OSAGE RIBBON WORK AND THE EXPRESSION OF OSAGE NATIONALISM: RE-IMAGINING APPROACHES TO MATERIAL CULTURE AND NATIONHOOD

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This project focuses on the use of ribbon work—the cutting, folding, and sewing of colored ribbons into geometric patterns—within the Osage Nation. Today, ribbon work designs appear on t-shirts, jewelry, tattoos, posters, campaign signs, and the Osage Nation website. These examples point to the ways that ribbon work has become a symbol of Osage nationhood and community in various contexts and how the symbolic use of ribbon work is deployed as tool for building a strong Osage future. This project explores the ways that Osage ribbon work has developed through and against colonial processes, becoming a symbol of Osage nationhood. This examination of ribbon work contributes to a growing body of scholarship within indigenous visual studies that examines the links between art and sovereignty. Through an engagement with decolonization, this project also contributes to discussions of nation building from a gendered and indigenous perspective.
To my family, I couldn’t have done this without your encouragement and support.
PREFACE

Note to reader

Today anthropologists are often expected to situate themselves and their perspectives within their work; indigenous anthropologists, however, are held to an altogether higher level of expectation. Since the beginning of my graduate studies, I have felt uncomfortable with my status as both a citizen of the Osage Nation and as an anthropologist. Some of this discomfort rests on my own insecurities, but most of my unease has been the result of questions I've received from colleagues about how I will maintain distance and remain "objective" while conducting research on my own community and family.

Fortunately, many indigenous scholars have already addressed these questions within their own work.¹ The growing body of indigenous scholarship, and my own conversations with some of these scholars, has helped me address some of these questions. In November 2012, I was fortunate enough to have lunch with anthropologist K. Tsianina Lomawaima, a descendant of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation. Her book They Called it Prairie Light: The Story of Chilocco Indian School examines the creativity, adaptability, and resistance of American Indian children at this school. The reminiscences, thoughts, and memories of her own father, Curtis Carr, who attended Chilocco in the 1920s and 1930s, anchor her narrative. During our conversation, I spoke with her about whether or not a scholar can be "too close" to a research project. She told me that throughout her career, and especially during her research on the Indian school her father attended, she was approached by many people who thought she was "too close" to her research. She told me that there is nothing wrong with
Indian people studying their own communities and nations, and made the following comment that has stayed with me throughout this project, “Michel Foucault is a white French man, studying other white French men. People don't question his research, so don't let them question yours.” This type of feedback and encouragement, which I have also received from various indigenous colleagues of mine at UNC, has been incredibly helpful throughout my research.

In *Decolonizing Methodologies*, Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith concludes that in order for an indigenous scholar to conduct research on issues that are important within their own communities, they must first situate their own perspective (1999:12). Following Smith, and others, I would like to situate my perspective as an Osage citizen, nationalist, mother, and novice ribbon-worker who believes in the incredible potential of the Osage Nation and its citizens. Throughout the text, I have also included personal narratives that demonstrate how my own experiences have influenced this research in various ways. In her work on the social and political constructions of race and national identity within the Cherokee Nation, anthropologist Circe Sturm incorporates what she calls a “southern storytelling aesthetic” throughout the text (2002:xvii). This stylistic tool—marked in her book with a line drawn down the page, adjacent to the text—allows Sturm, as she explains, “to present an angle on events, experiences, and even myself that I otherwise could not” (2002:xvii). Furthermore, this technique also highlights the “highly subjective” nature of ethnographic writing, which Sturm describes as a form of non-fictionalized storytelling (2002:xvii). In using this “narrative southern voice,” Sturm conveys the “crafted, filtered, and subjective nature” of her descriptions in particular as well as the project of ethnographic writing more broadly (2002:xviii).
In addition to describing how subjectivity, anthropological theory, and the ethnographic gaze permeate her research, Sturm also marks time as an important filter impacting ethnographic work. Historian Philip J. Deloria has also confronted this issue within his own work on the connections between self and subject. Deloria recounts a story about his experience riding the bus as a sixth grader near the Lummi reservation in Washington State; it is a story that evokes ideas about identity, race, culture, and space (2002:26). Deloria, however, recognizes that this particular history is not the story of his sixth grade self, explaining, “I am certain I did not experience it in the way I have recalled it” (2002:27). This 2002 telling of an experience that occurred in 1971 is not incorrect, but rather, as Deloria explains, “codified out of direct experience and then slowly altered with time” (2002:27). The use of personal stories raises important questions about the way the present engages with the past in various ways and allows Deloria to situate himself and his subjects within his work.

Drawing upon these ideas, each section of this text begins with a personal narrative, which is followed by a shift to a more formal academic narrative. As Sturm argues, “even though experience has always been a great source of legitimization for anthropologists, I find it is more honest to acknowledge these filters up front” (2002:xviii). In placing these personal narratives at the beginning of each section, it is my hope that the reader will be able to understand this project through my own situated perspective and better understand the experience that filters this research. While I have attempted to demonstrate the diversity and complexity of Osage experiences, academic writing is inherently limited and this examination is representative of my ongoing research on the dynamic processes of Osage ribbon work and nation building.
Terminology

The majority of words used to describe indigenous peoples and concepts are problematic in some way or another. Recognizing the thorny nature of such language and elucidating the reasons for using specific terminology contributes to decolonization. Therefore, I would like to make a few clarifications about the terms I have chosen to use within this text. Even though ribbon work is an art form practiced by many other American Indian nations, this project examines how ribbon work is utilized and deployed within the context of the Osage Nation. Therefore, I will use the term “Osage” most often. However, in some instances, this project speaks to broader issues surrounding indigenous communities throughout the United States and Canada. While there is no term that remains unquestionable, I have chosen to use “American Indian” and the abbreviated form “Indian”—the term most commonly used within Osage communities—in reference to these trends. When speaking about more widespread issues of settler colonialism that pertain to the global population of communities and people that reach beyond American Indians, I will use the term “indigenous.”

