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REFLECTION

"Late 20th Century Indigenous Literature at Haskell"

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At Haskell in 1984 and Before

Before I went into my first class at Haskell Indian Junior College (now Haskell Indian Nations University), my colleagues warned me, "Don't expect much." They explained how the students, mostly from reservations, had poor backgrounds and would fail. This was the prevailing attitude in those days—and my colleagues were evenly split between Native and non-Native. None had interest in N. Scott Momaday, who had won the Pulitzer in 1969 and championed Indigenous oral traditions. None followed the early careers of Leslie Marmon Silko and Joy Harjo. I had discovered Momaday's novel *House Made of Dawn* on my own and appreciated the book's innovative structures and spirituality. Bernard Hirsch at the University of Kansas, two miles away, taught contemporary Native writers and promoted them in academic articles. He mentored my teaching of a Native literature class at the University of Kansas, about the same time he was chairing the poet and artist Gwen Westerman's doctoral work. I felt lucky in 1984 to find a permanent position at Haskell, but my colleagues' reservations about

emerging Native writers surprised me. "Paradox" describes all my time at Haskell, but to select one strand of this complex web, here is a personal sampling of "Albuquerque Renaissance" and other early Native literatures at an all-Native college from the mid-1980s through the 1990s.

Indigenous authors' innovations in mainstream English-language literary forms may seem dated now and obvious, but just Momaday's insistence on the legitimacy of orally transmitted literature was huge. Gerald Vizenor added journalistic and then literary critique to his position that oral histories were as valid as western European literacy. In his *Wordarrows*, he discussed the legal standing and precedents of spoken documentation. This attacked the anthropologists' idea of primitivism, no small thing in the 20th century.

Other exceptional ideas from Indigenous sources first seen in United States publications during this era were history-as-contemporaneous presence; prose written in a lyrical style; hybridity and multiple-genre texts; nonlinear plot and verse structures; transformative experiences; and use of Native languages. Native writers introduced several of these approaches simultaneously, like Momaday. All depended on English, what Joy Harjo has termed the "enemy's language," even if modified by Native syntax, vocabulary, and forms (Harjo, *Reinventing*).

In 1984, little predicted the arrival of a sequence of literary "waves"—as Erika Wurth has labeled them, with pre-Albuquerque renaissance as the first wave, and 1968 as the beginning of the second—a period of Native-produced texts in major publications (2016). This era was not directly related to the American Indian Movement's activism, which was founded in 1968 in Minneapolis, after Momaday's early works were already published. The attainment of civil rights suggested political equalities, but academic and publishing institutions were slow to change established practices. Slow inroads occurred.

Montana author James Welch, Blackfeet and Gros Ventre, published with New York houses in the early 1970s: *Riding the Earthboy* (1971), poetry, and the novel *Winter in the Blood* (1974). Both Welch and Momaday wrote at intersections of tribal

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histories and contemporary times. Their narratives and verse were informed by traditions yet co-current with present-day Native experience, not lost in the past with the "disappearing Indian" trope. Haskell students in the rodeo club in the 1980s wore belt buckles with a dying "Indian" on a horse, as I recall. Its anachronism was unquestioned at the time. This echoed the acceptance of diminishing Native populations even by Indigenous people themselves. The 1960s-1980s writers proved them wrong.

Momaday, Welch, and others disrupted the ethnographic-style "as-told-to" autobiographies that were favored by publishing houses. They reinvented the genre of historical fiction to fit Native perspectives, with ruptured timelines and contemporaneous sacred powers. I spent a lonely Christmas holiday in my office (I had not yet accrued any vacation time) reading *Winter in the Blood*. Its transformative arc, humor, connections to family and tribal history—all lifted me out of my probationary federal-job funk. Its publisher, Harper & Row, had a new Native American series, which came to include Momaday's poetry and prose, Duane Niatum's own poetry, and later, Niatum's anthology of poetry *Carriers of the Dream Wheel*.

