The Living Tribal Histories Collection

Cohort 1

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Abstract

This paper strives to capture the creation process of four graduate students at the University of Arizona in the creation of a Living Tribal Histories Collection. The students are Knowledge River Scholars in the School of Information Resources and Library Science. As a final project for the IRLS 550 class: Information Environments from Hispanic and Native American Perspectives, the students compiled a list of 100 items focusing on Native Americans in four areas: General Indian History; Creation Stories; Trickster Tales; and Native Voices in Film and Video. This is the story of how this project affected each student. Their individual voices and unique perspectives are clearly heard throughout the paper. It was a remarkable experience that brought the four previously unacquainted students into a cohesive cohort. The compiled list is available to anyone (both as a Microsoft Word document and an Access database). The students hope that others will add to this “Native American Canon” in order to keep the process alive.

The Living Tribal Histories Collection

The Living Tribal Histories Collection is the beginning of an ongoing and expansive Native American Canon. In the development of this unique literary and media collection, the four of us have researched and pulled together perspectives and voices that have been overlooked for centuries. We focus on four areas: 1) general Indian History, 2) Creation stories, 3) Trickster stories, and 4) Native American voices and lives in film and media.

First, we must define THE CANON. The word comes from the Latin “canon” or “rule,” which initially related to authorizing materials and certain texts through ecclesiastical standards. In today’s literature study, the Canon has continued to point out the “best” or “most representative” literary works to form the foundation of required readings in schools and universities throughout the U.S. Often these were literary works that were considered “high culture” by many educators and librarians of the past. Their knowledge of the Canon gave them the power to distinguish what was good, bad, valuable, or worthless. In fact, we can begin to see how the Canon’s prescribed reading lists perpetuate this idea of “high culture,” as Pierre Bourdieu and Henry Giroux claim, “schools reproduce existing power relations more subtly through production and distribution of a dominant culture that tacitly confirms what it means to be educated” (Harris, 1986, p. 237). To further emphasize this point, Arnold Krupat (1983) argues that what the pedagogical Canon includes from the past and from current production works to ratify the present and to legitimate an established hegemony (p. 146). However, this Canon was certainly not “most representative” and continues to do a

disservice to generations of non-dominant communities. The creators of the Canon left out many voices. One voice that was missing was that of the Native American.

With N. Scott Momaday's 1968 Pulitzer-Prize winning novel *House Made of Dawn*, a Native American Renaissance began. A number of Native American writers such as Michael Dorris, Louise Erdrich, and Leslie Marmon Silko began to break into the Canon and into reading lists for American Literature and Native American Literature courses, but unfortunately only with certain stories – stories that were deemed "good" or "valuable" and those which told a stereotypical narrative. As Mona Kratzert and Debora Richey (1998) from their article, "Native American literature: expanding the canon" point out, "storylines in these novels, which remain the most successful Indian novels, generally involve a young, alienated Indian male protagonist split between white and tribal cultures. Healing and wholeness is achieved when these characters return to the reservation and adopt tribal traditions" (p. 4).

In effect, you see that these "approved" storylines leave out the many creative voices and stories that make up the Native American literary tradition. This is the reason we came together. We wanted to find the "lesser known" Native American works. And by "lesser known," we consider works that have been highly regarded by Native Studies sources, but may have received lukewarm reviews from mainstream press. We checked American Indian Studies book reviews, listservs, and other online Native American resources to evaluate the importance of these items. Being culturally competent collection builders, we understand the importance of "self-representation". That is why our collection is unique and flexible as it will continue to expand as more and more voices tell their stories.

General Indian Histories: Shawna's Collection

> There is a simple corrective to [the] widespread pattern of defeatism. The corrective is as simple as pointing out that the river of time has not stopped flowing. The river continues to flow toward the bridge and under it, and every moment presents a fresh opportunity to find a fresh, and better, way of living in that flow of time. When anyone responds to historical misfortune by saying, "That's water under the bridge," a resounding chorus should respond, "Maybe not." (Echo-Hawk, 2010)

The Dominant Society Writes History

History is defined as "a chronological record of significant events (as affecting a nation or institution) often including an explanation of their causes" and also as "a branch of knowledge that records and explains past events."[1] Both of these definitions are relevant to the following discussion as well as the definition of chronology as "the science that deals with measuring time by regular divisions and that assigns to events their proper dates."[2] These are definitions as stated by the dominant society.

