

Survivance, Sovereignty, and Story: Teaching American Indian Rhetorics,
edited by Lisa King, Rose Gubele, and Joyce Rain Anderson. Logan:
Utah State UP, 2015. 240 pp.

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In keeping with the collection under review, the only place to begin is with a story about myself. I write this story from Laramie, Wyoming, a state that covers land of the Lakota Sioux, the Cheyenne, the Arapaho, the Crow, and the Shoshone nations. I hail from the Black Hills of South Dakota, the sacred Paha Sapa of the Lakota Sioux. The Laramie where I reside now is not the original Laramie; the name recalls the Fort Laramie Treaties of 1851 and 1868. The latter treaty established the Greater Sioux reservation in the Dakota Territory and recognized the Black Hills as Sioux land. The 1868 treaty also mandated the U.S. government's responsibility to "insure the civilization of the Indians" through education (Article VII, Fort Laramie Treaty, 1868).

From the outset, there was an imbalance of power. Within the very treaties meant to recognize indigenous nations and lands, the U.S. government undermined the possibility of equality by resorting to the harmful binary of civilization versus savagery. In Article VII, the erasure of indigenous ways of life and education was made official policy. The history of residential schools, reservations, legal disputes over the ownership of the Black Hills, and the genocide of the Plains Nations find their roots in these documents. And yet, this is one history, a local history that can only gesture towards the processes of colonialism and genocide that have been policy since the first contact between indigenous peoples and European Americans.

This imbalance of power and the resulting colonial mindset toward education are what the contributors to *Survivance, Sovereignty, and Story: Teaching American Indian Rhetorics* seek to redress. Indigenous voices speak back and refuse to submit to the narrative that they are an extinct or defeated people. Additionally, the collection positions itself as a challenge to traditional Western rhetoric as the primary or only model for teaching and locates storytelling as a way to reclaim indigenous voices (4). The collected essays offer a rhetorical framework for resetting discussions about the continuance and sovereignty of indigenous nations and for challenging stereotypes about indigenous peoples that persist to today.

The impetus of the collection comes from a workshop of the same name that the American Indian Caucus of the CCCC has put on since 2009, which provides new ways for teachers to create a space for the inclusion of indigenous voices in the classroom. These essays bring the theoretical frameworks, resources, and classroom practices explored in the workshop to a wider audi-

ence. In the spirit of a counternarrative—reframing the dominant discourse from a marginalized point of view—the collection rejects the traditional form of pedagogical texts. Instead of divisions between theory and practice or organizing the essays thematically, the collection begins and ends with poems and reflections from the editors, while personal stories from the chapter authors mix with stories and writing from students in order to show the potential and pedagogical import of indigenous rhetorics. Both the form and content of the collection constantly destabilizes the Greco-Roman model of rhetoric that prioritizes writing and reason in favor of indigenous rhetorics that emphasize body (including oral traditions), place, and relationships.

Taking cues from Scott Richard Lyons and Gerald Vizenor, the contributors critique contemporary teachings of rhetoric around the terms *survivance*, rhetorical sovereignty, and story in order “(1) to develop a deeper understanding of the role of American Indian rhetorics in writing classrooms, (2) to situate the workshop within current literature, understandings, and practices of teaching American Indian rhetorics, and (3) to provide teachers with models they may adapt for their own classroom uses” (5). All of the essays circle around these terms and reframe debates about rhetoric to include an indigenous perspective. In this way, the essays bridge the gap between dominant cultural narratives that speak of indigenous peoples through stereotypes and in the past tense toward an understanding of and alliance with the continuance of indigenous nations today.

Turning to individual terms, the editors trace Vizenor’s notion of “*survivance*” in order to understand the continuance of indigenous nations. This concept combines the terms survival and resistance, and, in relation to indigenous rhetorics, “[*survivance*] is the recognition of how, when, and why indigenous peoples communicate, persuade, and make knowledge both historically and now” (King, Gubele, and Anderson 7). It emphasizes speaking now in the present and speaking out—or the continuance of communication—despite the U.S. government and culture’s efforts to eradicate, erase, or silence indigenous voices. While most essays in the collection touch on this topic, for me the highlight is “*Heartspeak from the Spirit: Songs of John Trudell, Keith Secola, and Robbie Robertson*” by Kimberli Lee. She grounds *survivance* by basing a class around the music of indigenous artists. Through music, Lee argues for the continued evolution of Native oral traditions as well as their resistance to dominant narratives about indigenous peoples. The music acts as an “alter/native discourse,” which, while respecting the past, also provides the opportunity for decolonizing the mind by promoting alternative futures (Lee 133). Lee turns the ubiquity of music into a useful access point for students to understand contemporary indigenous rhetorical strategies and the potential of storytelling.