Momaday continued to publish poetry and prose informed by Kiowa and Southwest Native traditions, and I bought each volume as it appeared. Albuquerque-area writers influenced by Momaday had work in Kenneth Rosen's seminal anthology *The Man to Send Rain Clouds* (1977). This included Simon Ortiz, Leslie Marmon Silko, and Anna Lee Walters.

Additions to Native literatures continued. Silko's *Ceremony* (1977) and *Storyteller* (1981) made a huge impact for their textual hybridity, themes, integration of dance (Tayo's directions on the mountain in *Ceremony*), photography, and other non-verbal narrative forms. Turtle Mountain Ojibwe author Louise Erdrich won a National Book Critics Circle Award for *Love Medicine* (1984), which had linked short stories and

tribal history. All these early authors continued to publish books in the next decades. Yet none of these 1970s-1980s works was available to Haskell students. A small community of admirers, scholars, and writers followed each addition to the canon. Some like Robert Nelson, Peter Beidler, and Gwen Westerman were involved in Association for the Study of American Indian Literature (ASAIL), founded in 1971. At Haskell I typed out and ditto-copied book excerpts for students, who responded actively to these tribal writers.

Continuing Erasure: Manual Training, Not Education

The boarding school milieu has relevance to the evolution of Native literatures, including the delayed timeline. Haskell Institute, founded in 1884 as a boarding school, emphasized vocational programs, like all such institutions. In addition to school training and farming, students were allocated to local townspeople during the summers as unpaid domestic help (girls) and farm labor (boys). My mother-in-law Frances (Weso) Walker told me she refused to take part in this program, and she left Haskell after a short stay. Through the years, I heard many Haskell alumni recount their experiences. Some boys were assigned to pump gas in breech cloths at a local teepee-like gas station. Their wages went to Haskell's administration and were not tracked by the government. Haskell also ran a restaurant that townspeople patronized—another income stream for Haskell administration. The students raised the produce and livestock as part of their education, and the best went to the restaurant, not their own chow. Educating students in the liberal arts, mathematics, and sciences would cut into profits, because of hiring faculty and loss of time, so few students had the basic curriculum to transfer to four-year colleges. During my first years at Haskell, the automotive department performed repairs for in-group staff for free. Money earned from townspeople's car repairs was unaccounted for. The supervisor was a Native person. Manual training was institutionalized child labor and profitable for whoever was in control, even after the Bureau of Indian Affairs became led by Indigenous administrators.

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Exclusion of Natives from a full college curriculum is a long-term, detrimental effect of boarding school that needs to be noted. Besides a handful of heavily edited writers like D'Arcy McNickle, John Rollins Ridge, Charles Eastman, and Zitkala Sa/Gertrude Simmons Bonnin, very few Native writers had book or article publications before Momaday. This erasure of voice is a profound loss. It is taking decades to reverse.

Respect to the Ponca Powwow Tradition and a Nod to Plains Indian Ledger Art

During my early Haskell years I tried to find Native-produced texts, and this led to shifting from western literary definitions. My acquaintance with a professor at South Carolina, Jim Charles, helped me understand how encoded history in powwow songs is a way that Indigenous narratives survived. He told me how as a teenager in Oklahoma, he had danced with a well-known Ponca family and learned the encoded histories. Ponca people were among the first to develop powwow dances, during the 19th and early 20th centuries, and their songs are known across the Great Plains. Charles' article "Songs of the Ponca: Haluska" (1989) documents specific subversive rhythms, melodies, sequences, and texts that preserve stories of Ponca victories over the United States Army.