In my previous research I have often used the words “tribe” and “member,” terms widely used to describe American Indian polities and the people that belong to them. While these terms remain important tools that contribute to the empowerment American Indian polities, particularly within legal contexts, these terms work differently in the context of academic writing. Speaking of this particular phenomenon, former president of the Navajo Nation, Albert Hale, said, “I beg you, those of you who are in academia, when you are writing papers, watch out for these things. Don’t refer to us as tribes when you’re trying to build our nationhood, or advance our sovereignty. Refer to us as nations” (Lemont 2006:88–
While Hale specifically references the use of the word “tribe,” the concept of “membership” similarly works to undermine political authority. As Dennison argues, “citizens belong to sovereign nations, while you can be a member of any number of clubs or groups with little real authority” (2012:13). In an effort to contribute to a scholarship that engages with decolonization and advances the sovereignty of Indian nations, in almost all cases, I prefer to use the terms “nation” and “citizen” in my own writing.

In 2010, the Osage Nation Congress passed a resolution (ONCR 10-30) that proposed, “the Osage Nation Constitution be amended to replace all references to ‘membership’ with ‘citizenship’ and to replace ‘eligibility for membership’ with ‘right to citizenship.’” This legislation, sponsored by Congressman William Supernaw, was enacted with eleven of the twelve members of the Osage Nation Congress voting in favor of the resolution. ONCR 10-30 was one of seven proposed Constitutional Amendments placed on the ballot for the June 4, 2012 General Election, and each of the seven amendments failed to meet the required approval of 65% of the Osage electorate. Although ONCR 10-30 ultimately failed, 47.6 percent of Osage the electorate voted in favor of amending the Constitution to use the terms “nation” and “citizen” rather than “tribe” and “member.” ONCR 10-30 reflects the particularly complicated nature of using these four words, and the fact that each of the terms is used within Osage communities. Therefore, while I have made the decision to use the terms “nation” and “citizen” in my own writing, I also use direct quotes from other Osage citizens and scholars who use the terms “tribe” and “member.”

As previously described, many of the words used to describe American Indians are problematic for various reasons. In the “Ribbon working an Osage future” section of this text a particularly problematic term, “red man,” is used in the name of an Osage-owned business.
Three Osage sisters opened the “Red Man Store”—which specialized in making ribbon work and clothing worn by individuals participating in certain Osage social institutions or powwows—in 1958. While it would be easier to explain the use of “red man” in the name of an Indian-owned business as a sign of the times in which it was opened, this type of relegation fails to explore the complexity of this terminology and its use in the name “Red Man Store.”

The origin of the term “red” is most often attributed to early European explorers’ accounts in which Indians were described as wearing red paint on their faces. During the eighteenth century, race emerged as a means for the European categorization of human difference and “red” became a descriptor of the racial category occupied by American Indians. The creation of racial hierarchies—with “white” Europeans at the top and “black” Africans and “red” Indians at the bottom—was used as a justification for the European appropriation of the lands and labor of “red” and “black” people (Shoemaker 1997:625). As a result of this, descriptions of American Indian peoples as “red” are most often characterized as derogatory and racist terms that perpetuate American Indian stereotypes and contribute to the continued colonization of American Indians. More precisely, the racialization of American Indian identity undermines the sovereignty of Indian nations. Still, this explanation fails to recognize the role that American Indians played in the historical emergence of the term “red.”

In “How Indians Got to Be Red,” historian Nancy Shoemaker critiques the above explanations for the historical development of race, and argues that by focusing too narrowly on how Europeans construct images of others, the roles non-Europeans play in image-making and knowledge production have been obscured (1997:625). Shoemaker describes how
American Indians, and southeastern Indians in particular, referred to themselves as “red” in order to describe biological, cultural, and political differences in early eighteenth-century diplomatic dialogue with Europeans (1997:627). Even after the term “red” became a part of Euro-American racialized discourse and was appropriated in mainstream contexts—through novels, films, advertising, and sports teams—as Shoemaker explains, American Indians “could always use ‘red’ to claim a positive identity and to make a statement about difference … or to articulate American Indian grievances” (1997:643). Shoemaker’s analysis and the “Red Man Store” speak to the ways that American Indians play an active role in constructing representations and images of themselves.8
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INTRODUCTION

When I arrived as a first-year graduate student at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 2011, my advisor Jean Dennison was working on the final draft of her book about the 2004-2006 Osage Nation governmental reform process. During one of our early conversations, she described to me that she wanted to use ribbon work as a metaphor for colonial entanglement. While researching Osage ribbon work, she came across my essay in the Lambda Alpha Journal. I was surprised to hear that she found my essay simply by typing, “Osage ribbon work” in a Google search. After our discussion, I immediately went home and looked for the article myself.

This was an essay I wrote when I was an undergraduate student at the University of Denver in 2008. I submitted the original essay, “Finding Our Way: Osage Ribbonwork and Revival,” in a writing competition for the Lambda Alpha National Collegiate Honors Society for Anthropology. I never heard anything from the society and therefore, assumed my paper was not meritorious.

After reading the essay for the first time in four years, I was incredibly disappointed in what I had written. As a citizen of the Osage Nation, I began my studies in anthropology in an effort to tell “our stories” from an Osage perspective. However, this essay did not present a different perspective, rather, it reinforced many of the stereotypes about Indian people that I so earnestly wanted to challenge as an Osage anthropologist. By using words like acculturation, loss, traditional, decline, hybridization, and erosion in reference to Osage “culture,” I bought into the colonial construction of the disappearing Indian. I was
disappointed that my essay perpetuated the myth of Indian extinction, and I was embarrassed that it was going to be available online in perpetuity.

Upon further reflection, I realized that graduate school provided me with an opportunity to re-evaluate this particular project. During my undergraduate studies, I did not have the opportunity to take classes from any indigenous faculty. Furthermore, I was not introduced to “post-”colonialism or comparable theoretical approaches until my senior year, after I had written the original essay. In graduate school, however, I have been fortunate enough to work with various indigenous faculty members and gain a broader understanding of how decolonizing methodologies can inform my work as an Osage anthropologist. These experiences have empowered me to revisit this previous project in a way that opens possibilities for an Osage future. This paper represents a re-imagining of my previous research on Osage ribbon work. Even though this project is particularly focused on the Osage Nation, it also speaks to broader issues within other American Indian nations and indigenous communities throughout the world.

