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ARTICLE

"What Does it Mean to Do Indigenous Studies in Europe in the 2020s? Different Perspectives, Conversations and Reflections"

RENE DIETRICH

Introduction

Native Studies in Europe has a tradition that dates back at least to the 1980s—marked for instance by the founding of the American Indian Workshop in 1980 (www.american-indian-workshop.org/), which continues to serve as a vital network for scholars of Native American literatures and cultures across the continent. That the 2024 Native American and Indigenous Studies Association (NAISA, https://naisa.org) conference was held in Bødo, Norway, can be seen as marking a significant milestone for Native and Indigenous studies in Europe, as it was the first time that the meeting was held in a European country, specifically on Sámi territory. With it being the third time– after

Hawai'i in 2016 and Aotearoa/New Zealand in 2019– that the NAISA meeting took place outside of the North American Mainland, we can also view this as an indicator of the field's increasing transnationalization. From this perspective, it is more suggestive of the field's widening scope than the growth of the field in Europe particularly.

Regardless of how we choose to read it, though, having the largest association for Native and Indigenous Studies meet in Europe highlights the continent's coloniality as well as pointing to Europe as home to Indigenous peoples. Doing so makes it clear that Europe, with regard to the issues raised by Native Studies, does not have the status of an outside observer. The particular fascination that a number of European countries have toward an imagined North American "Indianness" is only the most visible and best-known sign of a deeper and largely displaced European entanglement with Indigenous dispossession and colonization in that regard– an entanglement that concerns the inquires and practices of Native Studies in Europe as well (see among others Mackay and Stirrup; Usbeck; Lutz, Strzelcyk and Watchman; Kolinska, Runtić and Marešová). The moment of NAISA 2024 in Europe can then be an occasion to consider how Europe has developed as a site for Indigenous Studies until today. That Europe hosts research institutions of Native Studies such as the Centre for Indigenous and Settler Colonial Studies at York (https://www.york.ac.uk/english/research/centre-for-indigenous-and-settler-colonial-studies/), and that it is the editorial home of this journal, *Transmotion*, as well as more recently of *Settler Colonial Studies* (https://www.tandfonline.com/journals/rset20) speak to the degree of its development. Beyond that, one can witness an increasing reflection of European scholars on what it means to do Native and Indigenous Studies in Europe–a conversation to which my essay seeks to contribute.

In 2011, Deborah Madsen argued that Native American literary studies as practiced in Europe was not in sync with Native American literary studies in the U.S. She took particular issue with the fact that Native literature tended to be read and especially taught as contributing to a U.S. national canon, or as one ethnic literature

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among others, or as an American version of postcolonial writing. Madsen attributed this partly to the fact how Native American Studies in Europe was not independent but institutionally integrated within American and British literary studies departments.– In contrast to this earlier assessment, I want to posit that today Native Studies (still mostly housed within the disciplinary frameworks of literary and cultural studies, but also extending beyond that), as practiced and taught in Europe, has progressed to a large extent from those varying Americanist and Eurocentric readings. Even with an ongoing lack of institutionalization on the university and departmental level, the general burgeoning of the field and its transnationalization have put European scholars of Indigenous Studies in much closer dialogue with Indigenous scholars in the Americas, Australia, and Aotearoa/New Zealand so that the paradigms of Indigenous Studies in Europe are more closely aligned with the larger international field. Today, European Indigenous Studies scholars operate with the same key terms, such as sovereignty and self-determination, settler colonialism and decolonization, agency and presence, that have shaped the field of Indigenous Studies on a larger scale.

That the field is growing more transnational, however, also raises questions for the practice of Native Studies within Europe: What distinct European perspectives on Indigeneity are emerging, and how do they intersect with the field's increasing transnationalization? How does a European positionality shape scholarly approaches that extend beyond mere acknowledgment of distance from the lands of Indigenous communities? And how does understanding Indigenous experiences within Europe, such as those of the Sámi in the Nordic context or the Irish experience of colonization, adds complexity to these inquiries? These questions point to the issues of Native agency and presence within Europe; a settler colonial paradigm that includes Europe's entanglements and the ongoing histories of settler colonization within Europe; and an investigation of European representations of "Indianness" that addresses Europe's own

colonial culpabilities– rather than serving to continue an objectification of Native people. All of these approaches and directions come with new challenges, while at the same time some of the old challenges such as the lack of institutionalization remain. With this in mind, and through conversations with three scholars of Native literary, visual and media studies as well as of Nordic and global colonialism, this essay seeks to explore how these changes and challenges influence research, teaching, networking, and diverse methodologies within Native Studies today.

For the conversations I chose as partners Chiara Minestrelli, Janne Lahti, and Jana Maresova. With this selection, I wanted to pay attention to geographical and national diversity, taking into account perspectives from Western Europe (UK), Northern Europe (Finland), and Central/Eastern Europe (Czech Republic), as well as to showcase disciplines across the spectrum of literary and cultural studies as well as history. In addition, each scholar was engaged in their work with Europe and the meaning of Europe for Indigenous Studies: Minestrelli is concerned with the significance and the ethics of practicing Indigenous Studies in the heart of Empire, Lahti interrogates the largely unacknowledged and ongoing history of Finnish and more generally Nordic (settler) colonialism, and Maresova (together with her co-editors) investigates the ongoing stereotyping of Indigenous people in Europe and which ends this continues to serve in Central and Eastern Europe. Beyond their scholarship, I was interested in the position Minestrelli and Lahti held within institutions of Native and settler colonial studies, namely with Minestrelli as a co-director of the Centre for Indigenous and Settler Colonial Studies, and with Lahti having recently taken on the position as the editor of the journal *Settler Colonial Studies*. With Minestrelli and Maresova, I was also intrigued in the perspectives of scholars who worked within different national contexts in Native Studies, both within and beyond Europe. Finally, I was interested to hear the perspectives of scholars who are part of a more recent generation of academics whose work– as well as my own– developed in the past fifteen

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years and thus in the wake of Madsen's assessment of Native (literary) Studies in Europe at the beginning of the 2010s.

The following conversations thus attempt to reflect—even if necessarily only to a limited degree— the evolving landscape of the field and to serve as a lens through which we can critically assess its development since Madsen's observations in 2011. Minestrelli emphasizes the importance of integrating Indigenous perspectives across multiple disciplines, advocating for a collaborative, decolonial approach that prioritizes Indigenous agency. Lahti engages with the complexities of Nordic colonialism and critiques the politicization of the field, leading to the question to which degree scholarship can (or should) maintain a critical distance from the politics of colonization and Native sovereignty. Maresova highlights the need for self-reflection among non-Indigenous scholars and advocates for genuine engagement with Indigenous voices to combat lingering colonial attitudes.

