The (Re)construction of Native American Identity Through the Visual Arts

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(Re)construction and transformation have been at the center of indigenous knowledge (IK) discourses for the last several years. The *Oxford Universal Dictionary* describes transformation as a mathematical exchange, as a scientific metamorphose, as biologically the hypothesis that existing species are the product of the gradual evolution of forms of living beings, and sociologically as "the doctrine of gradual evolution of moral and social relations" (Little 1955:2231). The concept that history, people, sciences, and behavior can be transformed can be measured through a great number of small changes. These small changes support and reflect development in fields such as current research philosophies, new technology, changing economies, and the introduction of new agricultural practices. What connects all of these seemingly different fields is that the thread of knowledge that moves along with the change of one form into another and that unites something from the past with something in the present, and will link with something in the future.

Human transformation is based on the accumulation and application of knowledge that is located within our genes, within our cells, within our centers of thought, and simultaneously within our environment. Knowing what we believe and how that came about is one of the methods through which humans can socially transform themselves. The transformative act is not completely about finishing nor is it completely about the end product, but it is also about the *process*. One approach to looking at transformative processes is through a visual exploration of the field of non-verbal communication that we call "art."

By using both early historical and contemporary art images, such research can reveal the transformation of social ideas documented through the visual arts. Fascinated with verbal descriptions of North American Indians, the early imagination of both American and European general populations was made visible through the work of non-Native artists, explorers, religious men, and scientists who helped to construct a particular social and political ideology. This, in turn, supported a particular type of power ensured by "normalization methods that are employed on all levels and in forms that go beyond the state and its apparatus" (Fillingham quoting Foucault 1993:141). Normalization methods that are based on a dominant culture's values can be ones under which human rights violations of others are seemingly justified. One only has to review the history of actions taken by the United States Government towards the care of the Native people of North American to understand the horrific outcomes that *normalization* can produce. More succinctly, social power is located in the ownership of ideas and objects. After all, "it is the social actors [and in our case, visual artists] who use the conceptual systems of their culture and the linguistic and other representational systems to construct meaning, to make the world meaningful and to communicate about that world meaningfully to others" (Hall 1997:25).

One method, the tool that is applied here, is the use of critical analysis on several commonly recognized historical paintings and photographs to deconstruct these aesthetically pleasing pure works of art and transform them into "readable" social commentaries. The significance of having a historical visual impact resides in their relationship to contemporary works of art about Native Americans. In fact, these same historical visual constructions continue to mold current stereotypes of Native Americans, as they have become the foundation from which many artists and art respond, and as a result, reflect the changing roles of both artist and audience. It is in this way that the transformative nature of the Native American image can be interpreted as a powerful tool for cultural transformation and empowerment.

How Visual Arts Become Political

It is said that "history is written by the conquerors, literature by the survivors" (Revard 2001:i), and it is visually recorded by its artists. Artists are inseparable from the time, place, and culture in which they live. All artwork is created within a historical context that reflects both individual and cultural ideology. The audience also incorporates its own cultural values, experiences, bias, and preferences when viewing, interpreting, and judging artwork. Visual representation is the production of meaning through the use of signs to signify concepts and values. These signs construct knowledge or "maps of meaning" that are a result of social conventions and are constructed within the very heart of individual cultures.

Critical investigation of the political, social and economic content of a work of art should start with an analysis of:

- what it is about,
- by and for whom a work was created,
- what types of historical information are included, and
- what types of information are not.

The analysis of this information can expose the multiple methods through which ideas and knowledge are constructed. By moving through a series of organized steps of analysis, both individuals and groups may begin to understand the paradoxically complex simplicity of change. In order to promote changes within the dominant structure of knowledge, individual assumptions and cultural stereotypes need to be defined.

Defined behaviorally, the concept of "others" or other people not like ourselves developed as communities expanded into other communities. It is one method of placing dissimilar groups of people into a structure that explains or makes sense of these differences, as well as defining what is similar. With this in mind, it can be suggested that we are all, at some time, considered "the other," although the experience of being "the other" is framed by a number of attributes that are overwhelmingly biased. Distinctions between resources and opportunities result in economic, political, geographical, military, and educational advantages and disadvantages, which in turn define the cultural power structures in and through which we all live. Using the visual arts to investigate the prevalent ideas about a culture can add to our understanding of current biases, stereotypes and beliefs, and can support the reflective stance needed to bring about cultural awareness.