This project examines Osage ribbon work through an engagement with decolonization. More specifically, it draws upon the works of scholars examining issues of indigenous sovereignty, nationhood and nationalism, self-representation, self-determination, art, and the everyday lives of indigenous peoples in ways that acknowledge and engage the complexity and multiplicity that characterizes indigenous experiences (Chaat Smith 2009:75). In a recent article, “Stitching Osage Governance into the Future,” Dennison elaborates upon the ribbon work metaphor she introduced in Colonial Entanglement:

In picking up the pieces of fabric, both those torn apart by the colonial process and those created by it, and stitching them into their own original patterns, Osage people have artfully formed the tangled ribbons of colonialism into their own statements of Osage sovereignty. Osage ribbon work thus reminds us that it is possible to create new and
powerful forms out of an ongoing colonial process. Likewise, the twenty-first-century Osage Nation, with its six-year-old tripartite constitutional government, provides a rich example of how indigenous people are taking the entangled threads of settler colonialism and beginning to weave them into new forms. (2013:117)

For Dennison, ribbon work provides a visual metaphor that represents how the Osage Nation has taken the tools and raw materials obtained through the settler-colonial process and twisted them into something that is uniquely Osage. While Dennison’s work focuses more specifically on the Osage Nation constitutional reform process that took place between 2004 and 2006, her metaphor brings ribbon work into broader discussions about Osage nationalism. Building upon this metaphor, my project examines more deeply the ways that Osage ribbon work contributes to the larger project of Osage nation building as well as how ribbon work is deployed in different contexts in order to reflect and shape Osage nationalism.

In its examination of Osage nation building, this project encounters the ongoing settler colonial process in which the Osage Nation—and other indigenous nations within settler colonies—is situated. Settler colonialism refers to the “land-centred project” that aims to eliminate indigenous societies in order to gain access to and dominion over indigenously controlled territory (Wolfe 2006: 393). Historian Patrick Wolfe argues that the central guiding principle for settler colonies like the United States, Canada, or Australia is the “logic of elimination” (2006:388). Settler colonies employ various strategies such as race or social evolution as part of this logic of elimination in order to deny indigenous authority and justify the appropriation indigenously controlled lands. Settler colonialism is an ongoing process of subjugation that is not dependent, as Wolfe contends, “on the presence or absence of the formal apparatus of the state” (2006:393). Above all, the logic of elimination works primarily to deny future possibilities for indigenous peoples (Dennison 2012:6).
The analytical frame of my earlier essay “Finding Our Way: Osage Ribbonwork and Revival,” focused on various problematic constructions of Osage “culture” that ultimately renders the Osage Nation as a static and homogenous entity. Even though diversity and heterogeneity are widely acknowledged as key characteristics of nationhood, Indian nations are often expected to be homogenous entities, located in a mythical past (Dennison 2012:77). One of the characteristics of settler colonialism is a rendering of the indigenous population as “out of time and place” in contemporary society; such constructions enable the settler state to justify the elimination of indigenous peoples and the appropriation of their lands. By using words such as traditional, loss, decline, erosion, and acculturation, my initial engagement with ribbon work contributes to the erasure of indigenous people.

The use of anthropological analyses of indigenous “culture” within the logic of elimination represents one of many contributing factors to the complexity and ambiguity of the term itself. Ultimately, the problematic nature of “culture” has led many social scientists to avoid the term altogether (Dombrowski 2001:185). Some scholars, on the other hand, argue for a shift in using “culture” as an analytic category rather than abandoning “culture” completely. For example, anthropologist Kirk Dombrowski argues for what he terms “culturing,” which sets aside “the notion of culture as a fixed way of looking at the world” in order to examine the processes by which people create, disseminate, and contest shared meanings (2001:184-5). Dombrowski’s concept recognizes the contested and multiple meanings of “culture” and how it is constructed through various social, historical, and political processes. However, in order to avoid slippage between 1) the multiple, contested, and emic processes that are used to create “culture” within the Osage Nation and 2) the
analytic category of “culture” that can be used against the decolonizing goal of this research, this project moves away from the analytical frame of “culture” entirely.

Moving away from the analytical frame of “culture,” this work re-imagines how material culture—specifically American Indian expressive forms—can be examined through a deeper engagement with decolonization. Following Tuhiwai Smith’s assertion that decolonization “does not mean and has not meant a total rejection of all theory or research or Western knowledge,” the remainder of this introduction situates this project alongside other scholarly research contending with similar questions (Tuhiwai Smith 1999:39). While settler colonialism acts to suppress the possibilities for indigenous futures, this project seeks to examine the ways that ribbon work and its use within Osage nation building has been used as a form for resisting these limitations.

In a 2011 exhibit, *Objects of Exchange: Social and Material Transformation on the Late Nineteenth-Century Northwest Coast*, anthropologist and curator Aaron Glass raised questions about the classification of museum objects. Moving away from strictly ethnographic and art-historical approaches to material culture that categorically outline specific social or aesthetic forms, *Objects of Exchange* utilizes an interdisciplinary approach in which material culture collections “provide tangible evidence of historically specific social and cultural as well as artistic configurations” (2011:xiii). In addition to the application of recent interdisciplinary theories, Glass employs settler colonialism in order to more accurately portray the history and complexity surrounding the “capacity for objects to mediate intercultural encounters” and to “both express and help refigure social relations under highly variable conditions of power” (2011:7). Similar to the pieces analyzed in *Objects of Exchange*, ribbon work exemplifies the ways that material culture is at once
deeply imbedded in colonial encounters and capable of expressing self-representation (2011:5).

In her research on indigenous art in northern California, art and visual historian Jolene Rickard places art within a narrative of colonization and resistance. She examines how art operates within indigenous nations by asking, among other questions, “How does one articulate the relationship between art and sovereignty in Native nation-building?” (2002:143). Rickard makes the significant point that examinations of indigenous resistance and expressions of nationalism have been limited to recognizable and straightforward events like the occupation of Alcatraz, whereas examinations of indigenous art focus on “‘traditional’ cultural expressions” (2002:145). Working away from this, she introduces the concept of “retraditionalization,” arguing that “even the most ‘traditional’ form like basket-weaving, is actually a demonstration of indigenous renewal, survival, and political and environmental awareness … the notion of retraditionalization is tied to resistance” (2002:145). For Rickard, artistic expression challenges colonization, calls for self-determination, and “serves the larger goal of sovereignty” (2002:147).