The conversations show that the challenges outlined by Madsen, such as the institutional marginality of Native studies in Europe, remain pertinent today. At the same time, the growth and progress of the field in Europe is apparent due to the fact that these conversations would have sounded quite different fifteen or even ten years ago. Around 2010 settler colonial studies was just emerging as an important— and contested— paradigm for interrogating the situation of Native peoples, and decolonization was not yet widely articulated as a horizon for the field of Indigenous peoples— let alone thinking about Europe as a space to decolonize. In this way, the following conversations outline challenges but also present the current moment as one of opportunity for growth with recent global movements for racial justice and decolonization— and their backlash— continuing to reshape the academic and cultural landscape.

Ultimately, I see this essay serving as a platform for exploring diverse methodologies and approaches employed in Native Studies today and assessing how these can, in different ways, foster collaboration, amplify Indigenous voices, and critically engage with the legacies of colonialism. When reflecting on these conversations, it becomes evident that the future of Native Studies in Europe hinges on a commitment to ethical and responsible scholarship. In honoring both past moments of departure and future opportunities of moving further, such a scholarship can be, in the spirit of this tenth-year anniversary issue, a version of European Indigenous studies for the seventh generation. By embracing this multifaceted perspective and making sure that we keep up conversations such as the following ones, scholars can work to ensure that Indigenous literary and visual studies within Europe remain dynamic, relevant, and responsive to the needs of Indigenous peoples and nations. As becomes clear in the conversations with Chiara Minestrelli, Janne Lahti, and Jana Maresova (and as I will reflect in this essay following them), analyzing Europe's imperial legacies and their connections to broader narratives of Indigenous dispossession while engaging meaningfully with Indigenous communities worldwide is integral to a field thus envisioned.

Conversation with Chiara Minestrelli: Doing Research With Not On Indigenous People at the Heart of Empire

René Dietrich: Please talk a bit about your own work and background and how you see this as connected to the question of doing Indigenous Studies in Europe or coming from Europe.

Chiara Minestrelli: A bit about my background, I did a PhD in Indigenous Studies at Monash University in Australia, which I often mention because when I completed it in 2010, it was an interesting time. By the time I finished my doctorate, a new generation of Indigenous activists and leaders had emerged, and a new form of cultural awareness was reshaping public discourse within Australia. At that time, I wasn't fully aware of the

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complexity of embarking on such a project as a non-Indigenous person, but I had a passion for justice and Indigenous rights, as well as relationships with Indigenous communities in Australia.

Before that, I had started another PhD in Italy on Indigenous literature in Australia, but I realized it wasn't ethical to do that from a European institution without active collaborations with Indigenous peoples. I decided to quit and move to Australia, where I had previously worked as a secondary school teacher. I made connections, and through conversations, I noticed the rise of Indigenous hip-hop in Australia, which led me to pursue a PhD in that area. Eventually, after consulting with some Indigenous Elders and friends, I felt I had the support to work on my project in an ethical way.

Of course, there were challenges with my positionality as a white European woman working in Indigenous spaces. I questioned my right to be doing this research. However, after discussions with my supervisors and local Indigenous communities, I decided to continue, ensuring my work aligned with decolonizing methodologies and gave back to the communities I was working with. It was important that the research was collaborative and not just about me imposing my voice. It was mainly about finding a way to 'give back' to the people I worked with.

Eventually, I left Australia and went to the United States, where I became involved in Native American issues, especially during the Trump election and the Standing Rock protests. I organized events with Native American artists, poets, and musicians, focusing on creating transnational connections, as I did in Australia. After almost three semesters at Lehigh University in Pennsylvania, I moved to the UK, where it was harder to continue this work since few people were doing Indigenous Studies.

After reaching out to the Menzies Australian Institute, I got a permanent position at the London College of Communication, part of the University of the Arts, London. My background in cultural studies, communication, and linguistics helped me develop

my research into Indigenous media and communication. My first book focused on Australian Indigenous hip-hop, and I've since expanded into Indigenous media, immersive technologies and digital heritage.

Currently, I'm working on a project involving VR to tell stories from the perspective of cultural objects, particularly a turtle shell mask from the Torres Strait Islands. We want to raise questions around objects being animate with human-like characteristics and curatorial practices within Western museums. One of the aims is to engage the younger generations, foster a sense of belonging in them, and address a series of other issues as identified by the Elders. The second phase will involve bringing the VR artifact to the UK and engaging with British institutions on questions of repatriation, or 'rematriation'. As one of the directors of the Centre for Indigenous and Settler Colonial Studies, I am also committed to supporting any form of intervention to help Indigenous artists/leaders/activists engage with British institutions, if asked to do so.

René Dietrich: Coming from such an international background, how do you think your experiences in Italy, Australia, and the US have shaped your approach to Native Studies? What are the main differences and challenges you see for Native Studies in Europe?

Chiara Minestrelli: In terms of my positionality in Australia, there were both pros and cons, but mostly pros. Being Italian, I wasn't perceived as part of the colonial history, which helped me build warm relationships and foster collaboration. Many Indigenous people appreciated that I came with a different perspective on their issues, and my status as an outsider made it easier for them to trust me, compared to some of my Australian colleagues, particularly those of Anglo background. However, I still had to reflect on how my subjectivity—my gender, sexuality, and age—affected my research and interactions, especially in a predominantly male environment. Overall, though, I was seen not as a settler but as someone willing to engage and learn.

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My travels to places like Finland, where I liaised with Sámi communities at the University of Helsinki, gave me further insights into Indigenous issues. Being someone who travels frequently has been advantageous in building relationships and networks.

As for Indigenous Studies in the UK, much has changed over the past five years. When I first joined my institution, there was little interest in questions around Indigeneity, and my research was initially dismissed. However, the events of 2020, such as the Black Lives Matter movement, sparked a renewed focus on human and minority rights, leading to a surge of interest in Indigenous and Black studies. This shift allowed me to continue my work with more institutional support.

Looking ahead, I think the role of Indigenous Studies in the UK and Europe is shifting away from merely researching Indigenous peoples. It's more about engaging in conversations around repatriation, decolonization, and allyship. Our responsibility as scholars in Europe is to create networks and infrastructures that amplify Indigenous voices, allowing them to shape the agenda rather than having white scholars speak on their behalf. It's about facilitating and supporting Indigenous leadership in navigating and challenging the structures of Empire.