In Hopi villages during ceremony clowns are present to mock or humiliate those who take life too seriously. One of these clowns walks around looking at a clock and proclaiming, "It is time to be hungry" or "It is time to get up." Declarations like these poke fun at the dominant society and their constant need to "tell time." Native American

[1] http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/history accessed 7 December 2010.

[2] http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/chronology?show=0&t=1291787730 accessed 7 December 2010.

histories, legends, or stories may not be chronological.[3] The concept of time as linear is a relatively new concept to many indigenous cultures on this continent.

Another troublesome point of the dominant society's definition of history is the "explanation" of causes of significant events. First of all, we need to figure out who defines what a significant event is. For example, Thanksgiving is a holiday celebrated by many ignorant people in the United States. The "history" of this event requires a passive Indian "welcoming" the white man to this continent and throwing a feast to honor that significant event. Many Native American societies view this day as sorrowful and tragic because it is the beginning of colonization and the rewriting of history. This is also true for the story of Christopher Columbus and his "discovery" of a "New World." What is not taught in Western civilization history books is the fact that Columbus was lost and looking for the country of India. Upon landing on this continent, he refused to acknowledge his error and thus called the inhabitants "Indians."

Because Western civilization and the dominant society base their beliefs on the written word, their concept of history is that of the conqueror. As each civilization has been taken over by the Westerners, history is rewritten, adapted, changed or modified to reflect the "greatness" and "rightfulness" of the invaders. Huber, et al, writes of racial nativism and the "disease" he names *white supremacy*. "White supremacy not only positions whites as the *entitled* beneficiaries of unearned societal privilege and status, it also normalizes white values, beliefs, and experiences as those dominant and, therefore, legitimate in US society" (p 41); this is particularly true in the written history of the United States.

[3] The Popol Vu is one example of a non-chronological history of the Mayan culture. Scholars have worked for years trying to force this story into linear events without success.

Indigenous People Speak History

The oral tradition has long been recognized in indigenous cultures of this continent. When one searches by keywords “Native American” and “oral tradition” in the University of Arizona Library, the catalog returns over 230 articles. Few native peoples had written language to record events. “When Western Europeans began invading this hemisphere, native America north of Mexico consisted of more than three hundred cultural groups, each possessing different world views, social structures, and customs. These groups spoke approximately 200 different languages…” (Ruoff, 1986). Each group had their own stories, legends, and history which were passed from one generation to the next orally.

In the education of the American Indian during the Boarding School era, speaking one’s traditional language was an offense often resulting in physical punishment. Many languages suffered greatly and some were lost completely. Assimilation was the primary goal of “education” rather than pedagogy itself. Natives were taught to be ashamed of their language, culture, and way of life. The oral tradition survived despite colonization. This was due in part to those children who “escaped” being “educated.”

Native Americans are Reclaiming History

In the 1970s a revolution was taking place that revitalized the Native American search for identity and history. Those Natives involved with reclaiming their language began to hear the stories from elders about the true history of the Americas. Over the years, subversive writers such as Vine Deloria Jr., Mary Crow Dog, and Paula Gunn Allen have changed the historical view of Native Americans as a conquered people.

Because federally recognized tribes are considered sovereign nations, changes to the history curriculum have been evidenced by individual tribes. For example, the article, "Know Your Roots: Development and Evaluation of an Oral History Curriculum for Native American Middle-School Students," demonstrates the creation of community specific curriculum (Lacourt, Kokotailo, Wilson, & Chewning, 2005).

The Need to Find Native American History Books

With all this in mind, the collection process began. Using an ALA document entitled "TRAILS" and an American Indian Library Association publication, "I" is for "Inclusion," my search was for books reflecting Native American history rather than the generic history of the dominant society. The need is great; the need to recognize that history should be rewritten. The resulting list of recommended books is the beginning of meeting this need.