Similarly, in her work on indigenous and ethnographic filmmaking, literature and film studies professor Michelle Raheja examines how the film Atanarjuat (The Fast Runner), directed and produced by Inuit filmmakers, addresses a dual Inuit and non-Inuit audience. Raheja explores the spaces within and between resistance and compliance in order to examine the ways indigenous filmmakers and actors engage with ethnographic film conventions while simultaneously “operating within and stretching the boundaries” drawn by these conventions (2007:1161). For Raheja, the resistance deployed by myriad colonized peoples “is not created equal in all situations,” but rather, “is located along a spectrum of
political and social efficacy” (2007: 1159-60). Calling her analytical approach “visual sovereignty,” Raheja argues:

This strategy offers up not only the possibility of engaging and deconstructing white-generated representations of indigenous people, but more broadly and importantly how it intervenes in larger discussions of Native American sovereignty by locating and advocating for indigenous cultural and political power both within and outside of Western legal jurisprudence. (2007:1161)

For Rickard and Raheja, creative acts of self-representation and resistance contribute to indigenous sovereignty and decolonization.

Drawing upon these ideas, historian Jenny Tone-Pah-Hote demonstrates the ways that “Kiowa men and women” have used expressive culture as a means of asserting their “national interests in public venues not traditionally viewed through the lenses of Federal Indian law and policy” (2009:iv). By focusing on the contributions of men and women, Tone-Pah-Hote speaks to the often-undervalued roles that women play in indigenous nation building. Looking specifically at the period between 1875 and 1939, Tone-Pah-Hote further argues that, “Kiowa people engaged expressive culture as a way of articulating ideas about their nation both for themselves, for other American Indian people in Oklahoma and elsewhere, and for Euro-American audiences” (2009:2). This research reveals the various expressive forms—such as dancing, beading, peyote jewelry, and painting—Kiowa people have used to maintain their autonomy and imagine Kiowa nationhood.

Similarly, as a creative form of self-representation largely produced by Osage women, ribbon work has become a symbol of Osage nationhood. This examination of ribbon work as an expression of Osage nationhood adds to this growing body of scholarship within indigenous visual studies. However, the focus of this project is unique in that it does not argue for sovereignty and nationhood as categories of analysis within indigenous visual studies, but rather it argues for the use of artistic expression as a means to analyze
indigenous nation-building. More specifically, the primary focus of this project is not to examine Osage ribbon work as “art,” but to examine the ways that Osage ribbon work is used in Osage nation building. Moreover, this examination—focusing on the use of ribbon work within the larger Osage nation-building project—contributes a female and indigenous centered perspective to the existing Eurocentric and male-dominated body of scholarship on nationhood.  

The following section examines how Osage ribbon work emerged through and against the settler colonial process, becoming a uniquely Osage form of self-representation and resistance. This section also reveals how Osage women contributed and continue to contribute to the Osage nation-building project through the use of ribbon work as a means for securing an Osage future for their own children and future generations.

The second section examines constructions of citizenship and belonging in order to present a concept of Osage nationalism that is marked through the creation of boundaries in both political and social contexts. This nationalism—or the way the Osage Nation is imagined—is informed by the diversity of Osage experience and represents an ongoing and contentious process representative of the power structures and inequalities inherent within all nation-building projects.

Informed by the previous sections, the third section examines the Osage In’lon-schka as an integral nation-building space in which particular ideas about Osage nationalism are imagined and re-imagined. Here, the construction of boundaries surrounding In’lon-schka participation marks belonging and simultaneously excludes those who do not participate in this social institution. Ribbon work, which marks belonging and individuality within this
nation building space, emerges as a symbol of the In’lon-schka and the national values promoted within it.

The final section examines how the Osage Nation government, politicians, and constituents deploy ribbon work as a symbolic tool for shaping and advancing specific constructions of Osage nationalism. Focusing largely on the virtual territory of the Osage Nation, this section interrogates the various mediums that are used to communicate Osage self-representation both within and outside of the Nation’s boundaries.

Ribbon work, like Osage nationalism, means different things to different people, and this project explores some of these contested meanings. Above all, ribbon work symbolizes the ways that Osage people creatively engage with the past, as a means for serving present needs and securing an Osage future.
RIBBON WORK

My initial interest in researching ribbon work emerged from my own personal connection to the art form. Ribbon work has always been an integral part of my life. Every summer for as long as I can remember, I have helped my mom go through boxes and boxes of silk ribbon scraps trying to find pieces of ribbon that can be used to make ribbon work for our family’s clothes for the annual In’lon-schka dances. In fact, many of the pictures on display at my family members’ homes were taken at these yearly dances. In addition to these framed photographs, my mother placed some of my great-grandmother’s ribbon work in frames so that we could enjoy them as a part of our daily lives. As the Smithsonian Institution and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, among other museums, contain ribbon work made by my great-grandmother, my family has always been proud of these priceless works of art on display in our own home.

Whenever I brought friends to my house for the first time, I would watch as they curiously examined the artwork that adorned our walls. I remember more than one of my friends responding to what they saw with “So, you’re like a real Indian?” or a similar sentiment. Today, I would probably respond to such a question by explaining that being an American Indian is a political status, based on the right of the 566 individual sovereign Indian nations to establish their own citizenship requirements. I would also explain how notions of “real Indians” position authenticity and culture as tied to a mythical past. Growing up, however, I often took such statements for what they were, rhetorical.
Inspired by my grandmother and an interest in learning more about how her ribbon work ended up in such renowned institutions, I chose to explore Osage ribbon work for an assignment in a material culture class I took as an undergraduate anthropology student. The initial feedback my instructor gave me discouraged me from mentioning that the women I wrote about were, in fact, my great-grandmother and her sisters. Born out of a “well-intentioned” desire for my work to be taken seriously within the academic community, I was also cautioned against mentioning that I am a citizen of the Osage Nation. These strong women—credited with revitalizing the art of ribbon work within the Osage Nation—created ribbon work to ensure an Osage future for their children and generations to come. My analysis of ribbon work as a fundamental aspect of Osage nationalism is directly tied to the ways that my grandmother and aunts spoke about their roles as ribbon work artists.