René Dietrich: I'm curious about your thoughts on doing Indigenous Studies from Europe, especially as a non-settler space but one deeply tied to empire and colonial legacies. Has the renewed focus on decolonization in Europe since 2020 changed perspectives on Indigenous Studies, and how does this tie into the edited volume you're working on?

Chiara Minestrelli: Yes, Europe is a not traditionally conceived as a settler space but still steeped in colonial legacies, making it a complex site for Indigenous Studies. There's a long-standing tension—many Indigenous scholars and artists are drawn to Europe, particularly the UK, because of its imperial past and the presence of colonial

institutions holding Indigenous objects. These institutions are seen with both rejection and reverence, as they house objects that are viewed as relatives, not just artifacts.

Recently, there have been significant events, like the Tent Embassy installation at Tate Modern, which brought Indigenous scholars from around the world to London. This highlights how the UK, as the "heart of Empire," continues to hold symbolic power, even as conversations around decolonization progress.

In terms of Indigenous Studies in Europe, there are growing discussions, especially with delegations from places like Australia and Canada. A key takeaway from these discussions is the need to address reparations and meaningful decolonization, not just in theory but in practice. This involves rethinking how we do research and teach, especially when non-Indigenous scholars are engaging with Indigenous issues. It's about 'Indigenizing' not just institutions but also our methodologies and approaches.

The edited volume I'm working on with David Stirrup and Chris Andersen aims to address these questions: what does it mean to do Indigenous Studies from Europe? But instead of European scholars dictating the agenda, we're focusing on listening to Indigenous scholars and communities to understand their priorities. The book will include both Indigenous and non-Indigenous voices, fostering a space for debate and reflection on what it means to engage in Indigenous Studies within a European context, and how to move forward with collaboration and respect.

René Dietrich: I'm currently reflecting on how things have changed over the last 10–15 years in Native Studies, particularly in Europe. It seems that Native Studies in Europe is no longer isolated from what's happening globally, with Indigenous scholars and activists now playing a bigger role in shaping European perspectives. This wasn't as prevalent a decade ago. Would you agree that the field has become more transnational and integrated?

Chiara Minestrelli: Yes, there's definitely a move toward transnational collaboration, where Indigenous voices are increasingly shaping the field. The goal is to create spaces

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and infrastructure for Indigenous perspectives to lead, rather than having European scholars dominate the conversation.

René Dietrich: In terms of institutionalizing Native Studies in Europe, it's different from places like Australia or North America, where you can get a degree in Indigenous Studies. How do you see this evolving in Europe? Does this shape your teaching of Native Studies in a broader context, especially for students who aren't pursuing degrees in this field?

Chiara Minestrelli: It's a complex issue, and I wouldn't actively promote Indigenous Studies degrees in Europe just yet. There are debates around Indigenous Studies even in settler-colonial environments, questioning its role as a discipline. In Europe, there are additional challenges. Instead, I think it's more about integrating Indigenous perspectives across different disciplines and ensuring that Indigenous scholars play a key role in shaping these conversations.

In my courses, I often use case studies on Indigenous struggles, representation, and media to highlight these issues. Collaborating with Indigenous scholars, even from a distance, can also be beneficial, though it has its challenges due to budgets and time differences. I believe that consultation and collaboration with Indigenous voices is key to moving forward, rather than rushing to create Indigenous Studies programs.

Also, when students are interested in Indigenous topics, it's important to push them to fully engage with the ethical responsibilities that come with it. It's not a one-off project, it requires commitment. If they're willing to do the hard work and remain humble, they can contribute meaningfully. This is something we're developing further at CISCS, with programs like the Lenape scholarship, but there's still room to grow in terms of supporting students.

René Dietrich: Yes, I agree. It's challenging to envision Indigenous Studies degrees in the UK, but it seems that engaging with Native Studies within various disciplines, rather

than as a standalone program, may be more fitting. It requires a transdisciplinary approach, collaborating across different fields.

Chiara Minestrelli: Absolutely. It's about working transnationally and transdisciplinarily, rather than in silos.

René Dietrich: Thank you for your insights, they've given me a lot to think about for the article. Is there anything else you'd like to discuss about Native Studies in Europe that I haven't asked?

Chiara Minestrelli: I think we've covered a lot of ground. There are still many ongoing conversations, but I'm excited about the future of Indigenous Studies in Europe. With that excitement comes responsibility—to ensure that we do things right and make the most of the opportunities and collaborations ahead.

Conversation with Janne Lahti: A Focus on Nordic (Settler) Colonialism, Transnational Connections, and the Question of Critical Distance

René Dietrich: Let's start with you talking about your own work and how you see its connection to the practice of doing Native Studies in Europe. Also, I'll return to this later, but to what degree do you see yourself as a Native Studies scholar versus a scholar of various forms of colonialism?

Janne Lahti: My background is in the history of the American West. My dissertation focused on the U.S. Army in the Arizona-New Mexico borderlands in the 1800s, looking at the Army as a colonizing community. I drew from postcolonial theory and applied those ideas to the U.S. Army. That goes back to 2009, with my book published in 2012 by the University of Nebraska Press. The Apache conflicts were a major part of that work. My second book delved deeper into the Apache and the U.S. Army, examining how they represented two different military cultures clashing in the borderlands.

In the last five to seven years, I've become more interested in global history, specifically in comparisons and connections between the U.S. West and other colonial spaces, like German Southwest Africa. Recently, I've also been studying Nordic

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colonialism, particularly Finland's role. This is relatively new territory, but there's a growing interest in Finland's colonial history and legacy.

When I was growing up in Finland, colonialism was seen as something distant, something that happened far away and long ago. But I firmly believe that colonialism is still with us today, and we're living with its lasting impacts. We can see this in movements to topple monuments and in debates over repatriation, which have been hot topics here in Finland. For example, the Sámi people have been demanding their artifacts back. Last year, the National Museum returned a significant portion of its Sámi collection to the Sámi Museum in the north.

I recently took on the role of chief editor of the *Settler Colonial Studies* journal. I hesitated at first due to the extra workload, but I realized that as editor of a flagship journal in the field, I would gain valuable insights into where the field is headed, what scholars are questioning, what the next generation of researchers are doing. So, I felt it was worth it.

As for Native Studies, if you'd asked me 10 years ago, I would have identified more as a Native Studies scholar. Today, I primarily identify as a global historian and a historian of colonialism. During my dissertation, I was deeply involved in studying the Apache and became fascinated by how their society functioned, particularly in the 1800s. But Native Studies has changed a lot over the last decade. It's become more sensitive, and as a white European man doing Native Studies, you have to position yourself more carefully. It's become trickier. There's also the question of who gets to do this research, who has the right or capability to study Indigenous peoples?