The lyrics of Ponca ceremonial songs are brief, and often the stanzas are filled out in vocables rather than words—so they were not apparently in a Native language if a white instructor were listening. Out of one-hundred *Helushka* songs, twenty-five are entirely vocables, according to Charles. Yet even the vocable songs suggest larger narratives. The musical phrases and brief syllables are like the pictographs of painted winter count calendars, each of which signifies a larger cycle of oral texts. One *Helushka* song, comprised of one sentence, is about the fearsomeness of a man's horse going into battle. The accompanying dance—along with the drumming, melody, syllables,

and words—suggests the vigor of the war horse, courage, the warrior's mission to win honor, the importance of the horse to the Ponca way of life, the history of how Poncas got horses from the Comanches, and a particular plant that increases a horse's speed. While boarding schools punished students for using their languages, they allowed the powwow songs with no words. This was a brilliant and vital way to sustain the lineage of orally transmitted knowledge. When Haskell students familiar with the genre of powwow songs considered them as literary texts in class, another direction of appreciation opened for them and for me.

What I learned from Charles led to my explorations of Plains ledger art as an alternative form of literacy, performed differently from alphabetic texts but valid, nonetheless (Low, *SAIL*). I integrated ledger art texts, including winter counts, into my Haskell classes as I learned the genre. With improving technology, these visual pieces became more accessible. Now the Smithsonian posts extensive winter counts on their website. Plains Indian Ledger Art, a website supported by Ross Frank and the University of California-San Diego, hosts over forty ledgers. All of these are primary, Native-produced documents worthy of further use in Native studies. While Indigenous Americans were not publishing books during the early part of the 20th century, they nonetheless produced literary texts.

At Haskell in 1984, Textbooks

After my first class meetings at Haskell, I despaired not over the students, but the inappropriate textbooks. These were stocked by the library and issued to students each semester. The library had stacks of *The Last of the Mohicans* by James Fennimore Cooper. More contemporary writers were Frank Waters, Mari Sandoz, Ruth Beebe Hill, and Forrest (Asa) Carter—all non-Indigenous authors who wrote on Native themes, fraudulently in the case of Carter.

A few library anthologies included translations of traditional verse and orations for classroom use. One was *Literature of the American Indian* (Sanders, 1976). This collected traditional oral accounts, songs, the Haudenosaunee *Great Law of Peace*,

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orations, and even snippets from a few contemporary writers like Momaday and Vine Deloria, Jr. Students appreciated these works. One of the problems with these anthologies, as elders at Haskell let me know, was some inappropriate sharing of sacred stories, especially creation accounts. I learned to choose class assignments carefully.

Another important source of traditional texts was *The Portable North American Indian Reader* (1974), with orations, early writings of William Apess, Zitkala Sa/Gertrude Simmons Bonnin, and Luther Standing Bear, plus selections from Momaday, Deloria, Welch, and Ortiz. Especially the orations, even if imperfectly translated, gave students some tribal rhetorical models.

Bison Books of the University of Nebraska Press was beginning to publish Native books as I started my tenure at Haskell. They had issued histories and tribal tales in the 1960s, and in 1979, they published a reprint of *Black Elk Speaks*, with an introduction by Deloria. This book included information that, students told me, was important recuperation of information, despite the problematic editing of John Neihardt. I learned to listen to students' evaluations about the conflicted texts that did reach print, and many expressed appreciation. Later, relatives of Black Elk told me how he had taught traditional ways to Lakotas in his role of a Catholic catechist. This privileged position as a Catholic officiant allowed him to travel around Pine Ridge more freely than others. When the Sun Dance was made legal after passage of the American Indian Religious Freedom Act (1978), enough people still knew the ritual details to proceed with the ceremony.

Bison Books presented works of other Lakota and Dakota people from earlier times, never before published or published only in limited editions. These included: Charles Eastman's *The Soul of the Indian* (1980); books by Gertrude Bonnin/Zitkala Za (1985), and *Waterlily* by Ella Cara Deloria (1988). An aside: Ella Cara Deloria was on the

staff of Haskell for a few years as a young woman. As these Bison Books became available, I ordered them as new textbooks. *Waterlily* was an especially important publication because of its descriptions of traditional women's roles, rare in the other available texts. This book was a companion to Black Elk's account of men's roles.