Shawna's Reflection

We, Cohort 1, met on a Saturday at Bentley's, a coffee shop near the UA campus. The decision to collect 25 resources each for the collection of 100 items had been made in class. As we talked, a mission statement came into being and began to guide our collection topic. Eventually we would decide to create a Native American Canon, but at this time we were fairly uncertain about how this would all come together aside from our mission statement.

After attending the American Association of State and Local History Conference in September, I had a good idea of what books I was looking for. At AASLH I had the pleasure of attending a Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) workshop. Walter R. Echo-Hawk, a Native American (Pawnee) lawyer,

spoke about culture and how it cannot be captured digitally. He emphasized that we, Natives, are the culture and it is not possible to digitize a human being.

For years, I felt an outsider to the Native American culture. Having identified more as an Urban Indian instead of Navajo, this conference showed me that I was not as different as I had supposed. Listening to the 15 to 20 panelists that day, I became a part of the culture of American Indian professionals with each new presenter. Later, I had the pleasure of meeting Lotsee Patterson and having a very good conversation. Being included with all the Indians at this conference helped me to feel that I could be an authority. By this I mean that I am able to assist in the creation of a Native American Canon. When I left the conference I packed my first item for the collection, Echo-Hawk's book, *In the Courts of the Conqueror: the 10 Worst Indian Law Cases Ever Decided.*

While I wanted to collect only Native American authors, I soon decided that being exclusive only tied my hands and could be prejudicial. The hardest audience to collect for was Young Adults. There is not much in the way of Native American history for this age group. Fortunately I had the previously mentioned lists to work off of and Amazon was helpful in verifying that these books were either still in print or had been revised. I did my best to choose items more recently written in an effort to capture a recent viewpoint.

History is malleable. As minorities and underserved communities begin to voice their histories, the dominant society's history must adapt and change. Native Americans were taught shame through the dominant society's educational system. The

words, “kill the Indian, but save the man,” still ring in my head. Being a part of the creation of this Canon has saved me and helped me find my Indian-ness.

When it came to presenting the collection, I decided to compile the master list into a database. The Word document ran for 36 pages and was not searchable. Considering whether to use a spreadsheet vs. a database, I asked Oscar. Ultimately, I made the decision that “pretty” reports needed to be created via a database. This database is available to anyone who wants a copy. Also the Native American Canon in Word is also available. I am proud to put my name to this project because it changed my perception of who I am: a Native American LIS professional.

Creation Stories: Donovan’s Collection

“The world is beautiful and we are going to put the spirit into it.” (Klay 1942)

When we think of creation stories we often think of Genesis, in terms of the Bible and what the dominant society feels appropriate for its citizens to hear. More often than not, creation stories that stem from various Native American tribes are hardly ever heard or documented to be passed on to future generations. The *Encyclopedia Britannica* defines creation stories or myths as, “philosophical and theological elaboration of the primal myth of creation within a religious community.” I personally do not agree with the above definition because of how it takes it from a religious context. Many Native Americans use the creation stories in unison with trickster stories which both provide life lessons for the tribal members and are able to pass it down to the

future generations. From many accounts, creation stories “keep me grounded in truth more than anything. Makes me realize Western Society is nothing more than lies, greed, and materialism” (Rattles, Anishinaabe, 2010).

“It helped me to understand that we are connected to the world around us. Like the animal world, they helped Napi to create Earth things. Also the creation of humans kind of shed some light on male female relationships, like people always say we've always been here, to me creation stories speak to that. If I had never been told the creation story them I would have a very different world view” (Day Rider, Napi, 2010).

“I never actually heard ‘the’ story but thru songs, prayers, advice, ceremonies and family values everything is pieced together. Everything that was taught to me and everything I'm still learning makes me who I am. Living life, balance is key. Never losing sight of who you are, respect and understanding...it can be hard but we've just gotten lazy” (DC, Navajo, 2010).