Recently, while working on an article for *Settler Colonial Studies*, a peer reviewer noted that the author hadn't consulted any Indigenous literature or Indigenous communities. It raised the question of whether non-Indigenous scholars can still write on Indigenous topics without such consultation. Personally, I think there should be

space for different types of scholarship, but scholars need to be open about their positionality. I'm not Apache or Sámi, and I can't speak for them, but I can study them as an outsider, as long as I'm transparent about who I am and what baggage I bring to the table.

Native Studies is getting more politicized, but there's also greater visibility for Indigenous scholars in Finland. There's a growing number of Sámi scholars, and more Indigenous voices are contributing to the academic landscape.

René Dietrich: There has always been some Sámi presence at NAISA conferences, and at this one [reference the annual NAISA conference of 2024], held in Sápmi, I expect it to be much stronger. What is your expectation there, how do you see their participation evolving, and what does it mean for Native Studies in Europe?

Janne Lahti: In Finland, there's a growing number of new scholars—doctoral students and postdocs—who come from Sámi backgrounds. We're seeing more and more of them, especially in history and Indigenous Studies programs. Historically, the Sámi have been at the forefront of colonial studies in Finland. For example, the Giellagas Institute at the University of Oulu has been specializing in Sámi studies for decades. A professor there, who recently retired, has been applying a colonial lens to his work for over 20 or 30 years. But, as historians, we're relatively late to this discussion—especially when it comes to recognizing that Finland has its own colonial history.

When I talk about the recent turn toward colonialism in Finland, I'm referring to historians. What's interesting is that the scholars focusing on Finland and colonialism often come from outside Finland. They're usually trained in the history of the American West, the Mediterranean, the British Empire, German colonialism, or Russia. But the historians specifically trained in Finnish history aren't engaging in these discussions. We've often wondered why.

For many of us researching colonialism, we notice patterns and phenomena, like boarding schools or assimilation policies, that mirror what happened in North America. Finland has had similar tendencies, discourses, and policies, which drew me into this

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field of research. Yet, Finnish historians remain mostly absent from these discussions, and I have a few guesses as to why.

When I started researching colonialism about five or six years ago, I received different reactions. Some people advised me to stay away, saying it would be career suicide and could lead to trouble. This is partly due to Finland's political landscape, where the second-largest party today is a right-wing nationalist group. They often target historians on Twitter and other social media platforms.

Another tendency is to deny that colonialism applies to Finland. Some argue that it just doesn't fit, which reminds me of my experience doing research in Arizona. People there would say, "we didn't have colonialism here; the U.S. is exceptional." It seems everyone wants to see themselves as exceptional. There's also the idea that Finland was a victim of colonization, being part of the Russian Empire. While that's true, Finland was also involved in colonial ventures, like Russian activities in Alaska and even in places like Southwest Africa and King Leopold's ventures.

So, it's a strange dynamic. On one hand, colonialism is a politicized topic; on the other hand, Sámi scholars have long been applying colonial frameworks to their work on Finland. But Finnish historians, in general, are still not engaging with it.

René Dietrich: I was wondering about this broader trend in global history, particularly the links between Finnish and U.S. colonialism, or transnational perspectives on colonialism. From your perspective, do you see Native Studies becoming more integrated into Sámi scholarship? You also mentioned that one of the two professors of Indigenous Studies in Finland specializes in Latin American Indigenous peoples. Is there a growing connection between this and the broader Indigenous framework?

Janne Lahti: Yes, there's definitely more international collaboration happening now among Finnish scholars. We're seeing increased participation in networks like NAISA and in journals such as *Settler Colonial Studies* (SCS). For instance, the professor of

Indigenous Studies at the University of Lapland is part of the editorial team for SCS. So, Finnish scholars are reaching out more and becoming part of these global networks.

Take, for example, my research on Petsamo, a region in the Arctic Ocean that Finland controlled from the 1920s until it was lost to the Soviets after World War II. For 20 years, Petsamo was a multi-ethnic borderland with Sámi, Norwegians, Russians, Karelians, and Finns. It became the target of intense Finnish settler colonization, with efforts to assimilate the local populations through education and other colonial policies. This colonial history challenges the traditional narrative of Finland as a small nation that was only a victim of colonization, particularly by Russia. We were also colonizers, both in the Arctic North and in other parts of the world like North America and Africa.

This shift in perspective is part of a broader trend in academia, but it faces resistance from political forces in Finland. Our second-largest political party is an ultra-nationalist group, and they view these changes as a threat to the national story. They want to return to a narrative of Finland as a resilient nation that survived larger powers, rather than acknowledging our role as colonizers.

There's a similar dynamic in the U.S., where we're seeing more restrictions on what can be taught—avoiding discussions of racism or Native American genocide in favor of a more uplifting, unified national story. These same pressures are present in Finland today. But, on the other hand, the Sámi are becoming more visible in the media and political discourse. For example, the recent debate in Parliament over Sámi legislation, which addressed the question of who gets to decide who is Sámi—the Sámi Parliament or the Finnish courts—received significant attention.

These multilayered connections are crucial for Finnish scholars, particularly in Native Studies. Native Studies are deeply intertwined with political forces, and the discussions happening now are part of a larger, global conversation.

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René Dietrich: I was curious about your new role as chief editor of *Settler Colonial Studies*. The journal has been around for now 14 years (the first issue came out in 2011), and I know there have been some changes. How do you see the journal evolving?

Janne Lahti: I was familiar with the journal and its founding editor, Lorenzo Veracini, having worked with him before. When I was approached by Taylor & Francis to take over, I had a Zoom call with Lorenzo, and he was very supportive. The journal had been going through a rough patch with the previous editorial board, but we felt it was important to keep it going because it's an important and relevant field.

Unfortunately, recent events, like the conflict in Gaza, show how relevant settler colonial studies still are. Understanding these processes is crucial for discussions around decolonizing Western knowledge and history, movements like Rhodes Must Fall or Black Lives Matter, and the broader cultural and political recalibration of our understanding of colonialism.

The field of settler colonial studies is evolving beyond the foundational theories of people like Patrick Wolfe and Lorenzo Veracini. There's a lot of Anglo-centrism in the field, with a focus on places like North America, Australia, and New Zealand, which are seen as permanent settler colonies. But we need to expand this focus. For example, my research on Finnish Petsamo highlights the settler colonial ambitions of smaller states like Finland. We need to move beyond Anglo-centrism and explore different types of settler colonial projects, including those that may have "failed" or didn't endure in the same way.