Publisher Heroes of the 1970s-1980s

Within weeks of my arrival at Haskell, their centennial committee sponsored a literary program in the student union, with personal appearances of Joe Bruchac, Lance Henson, and Paula Gunn Allen. The grant required a representative from the Haskell English Department for one of the panels. My new colleagues insisted I take this on—as the faculty member with the least standing. I prepared some notes, brushed my hair, and sat like a sacrificial lamb amidst these giants. My upbringing in southeast Kansas—among many people of mixed heritage (including my grandfathers) and some enrolled Indians—included training in social protocols. I knew enough to keep my mouth shut and to let my betters speak. They did. Finally, with five minutes left, Bruchac turned to me. I read off my notes and included thank yous. This brevity gained me admittance to the after-party, where I delighted in the good company of these visitors and their stories. I learned a lot from each.

Henson's reading of his poems at that conference, and his explanations, impacted me greatly. I appreciated his skilled compressed lines, use of Cheyenne language, and content. He further inspired my research into Plains Indian ledger art with his bilingual poem about Fort Robinson Breakout hero Littlefingernail (*Circling*). I continue contact with him through his occasional poems in Facebook posts as an eighty-year-old man. And at this gathering in 1984, I learned about Henson and Gunn being published by Bruchac, who had begun the ambitious enterprise of Greenfield Review Press, headquartered in an old gas station.

Kansas is a crossroads, and this gathering foreshadowed the rest of my time at Haskell. Many of the greats came through town and tarried, including Momaday, Joy

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Harjo, Louise Erdrich, Heid E. Erdrich, Kimberly Blaeser, Ofelia Zepeda, Alice Walker, Linda Hogan, and many others.

After I met Bruchac, I ordered Greenfield Review Press books. It is hard to explain how important Joseph Bruchac's work as a publisher was, in range and depth. He had no institutional backing, just force of will, salesmanship, and belief in the importance of Native literatures. Especially useful in classes was *Songs from This Earth on Turtle's Back: An Anthology of Poetry by American Indian Writers* (1983). It included work by over fifty poets, including Paula Gunn Allen, Robert Conley, Joy Harjo, Janet Cambell Hale, Geary Hobson, Gordon Henry, Diane Glancy, Lance Henson, Linda Hogan, Maurice Kenny, Adrian C. Louis, Momaday, Duane Niatum, William Oandasan, Simon Ortiz, Wendy Rose, Ralph Salisbury, Leslie Marmon Silko, Mary TallMountain, Luci Tapahonso, Laura Tohe, Gerald Vizenor, Welch, Elizabeth Woody, and Ray A. Young Bear. Few of these writers had books yet, except for chapbooks. This anthology became my text for creative writing classes, which I was allowed to teach as an overload (that made six sections a semester). I also borrowed from Hobson's indispensable anthology of prose and poetry *The Remembered Earth: An Anthropology of Contemporary Native American Literature* (1979).

Let me give a brief homage here to more of the publishers who forged places for the literature. *Blue Cloud Quarterly*, edited by Benet Tvedten in Marvin, South Dakota, published quarterly chapbooks by Native authors from 1971 to 1988. William Oandasan, Yuki, edited *A* magazine, founded in 1976, which included many Albuquerque-area writers. Maurice Kenny (Mohawk heritage) published Strawberry Hill Press, and Frank Parman's Point Riders Press in Oklahoma—publisher of Henson, Hobson, Kenny, and others—continues to publish Great Plains literature. John Crawford of West End Press, founded in 1975, published early books by Tapahonso, Louis, Bruchac, and others. Anna Lee Walters has headed the Navajo Community College

Press from the 1970s to present time. None of these presses has had wide distribution beyond libraries that collect Indigenous writings, the writers themselves, and their followers. All have kept alive the spark of Indigenous literature.