In recent years, the use of ribbon work outside of its placement on Osage clothing has grown tremendously. Today, Osage ribbon work designs appear in a wide variety of places including on t-shirts, handbags, towels, neck ties, coffee mugs, jewelry, tattoos, posters, campaign signs, and the Osage Nation website. These examples point to the ways that Osage ribbon work has become a symbol of Osage nationhood and community. On a most basic level, the symbolic use of ribbon work is being deployed in various contexts as a tool for building a strong Osage future and as an expression of Osage nationalism. While the main focus of this research explores the deployment of ribbon work within particular nation building spaces, the importance of ribbon work as an Osage practice emerged from the historic, economic, social, and aesthetic choices Osage people made when incorporating specific European materials into their daily lives. This section explores the history of Osage ribbon work—paying particular attention the contributions of Georgeann Gray Robinson,
Louise Gray Red Corn, and Genevieve Gray Tomey—in order to better understand these contemporary deployments. In addition to providing necessary contextual historical background, this section also seeks to further ground the analysis of Osage ribbon work within a decolonizing approach to material culture studies.

**Ribbon work as resistance**

Ribbon work—the cutting, folding, and sewing of layered pairs of different colored ribbons into geometric or curvilinear designs—is a form of appliqué that is practiced by various American Indians throughout the Great Lakes and the Prairie regions today. Ribbon work in the Osage context is also referred to as ribbon appliqué work, ribbon appliqué, silk appliqué embroidery, and cut ribbon work in other communities (Abbass 1979:4). The term appliqué refers to the use of ribbons as decorative overlays, particularly the way that the ribbons are “fixed over the surface of another so as to cover the latter partially” (Conn 1980:9). The origins of ribbon work can be traced to American Indians obtaining silk ribbons through trade with Europeans in the eighteenth century. While the origins of ribbon work are tied to American Indian engagement in the eighteenth century consumer revolution, it is important to note that Indian peoples traded and incorporated new materials into their lives well before the arrival of settlers. In fact, as Emil Her Many Horses—curator at the National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution—points out, “extensive intertribal trade networks supplied women with highly prized goods such as dentalium shells, elk teeth, beads made from shells, and paints, which they used to ornament dresses or trade as goods” during the pre-contact period (2007:24).

The expansion of trade networks through the fur trade and competition between the French and the British led to an increase in the availability of silk ribbon and other goods.
Georgeann Gray Robinson often spoke about the fact that she attributed the proliferation of ribbon work to the French Revolution, “for it was in the wake of the French Revolution that merchants exported large stockpiles of silk ribbon to North America” due to post-Revolution regulations on “luxury dress” (Pannabecker 1986:107). While the first documented account of ribbon-adorned clothing occurred among the Iroquois in 1735, it was not until the mid-nineteenth century that examples of appliqué style ribbon work began appearing in the material record (Pannabecker 1996:268; Swearingen et al. 1990). By the mid-nineteenth century, the practice of ribbon work had also expanded from the Great Lakes region to the Prairie communities through the process of Indian removal (Pannabecker 1986:105). The exchange networks that emerged during the settlement process, the increase in the availability of silk ribbons as a result of the French Revolution, and the subsequent expansion of ribbon work during Indian removal signal the ways that ribbon work is deeply entangled in colonial processes.

As discussed above, Dennison uses ribbon work as a metaphor for “colonial entanglement.” Drawing upon the work of Achille Mbembe and Ann Stoler, Dennison uses this concept in order to highlight the moments of complexity that contemporaneously work to strengthen and undermine indigenous nationhood. As an analytic frame, colonial entanglement resists privileging or avoiding the colonial forces with which colonized peoples must negotiate (Dennison 2012:7-8). Even though the settler-colonial process has attempted to deny future possibilities for indigenous peoples, this approach recognizes the ways that these processes have actually contributed to the practice of ribbon work. In this way, ribbon work exemplifies how the materials obtained through these—and other—colonial processes,
can be manipulated and negotiated in ways that create powerful expressions of indigenous sovereignty and nation building (Dennison 2012:7; Rickard 2002:147).

One of the ways that ribbon work serves as an expression of indigenous sovereignty is through the act of building community and marking belonging. Rachel Pannabecker points to the fact that even though the trade of silk ribbon bound American Indians to Euro-Americans, “ribbon-bordered dress incorporated the European-produced textile in a unique, non-European way, thus establishing a boundary between what was and what was not Indian” (Pannabecker 1996: 273). This practice represents a creative response to colonial forces, a response that strengthened and solidified Indian communities through the establishment of boundaries (Pannabecker 1996:274). By marking and strengthening community belonging in the past and today, ribbon work contributes to decolonization and resists the logic of elimination (Dennison 2013:117). Furthermore, through its marking of Osage belonging and strengthening of Osage community, ribbon work emerges as an integral component of Osage nation building.

**Uniquely Osage**

There are three distinct types of ribbon work used within Osage communities: 1) sawtooth, 2) four-ribbon patterns, and 3) stripped-ribbon patterns. These types of ribbon work are distinguished by the techniques used to achieve the particular style or pattern. Within academic research on ribbon work, the first type of ribbon work is often labeled as the “developmental style” (Abbass 1979; Pannabecker 1986; Neill 2000). However the term “sawtooth” is used in this analysis for two reasons: 1) it is the term used by the majority of Osage ribbon workers, and 2) it avoids the implication of evolutionary development embedded within the term “developmental style.” In order to make sawtooth, one or two
ribbons are cut and folded to form triangular patterns. This technique is often used as a border on the edges of blankets and women’s skirts. For this reason, many Osage ribbon workers consider sawtooth to be a decorative trim rather than a particular style of ribbon work (fig. 1).

The four-ribbon patterns—also referred to as four-strip patterns, four-strip ribbon work, overlay patterns, or overlay ribbon work—use four different color silk taffeta ribbons, approximately two to three inches wide, in order to form a bilaterally symmetrical geometric pattern (figs. 1-2; see Appendix). The style of Osage ribbon work that is commonly referred to as stripped-ribbon work or stripped-ribbon patterns is also referred to as “shingled” ribbon work by some researchers (Abbass 1979; Pannabecker 1986; Neill 2000). Stripped-ribbon patterns can be made with any odd number of ribbons ranging from three to as many as twenty-one ribbons (figs. 3-4). Unlike the four-ribbon patterns, the colors used in stripped-ribbon patterns are repeated symmetrically (see Appendix).