René Dietrich: Thinking a bit more about settler colonial studies, there's something interesting to me about the field, particularly how it's been seen critically. Some works in Indigenous Studies highlight an Anglo focus, and you can also see that as redirecting attention to non-Native or European perspectives. But I also see a great potential in settler colonial studies because it brings back the focus to Europe in a different way:

It's not just about what's happening in the U.S. or Australia; it also addresses European complicity. We benefit from this, and we have our own colonial legacies connected to it, like Finland and Germany.

Janne Lahti: One of the big potentials of settler colonial studies is exploring these transnational connections. It's fascinating how different settler colonies, not just the established ones, were inspired by each other, borrowing knowledge and competing for dominance. The U.S. is a prime example of a massively successful settler colonial project. Other powers, like the French or Germans, looked at it with envy, viewing it as a model for colonization. The American West was almost a template for them. They thought, "this is how you do it, on a grand scale." Millions of white settlers took over the trans-Mississippi West in a generation! So, those connections and parallels really intrigue me, and I see a lot of potential in that scholarship moving forward.

René Dietrich: It shifts the focus back to Europe, too. It's important to see how these processes are interconnected, and it doesn't let anyone off the hook easily. There's this identification with Native peoples in European culture, almost as if it absolves European guilt about their colonial histories. It's like a way to see oneself as the underdog, while ignoring the complicity in those histories. Indigenous Studies in Europe is changing, too, showing how these issues connect back to our own colonial legacies and practices that still shape society today.

Janne Lahti: One critique of settler colonial studies is that it can be too mechanical, heavily influenced by Patrick Wolfe's ideas. He frames it as an ongoing structure, which can feel totalizing. While that perspective makes sense, settler colonialism is much more contested, negotiated, and fragile than that. It's not just a linear process; many visions and ambitions have failed, and Indigenous peoples are not merely victims waiting to be eliminated. They're active participants in these processes, challenging the dynamics.

So, getting rid of simplistic definitions of the logic of elimination that Wolfe introduced is crucial. While he acknowledged that elimination takes many forms, we

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need to delve deeper into these historical processes. It's about recognizing personal agency and the negotiations at play, rather than reducing everything to just elimination. I think that's an important direction for future scholarship.

One radical idea to consider is whether Indigenous peoples can be seen as settler colonial themselves. Could their expansions be evaluated as forms of settler colonial expansion? I know that proposing this could invite backlash from Indigenous communities since many would say, "we are not settler colonial." But when you think about groups like the Lakota or the Comanche on the Great Plains, they were replacing previous inhabitants and kind of substituting them. They were doing what settler colonialists often do. There are other Indigenous communities that have done similar things. I'm not saying we should definitely frame it this way, but maybe it's worth considering Indigenous participation in these processes. It could be a scholarly risk, especially for a white man making those claims. Still, I'm intrigued by the idea: can Indigenous expansionism be framed as settler colonialism as well?

René Dietrich: There might need to be some kind of racializing aspect to limit that perspective. These are complex and interesting questions, but they might also point out the potential boundaries where a framework such as settler colonialism can fully apply.

Janne Lahti: They are definitely political questions. When people talk about colonialism and settler colonialism, some interpret that as an accusation, like scholars are discrediting their ancestors. Many might say, "my grandfather was not a colonizer," or "my ancestors were not part of those ugly, violent processes." People outside academia often react as if we're accusing them of something. When we use terms like colonial or settler colonial, it can feel like we're blaming their ancestors for history. Among the general public, there's this dichotomy of seeing history as either good or bad: there's good history, with uplifting national narratives, and then there's bad

history, like racism, colonization, and genocide. They often miss the fact that these histories are intertwined. There are many sides to these stories, and history is made up of encounters and negotiations that don't fit neatly into boxes or stereotypes.

René Dietrich: One of the last articles I found that discusses the current state of Native Studies in Europe from 2010, primarily focuses on literary and cultural studies. In the article, Deborah Madsen mentions that Native Studies in Europe often takes a multi-ethnic approach, treating it as one ethnicity among others. Some people do Ethnic Studies in American literary contexts, looking at Native literature alongside other ethnic literatures. But I think that's changing, and from my perspective, Indigeneity has shifted from being viewed purely as an ethnic position to being seen more in terms of colonialism and its connections to racialization.

Janne Lahti: I completely agree. It's become more mainstream in discussions about colonial histories here in Finland. More teaching is being done on colonialism, and part of that includes aspects of racialization. In Finland, we also have our Indigenous people, the Sámi. The introduction of Sámi studies has created more connections between those working in Native American Studies and those in Sámi Studies. There's definitely more collaboration now than there was 20 years ago. In Finland, we have a strong tradition of studying the American West, and Native American Studies has been part of that area focus. Indigenous Studies and Sámi Studies used to be separate, but not anymore. There's a growing inclusion of Native Studies in various fields, especially in migration history, and institutes in Finland, like the Migration Institute in Turku, are focusing more on colonialism. There are also Indigenous Studies professorships in Sámi Studies that are gradually branching out to be more inclusive in their perspectives. So, in a sense, Native Studies is becoming part of a more diverse scholarly, interdisciplinary field.

Conversation with Janna Maresova: Central European Perspectives, Stereotypes, and the Question of European Limitations

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René Dietrich: Thank you for taking the time to discuss the state of Native Studies in Europe. I thought it would be interesting to gather perspectives from various parts of Europe and people involved in different ways. To start, could you talk about your work and how you got into Native Studies? I'd also love to hear how your PhD and the recent volume you co-edited connect to these questions.

Jana Maresova: During my Master's program in British and Commonwealth Studies, I encountered Canadian literature and Indigenous literature, particularly through Klára Kolinská who organized a workshop on American Indian Studies in Prague. I was a student at the time, helping with the organization, and that sparked my interest in Indigenous literature.

At the workshop, I had a conversation with Tomson Highway, a renowned Indigenous author and musician. Our shared interest in music created a connection, which inspired me to write my Master's thesis on his plays, exploring the narrative techniques and the musical elements within them. I then decided to continue this topic for my PhD, where I examined how the oral storytelling traditions in Indigenous cultures are reflected in contemporary Canadian Indigenous novels.

As a literary scholar, I am primarily focused on literature. However, I believe there is a pressing need for a general understanding of Indigenous cultures in Central Europe today. Stereotypes remain deeply entrenched and often reflect 19th-century views. This motivated us to edit a volume that addresses these stereotypes as a starting point.

In the future, I aim to combat these stereotypes and educate the general public about current Indigenous issues, making Indigenous voices more prominent and visible in Central Europe. It's essential for people to recognize that those stereotypes are outdated, constructed, and do not accurately represent contemporary Indigenous cultures. Raising awareness about this is crucial.