Students at Haskell are from about a hundred tribes in any given semester, and up to 1200 students total in the 1980s, so *Songs from This Earth* provided role models for just about everybody. I had a few creative writing students who had been at the Institute of American Indian Arts when it was a high school, and they helped the creative writing classes, including me, settle into writing circles. Mary Ann Gerard is one of these early students. Others were Jennie James, Bill James, and Diane Willie. What adventures we had in class and also field trips to see area visitors like Seamus Heaney and Linda Hogan. The program eventually developed an official Associate of Fine Arts degree. I appreciate the efforts of my colleagues who joined me in later years, including Trish Reeves, James Thomas Stevens (Akwesasne Mohawk), Amy Stuber, Christie Cooke (Diné), Laura Mann (Choctaw), and Joshua Falleaf (Delaware).

My Magical Winter of 1984 with Louise Erdrich's *Love Medicine*

Before social media and even before cable television, winters in small Kansas towns could be endless. One dark evening I had cabin fever and went to the local bookstore to kill a few hours. I picked up *Love Medicine* by an Ojibwe writer, Louise Erdrich, and riffled through a few pages. Wow. I became disoriented, almost dizzy, from the song-like prose. Lyrical prose was a drastic shift in mainstream literary taste. Hemingway's journalistic brevity was the accepted standard of excellence. William Faulkner's exaggerated stream-of-consciousness was an aberrant Southern exception. My fiction writing professor at Wichita State chided me for cluttering my beginner's short stories with poetic flourishes, and he considered it further evidence that poets should not write fiction. But Erdrich changed all that. Amy Tan modeled her novel *Joy Luck Club* on Erdrich's style, and then this style for fiction writers became normalized (Feldman). This important contribution of Erdrich to mainstream literature is hardly acknowledged.

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What magical experiences I had with Erdrich's novels. I read her poetry also, *Jacklight* (1984) and *Baptism of Desire* (1989), and these had similar themes as the novels, in shorter versions that were perfect for classroom use. Those students with Catholic backgrounds, some conflicted and sometimes less so, could relate to them especially. I remember the poem "Night Sky," which begins with Arcturus, "guardian of the bear" in Greek, who transforms into a present-time being in northern woods like those of Minnesota. The last section, IV, is a critical change in expectations for literary reading:

> Simple
> to tear free
> stripped and shining
> to ride through crossed firs (*Jacklight*)

The past-tense "myth" of encyclopedia definitions becomes a present-day motion in this last section of the poem. This invigoration of a traditional story from past to present is an important shift in cultural paradigms, especially in 1984. Her poem "Indian Boarding School: The Runaways" continues to be essential to understanding tribal experiences (*Jacklight*).

A few years later I was fortunate to be in a seminar at the Newberry Library in Chicago, where I picked up the Native alternative newspaper of the region. In it was a scathing review of *Love Medicine* that berated Erdrich for writing her English-language versions of tribal experience. This was my first acquaintance with identity politics, years before tribal nation enrollment could override all other identity considerations. It did not deter me from using her works in classes at Haskell, nor students from identifying with her writings. Erdrich is enrolled in a federally recognized nation, but it is noteworthy that many of the early writers were not.

Genre Fluidity

Erdrich moves among genres without being pigeon-holed as novelist or young adult author or poet. This was unusual in the 1980s. Publishers in mainstream houses looked for one-genre writers—James Michener (novel) or Calvin Trillin (essay) or E.E. Cummings (poetry). Momaday's early books included poetry, braided non-fiction, novel, memoir, and lyrical essays. Because of his Pulitzer he could set his own terms. Vizenor also shape-shifted among genres at will, as have many if not most Native writers. Silko's *Ceremony* was much anticipated before its 1977 publication with Viking Press in New York, in part because of the protests against uranium mining and nuclear power plants' environmental effects. The genre fluidity also was notable. Silko's use of traditional narratives and forms, including storytelling on paper, furthered Momaday's precedent. Her use of both verse and prose within the same work, woven together, added another hybrid dimension, still considered experimental. Bookstores favor wares that fit into shelf categories, so the commercial imperative impacts what gets published, as I learned myself later when publishing prose-poetry works.