Here are a few assumptions about cultures:

- Culture is an "amalgam of materialistic and spiritual elements determining the

existence and political and economic consolidation of nations" (Kabakchi 1985:4).

- Culture is a category of reality that is "filtered through the soul" (Doldzenko 1992: 28).
- Culture can be framed into specific categories: "a production of man, an anthropological phenomenon, a realization of the ideal, an activity, a dialogue and a historical wholeness" (Sinagutullin citing Gurevich 2003:40).
- "Culture can be thought of as a construction—it constructs us and we construct it" (Erickson 1997:39).
- An historical perspective describes Native culture as "subject to US policies of assimilation through property rights, education, religion, health and social services. The US federal systems have reduced Native from original sovereignty to the legal status of wards of the government" (Benson 2001:3).
- A counter-assertion describes Native culture as "multivocal dialogue within an endless re-creation of integrity and identity […] involving a complex process of survival, adaptation and renewal" (Benson 2001:3).
- "Culture is the integrated pattern of human behavior that includes thought, communication, actions, customs, beliefs, values and institutions of a racial, ethnic, religious, or social group" (Adams, Bell, and Griffin 1997:253).

For this discussion, I've appropriated a visual metaphor created by Holtzman (2000) to communicate how simply culture can be defined. Culture can be bisected into surface culture and deep culture. Think of culture as a tree in which surface culture is the above-ground part of the tree and deep culture is the roots below the surface. "Surface culture is easily visible and most readily used to form descriptions of people from other groups. Deep culture reflects less observable values, beliefs and customs" (Holtzman 2000:22). Using the idea of both surface and deep cultural qualities can help to identify individuals and groups on a more competent level. Surface traits like food, language, music, art, dance, clothing, hunting, farming and appearance are easily visible, while deep culture situated in the treatment of elders, beliefs, values, religion, child rearing, courtship, pedagogy, and marriage are not as easily perceived. Only through a close and intimate relationship within the culture, as a member or long-term participant, would these cultural traits be known and understood. Upon seeing the tree diagram, a Native Alaskan teacher shared that he had used a similar representation in the form of an iceberg to represent the many ways of knowing people and cultures. Much of an iceberg rests under the surface of the water.

Historically, surface culture provided the information that was easily accessible and used to define Native people. Time, language, and money; elements needed to support further knowledge, was not available. Ideas, thoughts, and images were created according to the role in which Native people were redesigned. "Colonists in New England disregarded reality and invented their own representations of Indians. What emerged to justify dispossessing them was the racialization of Indian 'savagery.' Indian heathenism and alleged laziness which can be viewed as inborn group traits that rendered them naturally incapable of civilization" (Takaki 1993:53). This type of application of culturally biased and constructed profiles forms the foundation for stereotypes. "A stereotype is a preconceived and oversimplified generalization about a particular social group" (Holtzman 2000:41), and based on knowledge only accessible at the surface level of culture.

Central to any discussion about Native Americans, and as part of the pre-service training for art educators, a survey of personal beliefs and knowledge is shared through a series of open-ended questions that vary according to the make-up of the audience. These are geared to form a basis of information, to reveal what types of information the group knows, and how we, as a group were taught the beliefs that we have. This begins by allowing the group to take the questions home to family and friends and to allow time for some personal reflection. Often, these are simple questions but rarely asked, and so time is needed to find the answers. And, importantly, the group is asked to contribute questions that they believe are significant to finding out exactly what forms the foundation of our information about Native Americans. In education and, I would assume, in any research, you must define what is already known before you can move into new territory.

The most common questions are listed below, followed by several quotations that reflect the changing ideas and voice through which Native ideas are articulated. Please note that each of the selections has its basis in either historical or contemporary references and is used here to clarify individual constructions of knowledge. By no means does this imply that I agree or wish to sustain any of the descriptions used here. They are all considered simultaneously both facts and fiction, depending on the source, and are meant to be used as a beginning point for discussion, not the final word. My primary objective is to explore the ways in which cultural ideas and beliefs are manipulated to support dominant cultural practices. In this particular case, dominant cultural practices refer to those regarding the framework most generally accepted by contemporary white Americans.

What Does It Mean To Be an Indian?

"Some writers, I have been grieved to see, have written down the character of the North American Indian, as dark, relentless, cruel and murderous in the last degree; with scarce a quality to stamp their existence of a higher order than that of brutes: whilst others have given them a high rank, as I feel myself authorized to do…" (George Catlin, American painter, 1842, p. 15).