To introduce myself in a manner that is fitting: ya'at'eeh shi ei Donovan Pete yinishye. Naakaii dine' nishli. Kinyaa'aanii bashishchiin. Ma'ii Deeshgiizhnii dashicheii. Tachii'nii dashinali. Which translates to: hello, I am Donovan Pete, I am of the Mexican People (or Moving People) clan born for the Towering House clan. My maternal grandfathers are of the Coyote Pass clan and my paternal grandmothers are of the Red-Streaking-Into-Water clan. Many clans that were created each have a story of their own as to how they were formed and how they got their names. According to Klah, “Begochiddy said to the plants and the trees: ‘You must grow and blossom and bear fruit at certain seasons.’ And they agreed to do this. Then he said to all creatures: ‘After four days you can go wherever you please.’ And when that time was ended,

Begochiddy blew four times in different directions, and they dispersed into four directions and lived within the four mountains."

When I go to new places, I like to find out from meeting other Natives, if they are Navajo or not, and if they are we exchange clans. In this case, when I read over Shawna's Cultural Heritage Autobiography (CHA), I was happy to know that there is another Navajo not only in the program but in the class. As we worked more and more together and I got to know her more and found that we both are related. Shawna told me that one of her clans' Ma'ii Deeshgiizhnii, which would make her my grandmother or my mother's mom's sister.

Dine Bahane

In the books, *Dine Bahane: The Navajo Creation Story* and *Navajo Creation Myth: The Story of Emergence*, each gives accounts of how the world was created and where the Navajo came from. According to both, the Navajos emerged from three worlds to get into the fourth world, our current world. The first world was created and black, the Diyin Dine (Holy People) were impressed yet bickered and the bickering caused the first world to burn, they escaped into a hole to the second world.

Begochiddy had taken some earth from the first world and recreated the first world, insects were created in this world, the people disobeyed Begochiddy, which made him gather all that he created into a holy one's rainbow to be protected from Hashjeshjin who turned the water to oil and burned the second world.

They emerged into the third world, which was covered in yellow, once again Begochiddy recreated the previous worlds onto the third and soon he created the animals. He made a Rainbow House for the five gods from the first world to live, he

assigned where all will live; he began the creation of men and women and the various tribes who were assigned duties and gods. The water children were stolen by Coyote and after four days of not receiving their children, the third world was flooded. A giant reed was planted for the people, animals and gods to try to go on to the next world. The Locust chief was able to put an arrow on his forehead and shot through to the next world.

The Locust chief in the fourth world was tested by four different birds, he returned to those in the third to inform them of his contest of strength and from there he called the people his grandchildren. Begochiddy went up into the fourth after asking for volunteers to come with him. In the fourth world he found gods, people and earth who welcomed him as a sibling. Begochiddy brought news to the people in the third world and they followed. The fourth world was still flooding because of the third, a council was called for solutions, Coyote took the water child out and threw into the hole and the water ceased to rise. Fire was born of stolen river boulders that were burning and Coyote gave it to the people.

From that point, ceremonies of the various chiefs and gods were held for how to live in the fourth world, they planned rivers, mountains, stars, moon and the sun; they sang songs so things will grow and more people were created. A council was held to flood and recreate the world, all agreed and a cleaning ceremony of the bad began.

For forty-two days water covered the earth except the tops of mountains, after the waters went away a great rainbow appeared and on top stood Begochiddy with hands in gladness. Another council was called and they discussed the creation of man and animals. Man and all creatures were created.

Changing Woman created the Earth Surface People (Dine) by rubbing her feet in the soil of the valleys. Changing Woman bore two sons; Monster Slayer and Child of the Water who were responsible for overcoming monsters that threatened all of the world's existence, yet some monsters remained; sickness, hunger poverty, lice man, and laziness.

The Holy People think and spoke so our current would come into being; they see that Changing Woman, the earth and the people are healthy. Ceremonies of the Dine, are to recreate and remember the Creation, the songs of Hozhoo are sung and images are pointed on the ground are also used (Klah, 1942 & Zobord, 1987).

Identity

In many cases, for those whose families have endured the boarding school experience still holding onto traditions, language and culture are fortunate because it shows that their identity is ingrained with whatever tribe they are from. Often those who were able to hold on passed down those items to the generations and see to it that is done the same, yet some did not pass down because of fear, the post-traumatic stress, and the complete loss of identities.