A 1978 video documentary with Silko by Larry Evers, "Running on the Edge of the Rainbow," gave Silko a chance to add further dimensions of genre fluidity, with alternative versions of the same text shown in storytelling for children alongside written texts. Her stories are improvisational, with distinct tunings for each audience—a characteristic of orality, and she expresses this on the page as well. This video was a regular showing for my classes. It helped to humanize the pages of text they read. In the same series, Andrew Nantonabah's traditional Diné singing is an example of the Navajo walking song, a traditional genre. Alan Basso's studies regarding Chiricahua Apache orality added specifics for that tradition, including social contexts and connections to landmarks (1996). Availability of more genres of oral narratives expanded the classroom canon.

Joy Harjo writes poetry especially beloved by students, including all the stanzas of parallel lines in "She Had Some Horses" (1997). This helped them understand the practice of metaphor, as they imagined the stories woven into that extended

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celebration of Native life and horses. Her use of prose poems accommodates storytelling orality. One of my favorites of her books, *The Woman Who Fell from the Sky* (1994), incorporates backstory, often presented in poetry readings, as a part of the text. This addendum on the same page, a personal footnote perhaps, is set off by a star wingding and italicized. She inscribed my copy, "Some songs and stories for your journey," which acknowledges the hybridity.

Harjo and Mary TallMountain were featured by Bill Moyers in his television series *Ancestral Voices* (1989), and this gave them a forum to explain and perform their works. Tall Mountain's early death curtailed her contributions, but she influenced many writers, especially on the West Coast. Her story of adoption as an orphaned child and her reconnection with her family in Alaska was important to Haskell students from similar family backgrounds.

These various expansions of oral tradition into literary writings continue in Native writings today. They also helped Haskell students navigate literature classes, writing assignments, and academic culture. Among my former students are numerous lawyers, Ph.Ds., master's degree holders, college administrators, Smithsonian staff, and writers. United States Representative Sharice Davids from Kansas attended Haskell.

Luci Tapahonso and Diné Language Forward

In the early 1990s, Robert Martin, Cherokee, became permanent president of Haskell, and as he innovated important reforms, his wife Luci Tapahonso, Diné, joined him from Albuquerque to be a professor at the University of Kansas. Her first full-length book, *A Breeze Swept Through* (1987) from West End Press, had been published, and soon she followed it with *Sáanii Dahataal/The Women Are Singing* (1993). I remember her patiently trying to teach me how to pronounce the title, the first Diné language I had attempted, even though I heard students speak it at Haskell. She was the first

Indigenous author published by a widely distributed press to title a book in a Native language. She was fluent in her language, also unusual for most of the early Indigenous authors.

Tapahonso transferred Diné into English syntax, a notable hallmark of her work "Hills Brothers Coffee." This signature poem has nine stanzas of irregular lengths to convey a narrative about the visit of a maternal uncle to his niece for a cup of coffee. Tapahonso is a genius at layering different time frames into a single poem—"one morning" for the visit; her mother's habitual "jumping in her car and speeding"; and the ending with the narrator's own future-progressive actions as she regularly drinks coffee, which is also past progressive as she has this memory. All these times suspend as one as the niece-poet replicates her Diné-speaking uncle's statement, "the store is where I'm going to." This inversion of the usual English subject-verb order is clearly understood by English language speakers and also clearly divergent. The entire poem is complicated by the convergence of many tenses, structures, and related storylines into one smoothly flowing account. It is a masterpiece.

As Tapahonso generously devoted her time to readings for Haskell students, I observed how she is one of the best readers of poetry. She does not have a highly dramatic style, yet she is spellbinding. She is able to engage large audiences, who follow her words and imagine her images in unison. Her stresses and intonations add layers of humor to innocuous words as in renditions of "Hills Brothers Coffee," where the "kick" of the coffee is what "does it" for her.

Tapahonso's attention to the Haskell community while successfully navigating academic politics at K.U. made her an effective representative of Diné people and all Natives in general. She educated K.U. colleagues about the different but not lesser structures of Indigenous-influenced literary works. She negotiated to get a graduate program in Indigenous Studies at the University of Kansas, which allowed many Haskell students to continue graduate studies. She rose in the academic ranks to professor. She even negotiated a good parking spot and basketball tickets. This non-Indigenous

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university came to understand her worth and her literature before she moved back to the Southwest. She remains a Jayhawk basketball fan.