While the nascence of Osage ribbon work is undoubtedly related to the broader emergence of its practice among other indigenous peoples, the execution and style of Osage ribbon work, as well as its contemporary uses, are unique to the Osage Nation. Today, one of the most recognized features of Osage ribbon work is the prominence of geometric designs. As Robinson explained to curator George Horse Capture during a 1982 interview, “Osage patterns are mostly geometric in design… I don’t cut too many curved lines.” In addition to the characteristic geometric patterns that exemplify Osage ribbon work, anthropologist Daniel Swan describes other “hallmarks of ‘Osage work’” which include: “precise technical execution,” “an exactness of design,” both of which are “accentuated by the selection and juxtaposition of colors” (2004:164). Swan also describes how today, “the Osage have earned
a position of great stature based on their distinctive patterns, high standards of quality, and the sheer volume of ribbon work they have produced” (2004:166). The characteristics described by Swan are tied to the resurgence of Osage ribbon work production that began with the efforts of Louise Gray Red Corn, Genevieve Gray Tomey, and Georgeann Gray Robinson in the mid-twentieth century, and continues today.

The unique qualities of Osage ribbon work described by Swan are also products of the distinct history of the Osage Nation. For example, the strength of Osage trade networks through the early nineteenth century—and the fact that the Osage accounted for more than three quarters of the St. Louis fur trade before 1812—played an integral role in the proliferation of Osage ribbon work (Burns 1994:49). The control the Osage exerted over the fur trade was significant, as historian Louis Burns argues, “because the Osages had first choice of the available trade goods” (Burns 1994:49). Burns also describes how the Osage mastery of ribbon work was due, in part, to the teachings of religious missions during the first half of the nineteenth century:

We will not claim that the Osage ladies do the best ribbon work. However, if such a claim could be made, it would be due to the small, even stitching and the neatly folded seams, which gives Osage ribbon work that special look called ‘class.’ The look is the result of more than a century of missionary training in fine needlework … [ribbon work] was the result of sharing the best of what the fur trade offered and the well-intentioned efforts of those searching for souls to save. Above all, however, it resulted from the desire of Osage women to create beauty (1994:49-50).

Even though the skills that Osage and other Indian women learned from missionaries were ultimately aimed at assimilating them into settler society, the expertise these Osage women gained in sewing actually gave them the tools necessary for excelling as ribbon work artists. The access and ability to afford the best ribbon, needles, thimbles, and thread, as well as the
missionary training Osage women received, contributed to the establishment of Osage ribbon work as a unique practice beginning in the early nineteenth century.

During the first half of the twentieth century, as a result of settler-colonial processes and broader economic changes, the majority of Osage people—and more Americans in general—began wearing commercially manufactured clothing. This shift resulted from the increased availability of transportation as well as the advent of catalog shopping through companies like Sears, Roebuck and Company, and Montgomery Ward. These innovations made it easier for all Americans—not just American Indians—to obtain clothing and household items commercially. However, there were certain items that emerged as central markers of Osage community during this time, items that were not available through catalogs or in department stores (Bailey 2004:148). More specifically, the clothes worn for the In’lon-schka dances and other social events became integral components of Osage community building (figs. 5-6).

Just as ribbon work arose from American Indian desires to establish boundaries between “what was and what was not Indian” during the eighteenth century, the use of particular “Osage clothes” were used to mark particular Osage community-building spaces in the twentieth century (Pannabecker 1996: 273). As the meaning of this type of clothing changed, the manufacture of ribbon work and other garments was also impacted. More specifically, as Osage people began wearing clothing with ribbon work less often, such garments undoubtedly lasted longer, required fewer repairs or replacements, and could be passed down to future generations.

By the 1940s, there were only a handful of Osage women who were doing ribbon work. As Robinson explains, “for a good many years, a lot of Delaware ladies were doing
Osage ribbon work” for Osage people.\(^\text{22}\) By this time, Red Corn and Robinson both had children, and it was important for them to be able to make ribbon work so their children could participate in the In’lon-schka dances. Interviews obtained through the Doris Duke Oral History Project reveal that learning to ribbon work was a self-taught process of trial and error for these sisters. Here, Red Corn describes how she began doing ribbon work:

I would like to tell a few of the things that I enjoy and one of the things that has helped me through the years and that is my sewing. When my boys—I just had three at the time—were little, one day, Mrs. Fred Lookout sent after me. I lived a block from her. She sent after me. I went over there to see her and she told me, she said, “you have little boys,” and she said, “one of these days those little boys are going to want to dance… and you must be getting them ready.”\(^\text{23}\)

Red Corn goes on to explain how Mrs. Lookout gave her some broad cloth and ribbons, a completed set of leggings, and a breech for her oldest son. Lookout suggested that she use the completed pieces as a pattern to begin her own ribbon work. According to Red Corn, “I told Mrs. Lookout, ‘I can sew, I can make a dress and I can make little shirts and I can sew just about anything, but ribbon work, that’s just out of the question.’”\(^\text{24}\) After making the initial suits for her own sons, different people from the community began approaching Red Corn with the materials needed, and asking her to do ribbon work for other suits, blankets, and skirts.

After making suits for her own boys, Red Corn describes how her younger sister Georgeann asked her to help make a skirt so her daughter could participate in the In’lon-schka dances:

She brought her material over and we made Jan a skirt, never thinking for five minutes about what size ribbon work would go on and I just jerked up and put it on the wrong side. So Jan danced that afternoon over here at the dances and she just went around the drum one time and I think four people came over and told Georgeann and I that her ribbon work was on the wrong side. So, that was another experience with us.\(^\text{25}\)
Even though these sisters began ribbon work through a process of trial and error, the fact that they were skilled with a needle and thread facilitated this undertaking.

All three sisters attended the St. Louis School for Girls, a Catholic boarding school in Pawhuska where they were taught, among other things, to sew. Like many Osage parents at the time who believed that it was important for their children to receive a certain type of education, Clarence Gray chose to send his daughters to the St. Louis School. As Red Corn explains, “the years that I spent at the Catholic Convent were happy years. My Dad sent me there because he felt like I would learn things that I needed to know, and I feel they helped me.”

The Gray sisters only stayed at the boarding school during the week, and returned home each weekend. At the age of nine, Red Corn’s father bought her a sewing machine, and she explains “I didn’t get to take the little sewing machine to school with me, but I had it whenever I’d come home.”

When Horse Capture asked about whether or not she was trained to do ribbon work by artisans, Robinson explains:

> When I was at the convent I learned to embroider, I learned to stitch, and I learned to darn and make all kinds of pretty things for Christmas. This was the nuns. This was all the projects that we did at all ages. I was real small when I first went to the convent but I could take a small needle and I could sew up my sock or do up my clothing or whatever. They taught us to do that … so ribbon wasn’t all that hard for me to figure out.