The use of creation stories is a way of reclaiming the lost or often forgotten culture in small bits, since combination of knowing the language, embracing the culture and practicing the traditions would be seen as a way to gain identity. The traditions and ideas help in molding the individual because life lessons are in the stories themselves, often, a combination of the creation story and the trickster stories help in providing a guideline on how an individual should live.

With the identity in place, what happens from there is the individual gains self-empowerment which gives them the ultimate chance in having knowledge in two worlds: in one world they are back on their lands, chopping & hauling wood, helping with ceremonies, hauling water, herding animals, helping their elders with chores, free of service, cut off from all things outside of their lands, and on the other hand they are working a fulltime job, utilizing technology to their advantage, reading, studying, doing assignments and above all understanding.

Creation stories and a mixture of the culture give individuals: wisdom, understanding, respect, strength, trust, love and balance.

Collection Development

I remember being little and not really having a sense of self or identity, for all I knew, the world around me was the world and all my time was put forth into playing or behind the desk learning. When I would watch movies, often times it would be the Westerns with big named stars attached to them. I enjoyed the fact my dad was never interested in who the starring actors were, but the enemies: the Native Americans. He would make up his own commentary and would laugh at how fake the “savage Indians” were being portrayed.

Getting older, I would look at certain tribes that I encountered and would draw comparisons by the use of movies or dancers and drummers from the summer evening powwows as a reference point in being able to identify other Native Americans. I would think of the romanticized “wild Indians,” raiding or chasing after stage wagons. I had an exposure to how the media portrayed the “Red Man.” Many of tribes that were on film were often the Plains Tribes which branches out to 34 different tribes.

After doing my own research and reading about tribe after tribe, I thought I had all the right ideas of Native Americans across the US. Yet it dawned on me that they talk different, they have different styles of clothing, and their hair is fastened in different shapes and forms. Once again I was baffled by Native Americans, it was not until I moved to the Navajo Nation that I gained a true sense of self and knowing my tribe: the language, the culture, the traditions, the stories, the ceremonies and how to carry myself as a Navajo.

I was curious as to know what other tribes' creation stories looked like because I know mine well enough, but I was curious as to know what everyone else's was like. At a young age, I remember hearing Hopi stories because the single Hopi kid in my class happened to have books on his culture, during the reading time, his book would be read aloud. I would often have questions and when my dad would be home on weekends I would ask him and he would answer but using Navajo culture instead of the Hopi's.

When I started out, I decided that the first story I am going to find is Navajo. I feel a great sense of pride in my culture and those that I share it with, but I am also inclined to enjoy what is outside of my own culture because if you are comfortable in yours, then it should be no problem hearing from others.

Since my section is very narrow, it was not too difficult to find books that state creation story at the end of its title. I found it difficult to try to find books that would fit in each category of Adults, Young Adults and Children. I spent some nights in the library looking up the book titles and quickly scanning through them making sure they fit in the categories. But I was able to do this and found an extensive amount of creation stories

that are not Navajo focused. I enjoyed looking through the stories because you find similarities or you find that others are out there trying to preserve creation stories.

Trickster Tales: Sara's Collection

> "As tricksters wander and exercise their mythic creative powers, they also define, generally in amusing ways, the limits and nature of our humanity as we struggle through the contraries and contingencies of our experience in this world" (Ballinger 2004)

My decision to collect Native American trickster stories as part of our *Living Tribal Histories Collection* came from my memory of trickster tales as a child. The interaction of the trickster with other animals always set the stage of how not to behave; providing me with memorable parables that I have applied later in life. It only made sense to include these stories in the collection once our mission statement was established.

Trickster stories are a large part of Native American oral tradition that has lasted through centuries of a deliberate attempt at cultural genocide by "new world" settlers. Because trickster stories are cross-culturally celebrated, they represent the Native voice we want heard in our collection. Lavonne Brown Ruoff (1986) states that in most tribal communities, narratives are divided into the sacred and the non-sacred, causing these stories to have a large influence on fiction written by Native American authors.