Dances with Moving Pictures

Dances with Wolves was an important film at Haskell. When I saw it with an audience of mostly Haskell students in 1990, I cringed at the white savior motif. Like Tarzan in Edgar Rice Burroughs books, John J. Dunbar quickly became the leader of Indigenous warriors. The heroine had to be a white captive, to complete the stereotype, the "Jane." Yet students' reactions surprised me as they talked in the darkened room. They were so happy to see any reasonable representation of Native people that they embraced it. Lakota language was present, and many relatives were extras. The next day, new cycles of jokes circulated. A colleague had a Pawnee cousin, whom he called to offer support after the Pawnee villain in the movie acted so heartlessly—kudos to Wes Studi, the actor. Even my colleague was surprised at his cousin's positive response: "It's about time the Pawnees get some respect," he joked. It was a giant step forward after John Wayne movies.

The movie was a breakthrough film, reviving the Western genre, and this made possible Sherman Alexie's later film *Smoke Signals* (1998). In those early days, movie industry people were also willing to support *Medicine River,* based on Thomas King's novel (HBO, 1993), and Greg Sarris' *Grand Avenue*, based on his book of the same title (HBO, 1996). The independent film *Powwow Highway* (1989) gained new recognition. A generation of Indigenous movie stars made places for themselves, including Haskell graduate Steve Reavis, who had an effective role in the film *Fargo*—I remembered him on the basketball team and as a gas station attendant working near Haskell. This was the era of VCR tapes. They made video in the classroom possible, so these films became regular fare. Haskell faculty member Joni Murphy, Creek, founded a film

festival that brought to campus Studi, Gary Farmer, Eileen Miles, and other standouts. Stephen Paul Judd, Thomas Yeahpah, Tvli Jacobs, and others took classes at Haskell and have continued with their own television and film projects.

Especially important to Haskell students was the work of Greg Sarris, who set his stories in Santa Rosa, California, an urban setting similar to that of Tommy Orange's Oakland of *There There* (2022). The Native population of the country was shifting to more urban areas, and so was the demographic at Haskell. Cultural and community identity transformed yet persisted in cities. In Sarris's film and stories, students could recognize living situations similar to theirs in Phoenix, Oklahoma City, Seattle, Oakland, Wichita, or other relocation sites.

When video interviews with elders became less difficult because of VCR technology, some considered this new technology to be a second era of orality. Powwow songs, talks, special events, tribal documentaries—all these became possible. Haskell alumni like Ken Cadue and Curtis Wright gave video interviews about their boarding school days, and these became some of the first records and critiques of those experiences. The daughter of Wilson (Buster) Charles, Nola, was on the Haskell staff and presented slides about her father's Olympic appearance and athletic career. Charles was a Haskell alum, so Nola explained the hardships he endured in the early 20th century at Haskell.

Bill Curtis taught video classes and documented the 1984 Haskell centennial program, boarding school history, sports, graduation speakers, and history of Native veterans. Rhonda LeValdo (Acoma Pueblo), his student, continued as faculty in the program. Video made possible long-distance education. Haskell had early distance learning before the Internet, with locations on the Prairie Band Potawatomi reservation and, briefly, Arizona. I taught online classes and developed American Indian Film, Traditional Narratives, and other courses in the 1990s, which made completion of degrees easier. Plus, Indigenous literary traditions adapt well to electronic media, because of the genre fluidity—interwoven impacts of visual, text, movement, and sound in traditional settings make moving image-audio media more apt than static media.