Just as Osage women mastered sewing through their interactions with missionaries in the early nineteenth century, the Gray sisters’ experience in boarding school from the late 1920s through early 1930s gave them the skills needed to teach themselves to create ribbon work from photographs and existing pieces. Once again, the policies aimed at assimilating Osage women into settler society provided them with an opportunity to excel at a uniquely Osage practice. The colonial entanglements between Osage people and religious missions, boarding
schools, and the fur trade further emphasize how the settler-colonial process does not simply deny future possibilities for Osage people, but can provide tools which Osage people use to build a strong future.

**Ribbon working an Osage future**

While the statements above reveal that both Red Corn and Robinson began practicing ribbon work so their own children could participate in important Osage social institutions, they continued doing this work because it was essential to ensuring a strong Osage future for the nation as a whole. Eventually all three sisters decided that they needed to master ribbon working and find a way to distribute it more widely, because as Robinson explains, “people were wanting it so badly.” In 1958, the three sisters opened the Red Man Store in downtown Pawhuska. At the store, the Gray sisters made ribbon work for Osage clothes and everything else people needed in order to dress and participate in the In’lon-schka dances as well as other social institutions.

Here, one of the Gray sisters’ nieces describes her memories of spending summers at the Red Man Store with her aunts:

> They all worked there; they sewed for everybody; sewed for the tribe. They made everything; moccasins, shirt, suits, blankets. They had a lot of people in and out of their store. During dance time it was the hot spot. Everybody who wanted a new shirt or wanted something new, made or mended that’s where they went … and that’s where I wanted to be.

During the early summer, the Red Man Store was often busy filling orders by Osage people preparing for the In’lon-schka dances. Even though the Red Man Store closed in 1978, its legacy continues through the various Osage-operated businesses that sell everything from the supplies needed to make Osage clothes to complete head-to-toe Osage ensembles. In an interview with the *Osage News*, Patrick Lewis—an Osage business owner who specializes in
embroidering ribbon work patterns—jokingly warns customers: “don’t wait until May to come see me … my house becomes real hectic during May.”

While the Red Man Store was often busy with Osage customers in the months leading up to the In’lon-schka dances, during the remainder of the year, non-Indian “hobbyists” often frequented the store. Robinson often joked that these “hobbyists” kept her in business. Furthermore, in addition to serving economic needs, selling ribbon work and other “Indian objects” to non-Indian hobbyists served as a creative form for self-representation (Phillips and Steiner 1999:4). During one interview she explained “when the white hobbyists came, they challenged us… but they didn’t bat an eye on the prices.” The hobbyists—wanting to obtain the most “authentic” Indian clothes for dressing up and participating in powwows and other events—often placed orders for recreations of ribbon work from historical photographs. Some of the hobbyists also asked for unique and intricate stripped-ribbon patterns with large numbers of ribbon that were difficult and expensive to make. These hobbyists wore the Red Man Store pieces at powwows throughout the country, attracting new business and the recognition of museums.

Over the years, a number of the Gray sisters’ pieces sold to hobbyists have been accessioned by various museums. For example, in 2003, a man’s suit made by Robinson was accessioned into the permanent collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and featured in the exhibit “The Responsive Eye: Ralph T. Coe and the Collecting of American Indian Art.” Some researchers have credited these non-Indian “hobbyists” with revitalizing interest in the art of Osage ribbon work. While museums have undoubtedly played a role in marking ribbon work as a symbol of the Osage Nation, all too often, the power to define what is or isn’t “Indian” or “art” resides within these non-Indian institutions,
and a discussion of such a complex issue lies outside of the scope of this project. Therefore, the focus of this research remains the meanings and representations attached to Osage ribbon work from within the Osage Nation.

Even though these entanglements with “hobbyists” and museums supported the Red Man Store and the artistic endeavors of women like Robinson, the Gray sisters’ ribbon work production was motivated by the desire to ensure the continued practice of ribbon working. For these women, ribbon work and particularly its use within the In’lon-schka dances provided a means for securing an Osage future for their own children and grandchildren. As one of the Gray sisters’ nieces explained:

I remember my aunts telling me about it … you have to go through it to realize what you’ve done for your people. And your people… You know you’ve dressed that first time and you’ve helped that person that might not have had money to help you finish… I’ve had a lot of people say I’m kind of short but I’ll pay you. And many times I’ve said go ahead; you’ve paid me enough. The main thing is that you helped somebody and you know the importance of what they’re getting ready for is to carry on something that’s part of an Osage’s life.

As this passage suggests, the economic success of the Red Man Store allowed the Gray sisters to build an Osage future by helping their Osage customers who were at times unable to pay their entire bill. Furthermore, by sharing their skills and knowledge with the younger generations, they have guaranteed that these practices will continue.

In addition to teaching her own daughter, granddaughters, and nieces how to ribbon work, Robinson believed that teaching ribbon work and giving demonstrations to Osages and non-Osages was important to maintaining the practice. Robinson taught ribbon work through various local organizations such as the Bartlesville Indian Women’s Club. She also gave demonstrations at the Wheelwright Museum in Santa Fe, New Mexico, the Buffalo Bill
Historical Society in Cody, Wyoming, and the American Folklife Festival hosted by the Smithsonian Institution.\textsuperscript{42} As her niece explained:

My Aunt Georgeann, my last visit with her, she called me over there to her home. She wanted me to be sure to continue with my ribbon work. And she said if you can I want you to teach it because teaching it is preserving it. And if you can preserve it’s going to be around. You give them some way that can take a class with you or have someone come to your home or any way you can, you share that talent with another person; because there’s no way one person can sew for this entire tribe … I’ve taught classes for 19 years for the tribe and I want to continue teaching ribbon work and sharing that talent with my people. And now I have the opportunity to share it with my younger people and they’re interested and I’m happy about that.\textsuperscript{43}

The Gray sisters shared their knowledge and experiences with the young women in their lives. Today, women who produce ribbon work or teach classes on ribbon work—even those who simply teach their own daughters, nieces, and granddaughters—are building upon this legacy, and in doing so, are building an Osage future.