Trickster tales in the Native American Collection is an important addition because of the role that the trickster plays in Native communities. These stories assist in understanding the universe and how humans and animals interact and operate within it. In *Living Sideways: Tricksters in American Indian Oral Traditions*, Franchot Ballinger (2004) characterizes the capability of the trickster. He points out that the trickster

represents an institutionalized disorder outside the system of norms established by the myths of origin and transformation. Ballinger (2004) claims that, “As an ‘outsider,’ trickster can suggest the dangerous possibility of novel relationships between form and function; sex and role; belief and practice; kin and clan; even appetite and will” (134).

My Collection Development

In order to start the collection process for Children, Young Adult and Adult books, I brainstormed books I remember as a child. When my memory could only take me back so far, I looked at lists dedicated to Native American books. However, narrowing down the stories to trickster tales proved harder than it seemed. I began to search specifically for “trickster” or “coyote tales” and from there I learned how other tribal peoples referred to their version of the trickster. With the new searchable terms in mind, I was able to browse the lists of bestselling Native American books. When this proved fruitless for my purposes, I turned to searching on Amazon. This was a most helpful resource because it returned books I was specifically looking for, as well as related books. The apparent explosion of resources, allowed me to not only expand my search but also choose books according to specific tribal affiliations. I learned that the holy-grail of books were those that contained the story in the Native tongue. Although I found no books written solely in the specific language, I did find a few that had both versions. I found this mostly in the Hopi books. However, some books contained words in the language that were emphasized throughout the story, especially in the children's books.

Before my searching process really got underway, I attended the 9th annual Gathering of Arizona Tribal Libraries at the Yavapai library in Prescott. During some

down-time the night of introductions, I asked the hosting librarian, Barbara Royer, how she maintained her stacks and the level of difficulty she experienced. Although she claimed that the vendors were fairly helpful with Native American materials, she found herself purchasing many books out of her own pocket. Interestingly, Oscar Hernandez, our supporting librarian who works on the Pascua Yaqui reservation, claims he also purchases many resources from his own pocket. While I was browsing the stacks, looking for any stories specifically about tricksters or the Coyote, the assistant librarian came over to help. Because she is Hopi, she pulled a lot of the books that told tales important to her that represented her traditions. She pulled a book about the Hopi clowns, and told me how important they were during events. She explained that children were told to beware of the Kachina clowns that go lurking about. The purpose of the clowns is to make fun of misbehaving community members as well as western customs. This then sets a standard for social behavior. From her stories I decided that the Hopi clowns were an important part of the trickster collection since they were most obviously an interesting type of modern trickster.

My Reflection

I was happy to see that there were many compilations of trickster stories. However, it seemed that they were mostly completed by anthropologists conducting cross-cultural studies. Although these compilations were respectful of the communities being studied, it defeated the mission of portraying the Native American voice. After some deliberation, I encountered the same problem as Shawna; I was unable to gather enough books without including the third person accounts. I wondered: if a non-Native outsider gathered stories that were told for Natives, by Natives, does it still represent the

Native voice? For the purpose of the collection, I decided that stories compiled with the undertaking of protecting oral traditions could be an asset. Interestingly, with some of the compilations, there were translations, which as I stated before, are the holy-grail when building a Native American collection. The children's stories were the easiest to find, assumingly because trickster tales are intended to be moral lessons for children. Within these stories, native words were interspersed in an effort to help children become more aware of their culture's languages, as well as promote the importance of using the lexicon in daily activities.

Trickster stories stand out the most when I reminiscence on books I read as a child. The brevity of the stories and their strength in moral lesson demand a lasting impression. I vividly remember reading about the coyote as a child and his encounters with many other animals. The coyote became alive in mind and through his follies; I learned to be a “giver” rather than a “taker.” Because all the animals were presented as human-like in the stories that I read, my respect for animals grew exponentially as the line was blurred between people and animals. I also began to understand the consequences of not keeping your word and mistreating people.