René Dietrich: I would like to discuss the book (Kolinska, Runtić, and Marešová, *(Un)Following in Winnetou's Footsteps; Representations of North American Indigeneity in Central Europe*, 2024), which I understand emerged from two conferences, one in Canada and another in the Czech Republic. I'm curious about its origins. I found it fascinating how the Winnetou trope is strong and expands from Germany to other countries, taking on a life of its own with unique functions. Could you elaborate on the book's origins and the role of Central Europe in shaping perceptions of North American Indigeneity? How is this perceived today?

Jana Maresova: The perception of Indigeneity and the associated stereotypes are issues we grapple with daily in Indigenous Studies. In my experience, the general public's knowledge is quite limited. For example, while some people may be aware of residential schools, their understanding often stops there. When I mention my research, I frequently encounter reactions like, "there are still Indigenous people in Canada?" or "they write literature?" This lack of knowledge has been something I've contemplated for years.

The conference in Edmonton, organized by the Wirth Institute for Austrian and Central European Studies, specifically focused on the concept of the "imaginary Indian." That's where Klára and I met Sonia, who was also involved. Klára proposed a follow-up to the Edmonton conference, and we worked together to create a call for papers. We reached out to scholars in Central Europe to contribute to the volume.

The issues surrounding Indigenous representation are particularly relevant not only in Germany and German-speaking countries, where stereotypes remain prevalent, but also in the Czech Republic, Poland, and Hungary. Although we didn't receive papers from Slovakia or Hungary, it's important to note that the Winnetou films have been very popular there for decades, further complicating these stereotypes.

I was also surprised by the Italian perspective; particularly how fascist regimes have historically utilized these stereotypes. This evolution of the "imaginary Indian"

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throughout the 20th century—from fascism to communism—has been fascinating to explore.

It took us several years to compile the volume due to the usual delays in academia, compounded by COVID-19. I wanted to include an Indigenous perspective, which is why I conducted an interview with Bruce Sinclair (Métis) for the book. His insights into how Indigenous peoples perceive their representation in European cultures were invaluable.

René Dietrich: During your PhD, you also spent some time in Canada. How did that longer research stay compare to your experiences in Europe? Did it change your perspective or introduce new viewpoints?

Jana Maresova: Oh, absolutely! It was like night and day for me. When I started my PhD, I was the only student in the entire Czech Republic focused on Indigenous literatures. There were only two other scholars involved in the field, Klára and Martina in Brno. This left me with very few opportunities to discuss the topic with colleagues, and resources were extremely limited.

Initially, I felt that my research topic was vastly different from what I eventually pursued. Back then, around twelve years ago, Indigenous Studies in Europe seemed stuck in the past, drawing primarily from the work done in the 1980s and 1990s.

When I arrived in Edmonton for my Doctoral Fellowship at the Wirth Institute, I was shocked by how much more there was to learn. Indigenous theory and literary criticism were just beginning to emerge, and I encountered topics like Indigenous resurgence and the revitalization of Indigenous languages. I quickly realized that I needed to catch up on about twenty years of research. Whenever I presented my work in Canada, I often felt like I was on the level of a Bachelor's student, despite being a PhD candidate, simply because the resources available in Europe were still so limited.

René Dietrich: Do you sense that things are changing in Europe? For example, the American Indian Workshop has created a platform that connects Native Studies in Europe. This year [2024] the first NAISA conference is taking place in Norway. Are you seeing more connections forming, or a sense of Europe catching up to larger discourses and debates, even if it's not at the same level as Canada or the U.S.?

Jana Maresova: Yes, I believe so. The American Indian Workshop and similar organizations are definitely helping to bridge gaps. I feel that the field is improving and becoming more connected. However, it still relies on just a few individuals in Europe, making it challenging to establish a broader foundation for Indigenous Studies.

Moreover, universities in Europe don't seem particularly eager to expand Indigenous Studies, as it's often viewed as a minor area of focus in general academic discourse. From a scholarly perspective, communication has improved, as evidenced by our collaborative volume. We are starting to connect better, but I wonder if these efforts will lead to significant changes in university programs for future generations.

Currently, the field is quite small, so we need to raise general awareness first. By increasing interest, we can attract more students and gradually build a stronger foundation. There are certainly more resources available now, and communication between Canadian Indigenous scholars and European scholars has improved significantly, which is encouraging. I've also noticed some Indigenous scholars traveling to Europe for exchanges, which is a positive development.

René Dietrich: With the recent focus on movements like Black Lives Matter, there's been a renewed confrontation with European colonial legacies, which are often intertwined with settler colonialism. Do you think this renewed focus, including discussions on cultural appropriation, could impact Native Studies in Europe? How can we address these broader colonial legacies beyond just the concept of the "imaginary Indian"?

Jana Maresova: Absolutely, the "imaginary Indian" is a fruitful topic to discuss with students in Central Europe. People know about colonization in a historical sense but

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often don't see it as their issue. I try to explain that we, too, have been part of the colonization process; it's not just a problem for countries like Britain.

This understanding is crucial when discussing Indigeneity and stereotypes, which reflect ongoing colonial attitudes and cultural appropriation. However, conveying this idea can be challenging because many believe that Central Europe is unaffected by these issues.

Settler colonialism, land acknowledgments, and similar concepts are essential for scholars and students to understand, even if they can be difficult to grasp from a Central European perspective. As a non-Indigenous scholar, I've struggled with my role in this conversation. I often feel conflicted about lecturing on these topics, but I see myself as a mediator between two worlds.

It's vital to have strong connections with Indigenous scholars and communities so we can bring their perspectives into the discussion. I try to be mindful of my position in research, working to avoid speaking for Indigenous peoples. It's a delicate balance to strike, but it's crucial to ensure that Indigenous voices are heard and represented accurately.

René Dietrich: You mentioned some dangers involved in your work. Could you elaborate on what you see as particularly risky, especially when it comes to representing Indigenous perspectives?

Jana Maresova: Absolutely, for me, it's very personal. I'm conscious that I don't want to speak for Indigenous people or issues. While we were editing our volume, I realized, almost at the end, that we hadn't included Indigenous perspectives. I thought, "this isn't right; I don't want my research to come off as speaking for them." That realization really struck me, so I decided to interview Bruce. I've been wrestling with this issue for a while.

In Central Europe, the general knowledge of Indigenous Studies is quite limited, and as one of the few who can discuss the current state of these studies, it often places

me in a position of knowledge and power. However, I have to remind myself that there are issues I shouldn't speak on, that some things must be learned directly from Indigenous people. It's a tricky balance, I need to educate people about Indigenous issues while also encouraging them to seek knowledge from the source itself.