"We never thought about it. To tell you the truth, we didn't know we were Indians. All we knew is we were families living on the reserve in Ontario and everybody farming my dad's way. We were too busy working to worry about being an Indian" (Rick Hill, Tuscarora, 2001, p. 165).

"Here's part of the dilemma. For me, it's an issue of identity. Can I say I am an Indian if I have never been enrolled in a tribe?" (Loretta Williams, Shinnecock, 2001, p. 163).

Where Are All the Indians?

"Throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the myth of the vanishing Indian was prevalent in American society. As Indians were being relegated to reservations and forced to adopt American values and practices, there was a growing concern among Americans that these peoples' diverse, and quite novel, identities and traditions were about to be lost and forgotten" (Erika Kneen Newberry Library, http://www.newberry.org/nl/collections/virtua.html; accessed February 3, 2004).

"American Indians were first reported as a separate race in 1860…the 1890 census was the first to count American Indians throughout the country…. Census 2000 showed that

American Indians numbered 4.1 million or 1.5% in the U.S. population of 281.4 million.… Four out of every ten Indians live in the West.… The places with the largest American Indian population are New York and L.A.… Notice is hereby given of the current list of 562 recognized and eligible for funding and services from the Bureau of Indian Affairs by virtue as their status of Indian tribes" (U. S. Census, http://www.census.gov/pubinfo/www/FRN02.pdf; accessed May 25, 2004).

"We Are Not Vanishing. We Are Not Conquered. We Are As Strong As Ever." (United American Indians of New England, http://home.earthlink.net/~uainendom/; accessed June 4, 2004).

How Does the U.S. Government Categorize Someone as an Indian?

"Knowledge of a people obtained by direct observation and by intercourse with them is called ethnological…The proportion of the length to the head has been much used in describing and classifying races" (Pliny Earle Goddard, Curator of Ethnology, Museum of American Indian, 1921).

"The term American Indian and Alaska Native refers to people having origins in any of the original peoples of North America and who maintain tribal affiliation or community attachment" (U. S Census, http://www.census.gov/prod/2002pubs/c2kbr01-15.pdf; March 13, 2004).

"It has nothing to do with blood quantum; it has everything to do with philosophy and heart" (Greg Borland, Cheyenne River Sioux, 2001, p. 163).

What Names Are Used To Describe Indians?

"When Columbus landed on the shore of San Salvador, he thought he had reached the East Indies. In a letter which he wrote in February, 1493, he calls the natives of the island, "Indios". The word "Indios" or "Indian", in spite of its misleading meaning, has passed into common usage" (Ben Hunt, Educator, 1954, p. 8).

"A word about terminology: most 'Native Americans' refer to themselves (among themselves) as 'Indians'. They recognize that the term is based on Columbus' mistake…In any case, 'Indian' is a coined term, as is 'Native American'…. Many if not most Native people prefer to be referred to by their specific nation…. Most Nations' own term for themselves in their own languages translates as 'The People'" (Kathy Kerner, Cherokee, 1998, p. 8).

"When you affirm that you are Lakota…you're affirming that you have adopted this view of reality; that means you have a commitment to ensure that the people live. What does it mean to be a Lakota? That is what it means. What does it mean to be an Indian? It means nothing" (Gerald Cliford, Oglala Sioux, 2001, p. 167).

What Types of Words Do You Believe Best Describe Indians?

"The expression 'Red Man' was used to describe the Indian by the white traders. It came from the fact that some of the Indian tribes painted themselves with red oxide" (Ben Hunt, Educator and Author, 1956, p. 8).

"My enthusiastic admiration of man in the honest and elegant simplicity of nature… shall live again upon canvas as…the living monuments of a noble race" (George Catlin, American painter, 1844:15).

“I am a boarding school Indian. When I say this, *you* know something about me already” (Black Bear, Blackfeet Indian, 2001:164).

“Europeans today see Natives without being able to imagine our Grandmothers…. Europeans are blinded by Hollywood images. How sad” (Lee Maracle, Stoh:lo 2001:168).

In What Areas Have Indians Contributed?

“American Indians have participated with distinction in United States military actions for more than 200 years. Their courage, determination, and fighting spirit were recognized by American military leaders as early as the 18th century. *I think they* [Indians] *can be made of excellent use, as scouts and light troops.*—Gen. George Washington, 1778” (http://www.history.navy.mil/faqs/faq61-1.htm; accessed March 13, 2004).