Although the ancestry of Pawnee heritage pumps through my blood, I am disconnected from any sense of belonging and tradition. Paradoxically, behaviors that I have learned from dominate culture have all too often felt wrong and left me with a sense of awkwardness. When thinking back on trickster stories, I am reminded that the manner in which I see things is not unique or strange; I have just been living by the rules of an insecure society for too long. Trickster taught me the genuine ways in which to treat other living creatures without sugar-coating the truth in matters. Not only did I

develop a foundation for how to treat animals and the earth, I learned the proper way to interact with other people, especially those I considered my friends.

With the intent of representing specific Native communities, I tried to find stories belonging to a particular tribal affiliation, rather than a compilation of cross-cultural tales. In order to retrieve a bit of my family's ignored heritage, I searched for trickster tales from the Pawnee Nation. I found a book of compiled myths about the sly coyote and the misleading rabbit, but much to my dismay, this book was an example of what should not be in a Native American collection. Although, I choose to add it for the purpose of the Pawnee representation, I feel its presence in the collection is a good point of discussion. Dorsey was a Curator of Anthropology in the Field Museum of Natural History in the late 1800s, early 1900s. Before becoming a curator, he attended the Harvard School of Anthropology in 1890 and prided himself on being an ethnographer of the Indigenous peoples of the Americas. However, when reading the stories contained in *The Pawnee: Mythology,* there is a sense of disconnection and non-participant examination. The stories are told from a third person's view and documented more as if they were a scientific study, rather than an attempt at keeping oral traditions alive. As an example, Dorsey (1906) states in the Preface: “This present memoir forms part of a series of investigations begun by the author among tribes of the Caddoan stock on behalf of the Field Museum of Natural History, and continued since the beginning of 1903 under the auspices of the Carnegie Institute of Washington.” This explanation demonstrates the coldness in which these tales were collected for the dominate society, as if the tribe’s people were lab rats being researched. Mainly due to the manner, in which it was collected, printed and reflected upon, *The Pawnee:*

Mythology by George Amos Dorsey represents how not to retrieve stories from Native populations.

Not until recently did I learn that trickster tales were only to be told at certain times of the year, specifically during winter months. I believe my lack of knowledge came from the fact I mostly read the stories rather than being told them in family circles. This leads me to suggest that the trickster stories within a collection could be problematic in some tribal communities. For instance, the Navajo coyote stories are only to be told during the winter months, as well as the Winnebago; who tell their stories when there are no snakes above ground. The Zuni myths can be told at any time of the day and year; however, they keep their sacred tales for winter nights. If a group has certain belief systems as to when a story can be told or not, this could lead to disagreements regarding what stories can be read during the summer months or what books are available for checkout throughout the year.[4]

Native Voices in Film and Video: Jamie's Collection

> Nibenegenesabe says, "I go backward, look forward, as the porcupine does," and Norman explains: "The idea is that each time these stories about the past are told they will be learned for the future" (*The Wishing Bone Cycle*, p.4).

Because of my passion for social change, the media, and subsequent twenty years of working as a social justice documentary filmmaker, I chose to research and collect film and video resources for our Living Tribal Histories Collection. The most important and urgent thing, to me, has always been the power of storytelling and

[4] I did not know whether to include this paragraph, but I felt that further discussion on the issue was important if the collection is meant to stay open and evolving.

especially ‘first-person’ storytelling and *testimonio*. These stories enter into the field of *community media* where, as a movement, there is opportunity for participation in the creation of media, as well as participation in its distribution, ensuring a greater diversity of viewpoints, encouraging free speech, while also building a sense of community and community identity. With the advances in technology, many more communities have the opportunity to collect and tell their stories. Viewing films and videos is also a communal event, in which people gather to share the experience and then discuss what they’ve seen afterwards.

Media as a whole is complex and the mainstream media has, according to Gitlin’s use of frames, become the “persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation, and presentation, of selection emphasis and exclusion, by which symbol handlers routinely organize discourse, whether verbal or visual” (Harris, 1986, p. 225). These frames have become a primary framework or lens and, once they are assimilated, the work of including or excluding becomes normalized and routine in an “objective” fashion. It is these frames that have allowed each of us to consume films and videos about Native American Experiences without acknowledging and seeing that the translator’s culture is apparent in the translation – camera angles tell of power dynamics and shot selections tell of underlying assumptions or stereotypical understandings. Linda Tuhiwai Smith in *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* urges readers to avoid positioning community media in opposition to the mainstream media, but to ultimately see the differences and especially the taken for granted assumptions that have become the dominant framework (1999).

