.”

CODE

Spring/Summer 2022

The Coded Messages of Plains Indian Drawings

Candace S. Greene

“Graphic art has been used for centuries by Native American peoples both as a form of creative expression and as a way to convey social information. Pictorial art, as realistic representations of people and things, was produced by many of the Native peoples of North America, and particularly well developed in the Plains region during the nineteenth century.”

Color Coded—The Language of Tattoos

Eric Singleton

The first stories ever inked were symbols of maturity, spirituality, and artistic identity. “Tattoos date from ancient times and are shared around the world—among men, women, and sometimes children. Across cultures and throughout history, these body adornments have been associated with health, medicine, religious practices, maturity rites, and personal aesthetic.”

CROSSROADS

Fall/Winter 2021

An American Sunrise

Joy Harjo

Harjo, the U.S Poet Laureate and a Muscogee Nation citizen, reflects on family and friendship in selected poems and prose from her book *An American Sunrise*. Harjo is the author of nine books of poetry, several plays, and two memoirs. She is also Executive Editor of the anthology *When the Light of the World was Subdued, Our Songs Came Through—A Norton Anthology of Native Nations Poetry*.

The Absentee Shawnees and the True Story of Lake Thunderbird

John Truden

Truden illuminates the Absentee Shawnee's enduring resilience amid the ill-considered consequences of constructing Oklahoma's Lake Thunderbird. "Most people living in Norman, Del City, and Midwest City do not know their water comes from a twentieth-century trail of tears," he writes. "The stories and memories hidden beneath Lake Thunderbird's murky waters will forever be of Absentee Shawnee history. But it is more: The outcome is Oklahoma history. It is *our* history."

CITIZEN 2020

Fall/Winter 2020

In Pursuit of Presidents and Principal Chiefs

Jay Hannah

"As an Oklahoman, I am a citizen of two nations: the United States and the Cherokee Nation...An election year is a touchstone of my past and a reminder that being a dual citizen has an added set of challenges in reconciling the parallels and proclivities in electing leaders. Election years remind me that I must choose wisely, whether voting for Principal Chief of my Native Nation or President of the United States."

JUSTICE

Spring/Summer 2019

Unintended Consequences

Lindsay G. Robertson

"United States federal Indian policy has roots in our nation's founding and is built on two broad constructs: that title to Indian lands was lost to discovering European sovereigns and subsequently passed to their American successors, and that tribes are "wards" of the United States, which acts as their guardian or trustee. These concepts were crystalized by the U.S. Supreme Court during the tenure of Chief Justice John Marshall, in three decisions commonly referred to as the 'Marshall Trilogy.'"

POETRY

Spring/Summer 2017

The Poet's Life

N. Scott Momaday

"To Oklahomans, N. Scott Momaday is a cultural treasure, a Native son in every respect: He was born in Lawton and is a member of the Kiowa Tribe of Oklahoma. His honors are legion. To name a few, in 2007 he was appointed Oklahoma Centennial Poet Laureate by Governor Brad Henry and awarded the National Medal of Arts by President George W. Bush. His novel *House Made of Dawn* won the 1969 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction. He is an accomplished painter and printmaker and has spent his lifetime as a scholar and keeper of words, crafting novels, plays, folk tales, memoirs, essays, and poetry.

DEMOCRACY

Fall/Winter 2016

Together

Congressman Tom Cole

“The story of our nation’s republic is the continual struggle to measure up to the lofty goals established in our founding documents. While the Declaration of Independence, U.S. Constitution, and Bill of Rights sum up who we aim to be, our history has certainly been marked by a combination of trials, mistakes, and successes along the way. And even today, we have not reached perfection or eliminated all shortfalls. The effort to fully realize and live up to the principles prescribed at our founding remains a work in progress at every level and in every branch of government. While often overlooked, misunderstood, or even intentionally undermined, we would be remiss to forget that in addition to federal, state, and local governing authorities there is another level of government that pre-exists the very nation in which we live. The enduring presence of tribal nations and lasting recognition of their sovereignty is not only significant in Oklahoma, but to all Americans. It is important for us to understand how tribes have shaped and contributed to our way of governing.”

RIGHTS

Summer 2014

The Color of Blood

Joe Starita

“On January 2, 1879, thirty Ponca men, women, and children finished loading their belongings. The morning came in at nineteen below zero with a steady north wind. They hadn’t much in the way of winter clothing and it was coming down harder as the two worn-out horses stood motionless in the blinding snow. The boy was dressed in his best clothing and the chief gently placed him in a box and carefully lowered it into the back of one of the wagons. Then the father and mother turned their faces north and began walking away from the Warm Country, heading toward the Running Water. Their boy was going home.”