“The discovery of the New World brought about the pursuit of raw materials and markets, which in turn led to worldwide European colonization. The Americas’ contributions to world culture included tobacco, rubber, a new form of cotton, hundreds of new plants of medicinal value—aloe vera and aspirin, turkeys, toboggans, moccasins, and snowshoes. Native Americans cultivated more than 50 plant species that are now of major significance worldwide. Maize (“Indian corn”), beans, potatoes, tomatoes, chili peppers, chicle (gum of the sapodilla—chief ingredient of chewing gum), cacao (chocolate), pineapples, squashes, artichokes, cashews, and maple sugar were all given to the world by Native Americans” (http://www.fourwindstx.org/contributions.htm; accessed March 13, 2004).

In fact, there are too many contributions to actually list here, but I hope that you get the idea.

As you might assume, these questions are meant to create dialogue and elicit comments in order to begin the process of creating an awareness and consciousness of those ideas that have helped to construct both personal and cultural profiles. However, I leave the most important query for last, as it leads into looking at the “how” questions of knowledge: Where Did You Learn About Indians?

Where Did You Learn About Indians?

The variety of responses reveals the multitude of methods of constructing knowledge and includes stories, books, school, movies, music, family, birthrights, museums, television programs, travel, postcards, Walt Disney, geographical places and names, maps, food, clothing, etc. What becomes immediately recognizable is the abundance of visual information that is used. This is even more notable in the school populations whose experiences are limited to and often solely based on whatever information can be gleaned from popular forms of culture found in television, videos, movies and advertising.

Examples of What We Commonly See or Recognize as “Indian”

The next step is to ask for examples to be brought to class; things we commonly see or otherwise recognize as Indian. Without disappointment, these references include several Land of Lakes Butter Indian maidens; a reference to sports teams such as the Cleveland Indians, Washington Redskins, and the local school team of the Warriors; a selection of children’s books like Longfellow’s *Hiawatha,* and W. Ben Hunts’ *Indian Crafts and Lore*; the nursery rhyme of *Ten Little Indians*; literature from the Boy Scouts of America and the YMCA’s Indian Guides

program; and at least one Buffalo nickel. Becoming (re)aware of these objects and images, and whatever ideas we have attached to them provides the building blocks upon which we can now begin to look at the historical work in a more critical nature.

Visual documentation began almost immediately with the first contact between Europeans and Native American Indian. Dates and locations of these interactions are varied and disputed, making the remaining extant images even more significant. The earliest known images date back to the fifteenth century. Drawn by European explorers, missionaries, wanderers, and scientists, these images were used to substantiate their own missions as part of their collected data. The use of photographic images was not available for another 300 years. However, their drawn images were treated as though they possessed the fidelity of a photograph. They were believed to be undisputable documentation that recorded the truthful appearances of things in their natural state. Taken at face value, these visual documents provided a mixture of perceived and believed descriptions of early Native Americans.

This early work can reveal the mixture of reality and cultural projection. A painting depicting Pocahontas as the wife of Jamestown settler John Rolfe portrays her dressed in the socially acceptable clothing of high European society. Attributed to Simon van de Passe and painted circa 1616, it is now located in the National Portrait Gallery of the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D. C., and easily viewed at http://www.npg.si.edu/pubs/profile/win02/poca.htm. On the surface, it appears that her conversion from heathen to Christianity was successful, that her life has improved through her fortuitous marriage to John Rolfe, and that she has the privileges accorded to all women of her station. However, another reading may be offered that a marriage advertisement of an Indian Princess to a European would suggest the "new fathering," hence hierarchy, of the newly explored America, and therefore evokes an invitation to sire a nation, tame nature through the wild Indian woman, and contribute to the reduction of an Indian male to a superfluous status or even eliminate the role altogether.

The sexual nature of native women as "libidinous beyond measure" (Lubin 1994:29) was reflected in the engravings by explorer Theodor de Bry, available at http://www.philaprintshop.com/debry.html. In particular, his depiction of *America* shows a chorus line of unclothed native women lined up as "they practise [sic] the full extreme of hospitality" (Washburn 1964:7). The European-constructed theme of open sexuality in nymph-like native muses showed Native women as "intemperate sensualists" (Lubin 1994:28). Native women were often portrayed as violent and beastly through the abundance of visual representations of them as sinful, wild animal-like exotic women.