In community or alternative media, there is room for new frames, voices, and perspectives. During my work on this collection, I have read a number of articles about Native American literature and the work being done to expand the Canon by including authentic Native American voices. In this case, the Native American voice is alternative to what the dominant framework had produced for centuries in the anthropological studies and telling of Native American lives and stories. This voice can bring about transformation in the way the individual and community understand their power: "[A]lternative media spin transformative processes that alter people's sense of self, their subjective positionings, and therefore, their access to power" (Rodriguez, 2001, p. 18). Self-representation from within cultural contexts is important to identity formation and understanding the world through our unique lenses and experiences. I think that when a non-Native attempts to tell of the Native American Experience in writing and through film, there is never a literal translation, but only interpretation and adaptation. In these adaptations, we know that we are missing a key ingredient to the truth and that's the cultural lens created by the camera, the narration, the storytelling. Who tells the story and aims the camera makes decisions based on a cultural lens or even many different lenses that make up the person's sense of identity. Where uncanonical works are demeaned and trivialized, self-representation shifts the power relations and the Native American is no longer marginalized but becomes a legitimate producer of knowledge and consumer of knowledge.

Jamie's Collection Reflection

Through conversations with my cohort and with former colleagues, I learned just how important it is to research and identify the tribal affiliations of the filmmakers

themselves when organizing this list. In fact, James Fortier (Métis/Ojibwe), the co-producer and director of photography on my last film *Green Green Water* and the director of *Alcatraz Is Not An Island,* urged me to "ONLY include films made by Native filmmakers if I wanted this collection to represent and reflect the authenticity of the diverse Native American Experiences." By Native, he meant any filmmaker who self-identifies as Native and is accepted as such by his or her peers, tribal community, and tribal relations. He told me that if include works about Native issues by non-Native filmmakers, to note those films separately. I did. And as a group, our cohort reviewed each other's work and commented accordingly to ensure authenticity and intent. The "non-Native" notation in the collection will provide users the very important distinction of whose lens you as the viewer are looking through.

-2-
TITLE: The Exiles [Adults]
DIRECTOR: Kent Mackenzie **non-Native filmmaker
RUNTIME: 72 min
SYNOPSIS: THE EXILES chronicles one night in the lives of
entirely on interviews with the participants and their friend
drink, party, fight, and dance.

To find this collection of films, I searched through multiple years' catalogs from the imagineNATIVE Film Festival in Toronto, the American Indian Film Festival in San Francisco, the Native American Film + Video Festival in DC through Native Networks and the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian, as well as PBS, Native American Public Television, and ITVS' POV and Independent Lens programming.

Conclusion

After working carefully through this group project, we have been inspired by what a small group of information professionals can do when they truly believe in creating change. We could have gone in any number of directions with our collection,

but saw and felt the urgency of the missing voices in our own specialty areas. Utilizing what Overall (2009) calls a cultural competency framework, our work in developing The Living Tribal Histories Collection "broadens the traditional view of how humans come to know, how they acquire information, and how they become literate" (p.181). We have expanded the framework. We have uncovered the gaps and fissures. We have moved our heads, hands, and hearts from theory into practice. Developing a tangible product that we can share with libraries all of the U.S. and beyond was an amazing feat. Shawna's diligent work inputting all of our information and reorganizing in many different ways in order to provide reports for our audience was key to our success. Jamie's inspiration to dive into the journals and dig up research on what we were thinking and talking about helped to put our collection into a larger context. Donovan's connection to his own Creation story was heartfelt and authentic. He loved his work on this project; as did Sara, who was able to reconnect with her Native roots. Listening to the stories and hearing inspiration in all of our voices made for quite an amazing project! Thank you for sharing the unforgettable process with us.

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