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Ruptures and Reifications: Ending the 20th Century

Post-modernism arose by the end of the 20th century. Academics influenced by architecture and the Frankfurt School evolved a vocabulary to describe culture and especially literature. Wurth connects this movement with a third wave of Native literature. Some of the works by Native people already were intertextual, ruptured, juxtaposed with sometimes absurd contrasts, and more—although mainstream academics influenced by this European movement did not engage, for the most part, in Native literatures. The publication of an anthology of Native and Post-Modernism works, *Visit Teepee Town: Native Writings after the Detours,* edited by Glancy and Mark Nowak in 1999, was a landmark. It included text-art by Hachavi Edgar Heap-Of-Birds (Southern Cheyenne and briefly, a Haskell student), whose conceptual works disrupt expectations. Photographs and narratives of performance-artist James Luna's works appear in the collection. The authors further include Peter Blue Cloud, Besmilr Brigham, Allison Adelle Hedge Coke, Nora Marks Dauenhauer and Richard Dauenhauer, Larry Evers and Felipe Molina, Louise Bernice Halfe. Juan Felipe Herrera, Hogan, Carolyn Lei-lanilau, Maurice Kenny, Victoria Lena Manyarrows, Glancy, Lise McCloud, Wendy Rose, Sarris, Stevens, Barbara Tedlock, Vizenor, Rosemarie Waldrop, and Phil Young. This assigned book gave students great delight in variations of all kinds of language. They created their own genres in response, in creative writing classes and elsewhere. Their diverse works, not the academic reorganization of genres, made post modernism significant at Haskell.

Sherman Alexie's opus, for Haskell, fits into the last decade of the 20th century, beginning with poetry, *The Business of Fancy Dancing*, 1992. Also important was *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven,* 1993, short stories, and some were the basis of the film *Smoke Signals*. Alexie introduced popular culture figures (a huge

innovation at the time), radio music, and media (the Weather Channel in the opening pages of *The Lone Ranger*). He had ties to his reservations and also urban experiences, which he brought to his writings. He used sectional structures and other borrowings from mainstream poets. For students, this was a welcome contrast to the British literary canon.

An Astonishing Aftermath

My time at Haskell ended in 2010. Since then, the expansion of literary accomplishments by Native writers is astonishing. Returning the Gift gatherings through the years have been important for keeping connections, as well as Wordcraft Circle activities and awards. I hosted one of their gatherings at Haskell, about 2001. Kimberly Blaeser, a fine Ojibwe poet, founded Indigenous Nations Poets (In-Na-Po), in 2020 and invited me to be part of the board. This allows me to see the continuing excellence of emerging writers plus development of the language back movement, hybridity, gender fluidity, complexities of emerging tribal identities, and more. Many fine writers are graduating from the Institute of American Indian Arts undergraduate and Master of Fine Arts programs. I cannot name all the authors, filmmakers, and artists, and their contribution in this space. Robert Martin, Cherokee Nation, was the president of IAIA 2007-2025. His administration at IAIA and leadership at Haskell for ten years have had an enormous impact on the possibilities of Indigenous literatures. He supported the arts and educational standards at both institutions and held space for the development of programs and infrastructure. I am forever grateful to him for his expertise.

My former student Carrie Cornelius, Potawatomi and Oneida, is now director of the Haskell library. She collects recent titles, often after attending Native writer gatherings, and she hosts visiting Indigenous writers. As a board member of In-Na-Po, she helps support fellowships and programs that further the progress of emerging writers. The library is a center for students to engage with great writers of the distant

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and recent past as well as the present. It is a place where they can become inspired to add their own voices.

On my last day at Haskell, after donating boxes of books and papers to Sequoyah National Research Center and the Spencer Library Special Collections and Archives, I sat in my backyard several weeks and looked at the pine trees, the squirrels, the angles of sun across the grass, the mourning doves. Then I went back to my writing desk. A great pleasure is watching how this story ends, turns, and continues. Since Momaday's Pulitzer in 1969, Native writers have taken their places in tribal communities and the national literary forum as well. In 1984 when I started my tenure at Haskell, this proliferation was inconceivable. So many have contributed to a much better positioning of Native writers and their cultural expressions, including literary works. This story will continue into the future.

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