René Dietrich: For a long time, Native Studies seemed to be viewed as just another part of broader ethnic or multicultural studies, addressing questions of equality and inclusion. Deborah Madsen mentioned this in her essay about Native Studies in Europe, noting the strong multi-ethnic approach that has been prevalent since around 2010. From your perspective, has that perception changed? Are scholars or teaching methods shifting, or is Indigenous Studies still largely seen through that multi-ethnic lens?

Jana Maresova: I'd say it's still pretty much the same. Indigenous texts are often treated like a minority literature, which makes it challenging to elevate the field. However, from a scholarly perspective, I think there's a growing awareness that Indigenous Studies involves unique theories and histories distinct from other minority cultures.

Scholars recognize that while there are overlaps in issues of race and colonialism, Indigenous cultures have specific histories and contexts that necessitate a different approach. I see a rise in awareness regarding Indigenous theories, and we're striving to teach Indigenous Studies from that standpoint rather than simply lumping it into a broader multi-ethnic framework. Indigenous theories have their own richness, and I believe they should be taught in a way that highlights those distinctions.

Reflecting on the Conversations

In reflecting on my conversations with Chiara Minestrelli, Janne Lahti, and Jana Maresova, I want to focus on the multifaceted roles that Europe as a site for practicing Indigenous Studies occupies within their conversations and, in a wider sense, in the evolving landscape of the field. For Chiara Minestrelli, Europe and being a European scholar of Indigenous studies take on a number of different meanings when

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considering her personal and academic journey, in turn pointing to wider questions of practicing? Indigenous Studies in Europe.

Beginning her PhD in Italy, Minestrelli found that European academic settings lacked sufficient self-reflection and could not provide for a meaningful collaboration with Indigenous communities. She therefore decidedto leave it behind and start again in Australia in order to pursue her PhD in a more strongly ethically grounded and actively collaborative way.

In Australia, "Europe" and being "European" afforded Minestrelli an outsider status which indicates two directions: it liberated her from the position of a settler, which other non-Indigenous scholars from Australia still occupy. At the same time, her positionality as a white, European woman required constant reflection on how her background shaped her and her research. Being European in a place like Australia thus positioned her outside of a settler-native binary while throwing into clear relief the coloniality her position still holds in these contexts. Whereas studying in Europe, especially as Minestrelli perceives the academic and institutional reception of Indigenous Studies in 2010, was a hindrance to doing meaningful Indigenous Studies, being European in an international context appears to have afforded her a unique position in which positional differences and relations could be navigated in a different manner.

Back in Europe and the UK (via the US), "Europe" is clearly characterized by Minestrelli as "the heart of empire". From this, she derives a particular responsibility in how to engage practices of Indigenous Studies and thematic focusses such as the repatriation of cultural patrimony. Central to Minestrelli's argument is the importance of working collaboratively *with* Indigenous communities and scholars rather than merely conducting research *about* them. For her, the ethics of doing Indigenous Studies in a non-settler imperial space calls for practices in which "Europe" is defined

by aspiring to be site for meaningful collaboration with Indigenous communities. Following this direction, European institutions such as CISCS can become facilitators for Indigenous voices from communities and academia, prioritizing Indigenous agendas in academic discourse, and thus providing a path for a decolonial practice of Indigenous Studies in Europe.

From Minestrelli's perspective, the most viable and future-oriented methodologies for conducting Indigenous Studies in Europe in the 2020s are intimately tied to one's positionality and self-reflection as a European scholar. Quite fittingly, such an approach aligns with the role an institution like the Centre for Indigenous and Settler Colonial Studies takes on, as a hub that seeks to initiate projects of collaboration that center Indigenous voices as well as their scholarly and activist interests.

In **Janne Lahti's** conversation, Europe is a place to be interrogated for its own imperial history as well as for ongoing settler-colonial practices within its borders. In addition, however, the conversation with Lahti poses the more charged question of the politicization of Indigenous Studies itself, and what consequences may arise from that for those invested in Indigenous Studies methods whilst working from a European perspective. Focusing on Finland, Lahti challenges the notion of the country as a peripheral or non-colonial state by examining its historical involvement in colonial ventures, particularly towards the Sámi. His work thus emphasizes the need to broaden the conversation around settler colonialism, advocating for a more nuanced understanding that transcends an Anglo-centric historic focus in Native Studies and calls for more investigations of transnational connections.

However, Lahti's perspective also touches upon what he sees as the increasing politicization of Indigenous Studies, particularly in the context of European scholarship. To him, the field has become more sensitive and politically charged, and he sees the proximity of politics and scholarship putting the work of non-Native European scholars under stronger scrutiny, thus risking the merits that might come from critical distance.

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While I can understand where Lahti is coming from, this part of the conversation also raised critical questions for me: how do we reconfigure a European scholarship which has historically served ongoing colonial legacy that complicates any assumed position of objectivity or critical distance? Is a hesitation or choice not to engage in questions that risk confusing settler colonization and the varied politics of Indigenous sovereigntyan actual limitation on scholarship? Or are such considerations central to a form of scholarship that can only offer meaningful contributions when aware of its ethical stakes in a world in which colonial processes and strategies of delegitimization against Native peoples are ongoing?

As scholars seek to engage with Indigenous issues from Europe, I see a need to consider the implications of both academia and advocacy, and while the questions that arise from straddling both are never easy to answer, in my work I fall on the side of an ethically engaged scholarship, while also being convinced that academia has a different interest in its knowledge production than merely replicating or confirming political positions; even if one agrees with them. With this in mind, Lahti's reflections prompt further exploration of how these dynamics influence the question of conducting and institutionalizing Indigenous Studies in Europe, especially as the field continues to develop and grapple with the legacies of empire and the responsibilities of scholarsto engage with these histories in an ethical and responsible manner. This also includes a focus on Indigenous European voices such as those of Sámi scholars. NAISA 2024 being held in Sápmi is one important step in this direction– and while in other contexts there are sometimes disciplinary boundaries to establish larger and more sustained conversations between Indigenous Studies focused on North America, Australia, and Aotearoa/New Zealand and Sámi Studies (and I do not omit my own choice in interview partners here from this), I believe a strong Indigenous Studies in Europe needs to build and foster these spaces more strongly.

The conversation with **Jana Maresova** shifted the focus on Europe yet again slightly. Talking with her highlighted the entrenched stereotypes and limited institutional support that make advancing the field particularly challenging in regions where colonialism and Indigeneity are often seen as distant issues. Maresova's own academic journey, which began with exposure to Indigenous literatures in Canada, revealed both the transformative potential of such work and the hurdles of fostering awareness back in Central Europe.