Like survivance, nearly every essay in the collection also builds around Lyon's concept of "rhetorical sovereignty" as developed in "Rhetorical Sovereignty: What Do American Indians Want from Writing?" Rhetorical sovereignty is a question of "who speaks about [indigenous peoples] and how" (Bizzaro xii). For the authors in the collection, this is a matter of not only including indigenous texts in courses but also framing those texts in the context of the erosion of indigenous sovereignty. In "Sovereignty, Rhetorical Sovereignty, and Representation: Keywords for Teaching Indigenous Texts," Lisa King foregrounds the complicated history of the term "sovereignty" not only to critique stereotypical representations of indigenous peoples, but also to provide a framework for students to approach indigenous texts. Linking these concepts together, she shows how rhetoric has played and continues to play a crucial role in the erosion of Native sovereignty.

Finally, stories are central to indigenous rhetorics because storytelling becomes the site of survivance and rhetorical sovereignty, and as such is a decolonial practice of resistance to the dominant culture. The story becomes practice in the classroom as Malea D. Powell and Andrea Riley-Mukavetz's "Making Native Space for Graduate Students: A Story of Collective Indigenous Rhetorical Practice" demonstrates. Prompted by Lisa Brooks's *The Common Pot: Mapping Native Space*, the chapter enacts indigenous rhetorical practices in the classroom in order to "map Native space over/into/around/under academic and other dominant spaces" (139-40). The essay is made up of stories from Powell and Riley-Mukavetz's academic backgrounds interwoven with the story of a student in their graduate seminar about American Indian Rhetorics in order to show the university as a space that is "indigenizable" (155) and to demonstrate how indigenous rhetorics challenge the colonizing impulse of traditional educational models (157).

In a straightforward sense, the collection is directed at scholars who teach indigenous texts, histories, and cultures. Due to the highly specific nature of the essays, both in examples of material or teaching strategies that are best developed over an entire course, my only critique is that I would have liked to have seen more chapters that were specifically applicable to first-year writing courses, rather than mostly special topics undergraduate or graduate seminars. However, such a critique would miss the democratizing impulse of the authors because the essays provide new, socially aware, and responsible questions for all composition and rhetoric scholars looking for different approaches to the classroom beyond the traditional model of (white/male/Western) literature and rhetoric or the imbalanced relation between student, teacher, and environment. In particular, many essays in the collection write against these traditions by introducing multimodal and embodied learning approaches that are particularly resonant in the twenty-first-century classroom. By teaching indigenous musi-

cians, analyzing the digital and visual representations indigenous peoples in advertising, or incorporating local indigenous knowledge into courses, learning becomes embedded in the daily life and routines of the students, challenges the university setting and model of instruction, and forces awareness about these specific and rooted issues via accessible mediums.

Bringing these various strands together, the two standouts of the collection are Qwo-Li Driskill's "Decolonial Skillshares: Indigenous Rhetorics as Radical Practice" and Gabriela Raquel Ríos' "Performing Nahua Rhetorics for Civic Engagement." Both reconceive rhetoric as embodied acts of learning and relationality, challenge the Western model, and critique the colonizing impulse of the university, and they do so by showing the radical political potential of indigenous rhetorics. Defining skillshares, Driskill writes, "[a] decolonial skillshare creates spaces for Native people to both learn and teach specific embodied *practices* as a specific *tactic* in processes of decolonization" (63, emphasis original). The dual role of student/teacher and the necessity of sharing knowledge makes the act of teaching fundamentally communitarian. In the same vein, Ríos talks about *in ixtli in yollotl* as a practice, an indigenous form of knowledge building that is embodied, relational, and shared. She clarifies, "(1) insight or knowledge is not only gained through the body, but the body is also constituted upon on this knowledge, and (2) building knowledge is always already a community-centered practice for Nahuas" (86). In this way, indigenous rhetorics build from active and reciprocal ways of learning and teaching that are always historically rooted.

Survivance, Sovereignty, and Story: Teaching American Rhetorics is a necessary challenge to the weaknesses of Western rhetoric and the wider impact of colonialism on education around the world. However, the challenge is more than academic. It is necessary due to the continued and disastrous impact of the dominant narrative on the lives of indigenous peoples. Reading the collection forced me to reconsider my own story and recognize the blind spots I had to the contested spaces in which I grew up and still reside, as well as the role of my education in consigning indigenous peoples to history books. The writers who contribute to the collection call us to reject this colonialist narrative. They call us to imagine alternative futures by giving voice to the stories embedded in the land on which we stand.

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Works Cited

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