Johannes Strandanus' 1589 depiction of the *Discovery of America: Vespucci Landing in America* (accessible at http://www.people.cornell.edu/pages/lib2/) shows a seductive, nude Native woman as the symbol of America greeting the great scientist Vespucci. The scene is symbolic of the "come and get it, baby" frame of mind that factored into the newly accepted socially ideal philosophy that America needed to be tamed and conquered. The effect of each of these paintings, and others very much like them, helped to transform Native people into both a challenge and a de-humanization as they became iconic material to be conquered and consumed by civilized men.

"Certainly one of the most troubling issues for a young nation was how to position itself diplomatically, philosophically and even aesthetically in terms of its European predecessors…and to maintain its high moral ground, and yet situate itself, with fullest

advantage, in terms of indigenous peoples who possessed prior claim to the land" (Lubin 1994:5).

There was a period of increased activity during the early nineteenth century as President Thomas Jefferson mixed national identity with the conquest of the west. Representation of Indians during this period of growth is limited. What does exist through the work of painters like George Catlin (http://www.archives.uc.edu/exhibits/catlin/catweb.html), John Mix Stanley (http://www.artcyclopedia.com/artists/stanley_john_mix.html), Edward Hicks and Seth Eastman (http://www.pbs.org/ktca/setheastman/) projected a somewhat peculiar style of presentation of Indians. Their styles reflected the numerous national ideas of Indians and the numerous depictions in which Indians were assimilated into the American identity. Attention was predominately given to the depiction of the Indian male, as evidenced by an overwhelming collection of portraits of men. In contrast, there are few portraits of women and even fewer that can be considered accurate. Disguised in the veil of history, many portraits of native people, both literary and visually, represent the stereotypical classifications in which Native people have always been placed. These would include the Native as sacred, as child-like, as savage, as an exotic object of desire, as a domestic, as a victim, and as a measurement of conquest and wealth. Whether or not the artists intended to suggest support, either morally or otherwise, for governmental policies, the existence of these images fed into, supported, and provided historical evidence that could and did substantiate the justifications for "westward expansionism," for the denial of human rights, and for the displacement of Native people based on multiple interpretations of notions of racial superiority.

Interpretation of art work is a combination of personal values and beliefs mixed with the tools of criticism. Simple analysis is not only accessible to everyone but can begin by using the following guide. First take a minute or so to look at the art and list all the things that you recognize. In our case we are using a historical photograph. Look careful at the photograph located at http://www.geh.org/taschen/htmlsrc6/m197200010001_ful.html#topofimage and register your initial responses to it. Most people use the first six seconds to make a judgment about art by using common questions such as: Do you like this? Why or why not? Try and make connections between what you see and what is not included. Consider the following questions through reflection, writing and/or dialogue:

- How was this picture made?
- Who made this?
- When was it made?
- What are the main ideas or components of this photograph?
- Is this a natural or staged photograph?
- What is the purpose of photographing someone in this setting and posture?
- What message do you think the photographer was trying to communicate?
- Who was the intended audience?

Now read the official information about this photograph: "Edward S. Curtis, 'On the Shores of Clear Lake,' 1924. This selection from Edward Curtis's 1920s photographs of the North American Indian demonstrates Curtis's ability to preserve a marvelous culture, which was being inexorably destroyed, without sacrificing the spirit of that culture. The Curtis collection is one of the largest photographic archives ever produced by a single artist and probably the most profound representation of pure Indian culture ever assembled. Curtis'

completed publication, *The North American Indian*, consists of 20 volumes of text with 1,500 small plates, plus 20 portfolios of 36 unbound gravure plates, comprising a total of approximately 2,500 images. The 36 plates on vellum in this exhibition include portraits detailing the culture of the following tribes in the California region: Wailaki, Wappo, Maidu, Miwok, Chukchansi, Yuelmani, Yokuts and Yaudanchi and graphically capturing the beauty of the western coast where these tribes lived."

Now return to the photograph once more and reconsider the information that you have. Have your ideas changed? Is there enough information here to satisfy your curiosity? What types of questions would you like to have known about this photograph and the photographer? Do you have a greater awareness of this photograph?

Try this again but with a different artwork. Use the same approach as you did on the photograph. First look at the work, determine what you see, then try to connect the information with what you already know and what the artist has presented. Now read the official information that accompanies this image.