As a co-editor of the recent volume *(Un)Following in Winnetou's Footsteps*, one focus of Maresova's work is her emphasis on dismantling romanticized stereotypes of Native peoples – depictions that still dominate European and settler imaginations and perpetuate the idea of Indigenous cultures as static or solely historical. This line of inquiry opens a genuinely European perspective on issues of Indigeneity. Similar work is being done in Germany (Hartmut Lutz) and other European contexts, in which scholars are interrogating the ongoing impact of colonial fantasies (Stirrup/McKay). For Maresova, too, addressing these stereotypes isn't just about correcting misconceptions; it's a way to bring Europe itself into conversations within Indigenous studies, reflecting on the region's complicity in shaping these narratives– a complicity which cannot be disconnected from Europe's broader colonial legacies.

Partly motivated by her time in Canada, Maresova also underscored the importance of promoting contemporary Indigenous cultures within European discourses, not just as a counter to stereotypes but as a way to amplify present-day Indigenous voices and experiences. Like Janne Lahti, Maresova made clear that non-Indigenous scholars should not attempt to speak for Indigenous scholars, yet her conclusion was somewhat different. She saw the absence of Native voices as a lack that needed to be addressed, and, similar to Minestrelli, she emphasized the importance of centering Indigenous perspectives through genuine collaboration.

For Maresova, more collaboration between Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars and a push for a more methodologically sound and ethically grounded

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approach to Indigenous Studies in Europe are the means to advance the field meaningfully. This approach, in my view, which resonates both with Minestralli and Lahti, also offers a further way to "put the focus on Europe" in Indigenous Studies – not as a detached observer but as an active site grappling with its own histories and responsibilities.

Implications for Native Studies in Europe

The conversations I engaged in for this piece became a means to think about conducting Indigenous Studies in Europe from various perspectives and revealed the challenges but also the opportunities for those working in this field in the current moment. If Europe is to position itself meaningfully within the broader field of Indigenous Studies, it must actively confront its colonial legacies and reimagine its role as both a site of critical scholarship and a participant in decolonial practices. Taken together, these conversations show that Europe cannot be a passive or neutral ground for Indigenous Studies; rather, it must be a space where historical complicity is acknowledged and where scholarship strives to amplify Indigenous perspectives in ethical and collaborative ways.

What consequences does this have for practicing Native Studies in Europe today? One implication of these reflections is the pressing need for European scholars to critically engage with positionality and ethical responsibility. As Minestrelli emphasized, European scholars must interrogate the power dynamics inherent in their roles – both as inheritors of colonial histories and as potential collaborators in decolonial projects. Europe's imperial past and ongoing neo-colonial present gives it a particular responsibility, not only to deconstruct its colonial fantasies, as Maresova argues, but also to create academic spaces that prioritize Indigenous agendas, as we can see in institutions like CISCS, or in forums of exchange like AIW. At the same time,

in the program of the AIW conferences we can also identify the problem that it is often a space in which European scholars of American Indian literatures and cultures network amongst each other, with a few additions from North America, including Indigenous scholars. While I see no easy way to change this (and logistical and travel issues are a major part of this), it might signal the need to also rethink and transform institutions such as AIW by thinking about Indigenous Studies more transnationally and across disciplinary boundaries, including proactively centering Indigenous voices. For instance, consciously including Sámi studies and Sámi scholars, or working more closely with North American networks such as the Indigneous Literary Studies Association (ILSA). All of this is to say that a European approach to Indigenous Studies must be grounded in critical self-reflection, collaboration, and a commitment to centering Indigenous voices and methodologies.

The field also calls for innovation in addressing the stereotypes and colonial narratives that still pervade European imaginaries. As Maresova highlights, dismantling romanticized or static views of Native peoples is not just a corrective measure – it is essential to fostering a contemporary and dynamic understanding of Indigenous cultures. On the one hand, we can see strong academic investigations of these issues in Germany and in different parts of Europe; on the other hand, the limits of public debates are also apparent. For instance, the debate following the decision of the Ravensburger Verlag publishing house to pull two newly released books relating to a 2022 film based on Karl May's *Winnetou* series shows the unwillingness of much of the public to meaningfully address these issues (see Kolinska, Runtić and Marešová's introduction for a more detailed discussion). We can see a similar kind of hostile pushback in parts of Finnish society, as well, when confronted with their own colonial legacy, as Lahti pointed out. While such opposition might be frustrating, they can also function as a motivator to examine these European colonial complicities further, moving beyond Anglo-centric perspectives and expanding the scope of settler colonial studies to include Europe's role in these systems.

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These reflections suggest a critical balancing act between scholarship and advocacy. While Lahti raised concerns about the increasing political orientation of Indigenous Studies– also understanding himself less as an Indigenous Studies scholar than a historian of colonialism– I ultimately see the consideration of the political ground on which European Indigenous Studies takes place as imperative for meaningfully engaging with questions of Indigeneity and colonialism in Europe. European scholars must navigate the ethical stakes of their research, ensuring that their work is not only rigorous but also responsive to ongoing colonial processes. At the same time, academia should produce knowledge that challenges assumptions and deepens understanding, so that the result of an academic inquiry is not merely a confirmation of political positions that one supported already beforehand. Ideally, this dual focus—on ethical engagement and scholarly inquiry—can be a way to define European contributions to Indigenous Studies in the 21st century.

In conclusion, these conversations reveal a shared priority: to make Europe not just a site of scholarship but a space of accountability and collaboration in Indigenous Studies. By acknowledging Europe's colonial legacies, challenging entrenched stereotypes, and fostering meaningful partnerships with Indigenous communities, scholars can ensure that the field continues to grow in ways that are both innovative and responsible. This might not always occur on a large, institutionalized scale. While I believe that the field has developed significantly since Madsen assessed the state of Indigenous literary studies in Europe in 2010, the greater hindrances to formal institutionalization on a university level remain. This makes the continuation and increasing of networking between scholars all the more important, and can engender a more decentralized, looser form of institutionalization, as apparent in the recent establishment of the Network for Teaching Indigenous Studies in Europe (N-TISE), which held its first hybrid workshop in November 2024 in Bremen. This vision for the

potential of Indigenous Studies in Europe aligns with the broader goals outlined in the introduction to this 10th anniversary special issue, emphasizing the need for a reflective and future-oriented approach to Indigenous Studies– one that not only engages with Europe's past but also contributes to a more ethical and inclusive scholarly practice in the present and future.

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