AMERICAN HUMOR

January 2014

Will Rogers in the 21st Century Influencing Politics with Humor

Brett S. Sharp

“Will Rogers was the quintessential political humorist of the last century. His mildly progressive humor was popular with audiences of all ideological stripes. He was world famous in his day and remains iconic. The contributions of this cowboy comedian may seem quaint in comparison to the edgy forms of contemporary political humor, but were they any less influential? The answer might surprise you.”

The Witty N. Scott Momaday

“That N. Scott Momaday is an artist of note there is no doubt: he’s a Pulitzer Prize-winning novelist, poet, playwright, and painter. Perhaps less well known is his sense of humor. Nothing demonstrates that better—his sense and humor—than the little ditties he calls epitaphs. According to Momaday, swimming laps keeps the body in shape but is dreadfully dull for the mind. To allay boredom between backstrokes, he began composing epitaphs. Though only two lines long, they require wit and imagination to stay razor sharp. Read on for some ripping good fun.”

RECONCILIATION

Summer 2012

Hope for Racial Healing: Rethinking Christian Missions among the Chickasaw

Otis W. Pickett

“Some wounds in American history simply cut too deep. The difficult and tumultuous relationship between the United States and the Chickasaw Nation is certainly one of those wounds. But perhaps some hope for future healing can be drawn from a deeper understanding of the injustices in our past. Today, in an era when attempts at racial reconciliation and solidarity seem fruitless in producing lasting change, we do well to re-examine and glean from the cooperative, interracial relationships in Mississippi mission churches of the early nineteenth century. These communities included whites, African Americans, and Native Americans, and were later carried from Mississippi into Oklahoma.”

SUMMER 2011

Found in Translation: Revelations from the Peter Pitchlynn Journal

Marcia Haag with Henry Willis

“Finding a handwritten document by someone as important as Pitchlynn was exciting indeed. Dr. Morgan secured a copy of the journal and brought it to the two people he believed could translate and make something of it—Henry Willis, a native speaker and member of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, and me, Marcia Haag, Associate Professor of Linguistics at the University of Oklahoma. Henry and I have collaborated for several years on projects to preserve the Choctaw language, including two volumes of Choctaw pedagogical grammars. We agreed with great eagerness to translate the document, completely cognizant that it would be historically important, no matter what it contained, and that it would be a long slog under the best of conditions.”

The Choctaw Confederates

Adam Goodheart

“The Choctaws on the eve of the Civil War were a heterogeneous, sometimes fractious people, poised at an intersection of races and cultures, of new ways and old ones. Now the Choctaws’ elected representatives—like the leaders of many other Native tribes across the South—faced a momentous decision: whether to remain loyal to the United States or cast their lot with the new and untested Confederate States of America.”

JANUARY 2011

A Funny Thing Happened in Line at the Water Fountain

Jay Hannah

“Growing up in Oklahoma’s Adair County during the 1960s, touted at that time as one of the most poverty-stricken counties in the United States, oddly enough provided indelible advantages. It was there that a deep and abiding interest in the study of history was sparked and inextricably embedded into my life. It did not emanate from the usual student’s introduction to history through rote memorization of dates and events; rather, in an innocent moment of connection to the past through the faces of people.”

FALL/WINTER 2008

Guardians of Glacier Park: The Blackfeet in Artistic Imagination

Dr. Steven Grafe

“*Guardians of Glacier* Park opened in February at the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum and is funded in part by a grant from OHC. The exhibit focuses on the work of photographer Walter McClintock and artists Julius Seyler and Winold Reiss, who worked among the Blackfeet Indians in northwest Montana between 1898 and 1948. During this period, the Great Northern Railway worked to establish Glacier National Park adjacent to its tracks, creating roads, lodges, and other facilities to support tourism. The debut of a new book, *Lanterns on the Prairie: The Blackfeet Photographs of Walter McClintock*, edited by exhibit curator Steven Grafe, will coincide with the exhibit. Following is a short excerpt written by Dr. Grafe.”

SUMMER 2008

New Poetry from N. Scott Momaday

Will Rogers for President!

Joseph H. Carter

“Hundreds of books on [Will] Rogers’ life and the re-release of his movies—he starred in 71 films— have kept alive the near-mythic admiration Oklahomans have for this icon of the common people. Schools, businesses, and a turnpike bear his name. Still, for all that we know and admire about this ‘Oklahoma Native Son,’ many are surprised to hear about his run for the presidency of the United States.”