Jaune Quick to See Smith's *The Red Mean: Self Portrait*, accessible at http://www.smith.edu/artmuseum/collections/nativeamerican/, is a powerful statement of identity as well as a drawing lesson. The medicine wheel here is a measure of perfect proportion, very similar to the classical Greek idea of the Golden Measure. *The Red Mean* (Quick to See Smith 1996) is based on Leonardo DaVinci's drawing titled *Vitruvian Man* and represents the ideal proportions of man. The measurement of man's height compared to his arm span is equal and is communicated through the circle form. All points from one side to the other of a circle are equidistant. Smith notes that man's height and arm span equal seven heads while women's equal six, and points out that we only learned the men's measurement in school. So Smith uses DaVinci's concept, and traced her own body as the measurement for woman. In contrast to DaVinci's measurement of man which was called "The Golden Mean," there existed no reference or name for the measure of woman, so Smith called it the "Red Mean," as an Indian and feminine measurement. Three vertical sections represent the body, the mind and the spirit. In this interpretation, the circular frame stands for the spirit as well as the medicine wheel. The medicine wheel communicates multiple information. It measures places of prayer on the landscape, marks solstices, is used as a star chart, marks the four cardinal points, and is used in many ceremonies.

Another kind of measurement that appears is the enrollment number, which was used originally to proportion out land to the Native people. At the time of initiation, many Native people refused to be counted and numbered as part of the original Indian census, while other Native people, trying to assimilate into the "dominant culture," refused to acknowledge their heritage. In reverse, others married into the Native people to take advantage of the status of being an Indian and receive land and cloth rights. Currently, this number has become politically charged as the method by which one could prove their ancestry. The lack of this number denies people of Native origin any tribal or governmental funding or ancestral rights.

In summary, Smith's statement in each of these works suggests the multiple ways in which Native people are identified and in how other people have tried to identify those who are called Native Americans.

Now return to the painting once more and reconsider the information that you have. Have your ideas changed? Is there enough information here to satisfy your curiosity? What types of questions would you like to have known about this painting and painter? Do you have

a greater awareness of this painting?

Both of these art works attempt to deal with the identity of Native men. The photograph acts more like a visual document than the painting, which is more impressionistic, and demonstrates the technological advances of the field of photography as well as the cultural ideology of the nineteenth century. Quick to See Smith's painting reveals methods of appropriation as she presents a physical and metaphoric layering of cultural ideas we now recognize as contemporary and postmodern. Curtis is a white, educated, nineteenth-century man, whereas Quick to See Smith represents a Native American, educated, twenty-first-century woman. Do these bits of information help in your interpretation and in your critical analysis of looking at these similar thematic-based works? Then you have successfully (re)constructed your knowledge by using the analytic skills of art criticism.

How can the tools of critical analysis of art work be of help in the (re)construction of information and the transformation of research methodology? As I have mentioned before, all artwork is created within a historical context that reflects both individual and cultural ideology. Changes in technology, behavior, agriculture, etc., contribute to and are reflected through the ideas and construction of creative works. As a researcher and scholar, art becomes a silent partner, because the verification of similar information and knowledge can also be found through numbers, measurements, and controlled environments. Noting the current shifts, as demonstrated in the interpretative analysis of artists Curtis and Quick to See Smith, can help to reveal the multiple ways in which cultural information is communicated.

(Re) construction of knowledge is a gradual and often invisible movement in the creation of ideas through which the process and eventually the product is changed. In this case, the process of creating art is as important as the end result. And it is the transforming process that reveals the ways in which cultural knowledge is being reconstructed. Transformation for many Native and non-Native people is already taking place through the use of both historic, traditional, and contemporary voices; through cultural ownership and the reclaiming of the position of authorship from outside of a culture; through the appropriation of dominant cultural practices in education; through the changing of federal laws for Native people; economically through casinos, tribal businesses, and resource management that support Native schools, college tuition, cultural centers, local economy, technology, and land management; and through the main streaming of power and leadership positions such as museums curators, teachers, professors, administrators, counselors, attorneys, judges, artists, and writers. These are the positions of power that can change attitudes, form and reform ideas, and challenge Native stereotypes. And for many indigenous people it is through this type of proactive cultural behavior that art is being used to reconstruct cultural knowledge, and more importantly, that the field of traditional research is slowly being transformed.

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