In describing indigenous artists in California, Rickard asserts “these artists are not just looking at that which exists in Indian communities, they are looking to find a way to continue as Native people” (2002:159). Similarly, Osage ribbon workers are creating a means for building and strengthening an Osage future. Appropriating “the colonizers’ tools” and reimagining them “as statements of empowerment,” Osages today continually contribute to this practice through ribbon working and other nationalist projects (Rickard 2002:159). The next section focuses on some of the complex ongoing processes that shape Osage nationalism and nation building.
Figure 1. This image depicts how sawtooth is often used as a decorative trim on women’s skirts. Here, the sawtooth is used in conjunction with various four-ribbon patterns.

Figure 2. Four-ribbon pattern.
Figure 3. Stripped ribbon pattern.

Figure 4. Stripped ribbon pattern.
Figure 5. Image of Osage male In’lon-schka dancers in “full dress.” Pictured are (from left to right): Michael Powell, Cameron Robinson, Jon Jacobs, Ben Jacobs, and Ryan Robinson.
Figure 6. Image of Osage female In’lon-schka dancers in “full dress.” Pictured are (from left to right): Lindsey Robinson, Taylor Powell, Jordan Robinson, Jessica Robinson, and Jami Powell.
IMAGINING THE OSAGE NATION

The first time I cast my ballot in an Osage election was in June 2010. Prior to the passage of the 2006 Osage Constitution, only Osages with a headright were able to vote in elections. After the 2006 Constitution was passed, all Osage citizens over the age of 18 were allowed to vote in the general elections, with the elections of the Minerals Council remaining closed to those Osages without a headright.44

In the spring of 2010, my grandpa sent a mass email to most of our family living outside of Oklahoma to remind us to fill out and turn in the newly available absentee ballot request forms. Attached to the email, he included the request forms for absentee ballots for both the general election and the Minerals Council election, and told us all to fill out both forms. After looking at the forms, I was confused about whether or not I and the other members of my family were actually eligible to vote in the Minerals Council election. I called the Osage Elections Office to clarify, and then I called my grandpa. Choosing my words carefully, I explained to my grandpa that only enrolled Osages with headrights were eligible to vote in the Minerals Council election. Therefore, the majority of the people he emailed, myself included, were only eligible to vote in the general election.

Even though the 2010 Osage general election marked the first time I was able to cast my vote as an Osage citizen, and even though I was simultaneously reminded that I was not eligible to vote in the Minerals Council election, I have always felt Osage. Even before I was allowed the right to vote in Osage elections, I had a membership card issued by the Osage
Nation. Furthermore, I grew up knowing I was Osage because of the way I was raised, because we went to Oklahoma every summer and participated in the In’lon-schka. Although I recognize the importance of being able to vote in Osage elections—as well as the inherent inequities that characterize the current and former voting laws within the Osage Nation—my own experience points to the ways that ideas about being Osage emerge from and inform political and social constructions of Osage nationalism.

In order to better understand the ways that ribbon work is deployed within Osage nation-building spaces, this section explores how nationalism is conceptualized within the context of the Osage Nation. In particular, this examination focuses on the ways that Osage citizenship and belonging are constructed through the marking of boundaries in both political and social contexts. The multiple and varied constructions of Osage citizenship and belonging demonstrate the multiplicity and complexity that shapes the ongoing and contentious process of Osage nationalism. Born from the same desires as the continued practice of Osage ribbon work, Osage nationalism is not about the past, but rather, it is about serving current needs and, most importantly, ensuring an Osage future.

In her research on conceptions of indigenous identity and nationhood in Kahnawake—a Mohawk reserve community in Canada—anthropologist Audra Simpson examines the practice-based process of citizenship formation in order to uncover how “indigenous nationhood is understood, practised, and narrated by its own people” (2000:116). By examining the “narrativity” of indigenous nationhood, rather than focusing solely on history and political structures, Simpson examines more deeply the diversity of experiences that characterize the on-going process of indigenous nation building. In examining these narrations, it is important to remember, “there is no single narrative of the nation …
nationalisms are invented, performed, and consumed in ways that do not follow a universal blueprint” (McClintock 1997:93). Osage nationalisms, similar to the nationalisms of western nation-states, are collectively imagined and reflect the diversity of Osage citizenry. Furthermore, these varying constructions of Osage nationalism become tools that are wielded within different contexts as a means of exerting power and authority and as a means for establishing political legitimacy.

Simpson examines Mohawk nationalism from “the ground up” through the narrations of Kahnawake community members (2000:117). This approach—“predicated on a praxis of listening”—highlights the fact that indigenous nationhood is a process informed by meaningful collective and personal desires (2000:114). In her examination of “everyday nationalism,” Simpson uncovers Mohawk nationalism as both a “politically expedient formulation” and a “lived phenomenon” (2000: 118). Following Simpson’s work, this study explores how Osage nationalism is experienced as a lived phenomenon. The following exploration of Osage nationhood recognizes the importance of the necessary political construction of citizenship that maintains a privileged position in the juridical sense. However, in order to more fully understand Osage nationhood, it identifies the important ways experience-based constructions of belonging continually contribute to Osage nationalism.

Benedict Anderson defines the nation as “an imagined political community—that is imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign” (1983:6). By constructing nation building as an imaginative process, Anderson locates nationalism, or the way in which nations are imagined, within a space of community and individual production. As a matter of course, these imaginings are multiple, complex, and often, incompatible. For example, while
studying the reform process of the 2006 Osage Constitution, Dennison describes how the commissioners “had to find ways to make sense of layered and at times conflicting biology-, practice-, resource-, and sovereignty-centered notions of their national self” (2012:5). In order to reconcile these conflicting notions of Osage citizenship, the writers of the constitution privileged certain imaginings of Osage nationhood over others through a series of negotiations involving surveys and public forums with the citizens of the Osage Nation. During the reform process, Osage nation building was characterized by a heightened level of participation and activity that ultimately resulted in the passage of a new constitution in 2006. Today, this constitution is one of many factors that shape Osage nationalism and the ways that the community and individuals imagine the Osage nation.

Anderson (1983:7) characterizes the nation as a community because it is ultimately “conceived as a deep horizontal comradeship,” that masks the contradictions, limitations, and inequities inherent within nation building. Here, nationalism becomes a rhetorical tool focusing on the shared set of characteristics that unite a community, masking the conflicts and inequality that permeate nation building (McClintock 1997:89). Within the context of Osage nationalism, the rhetoric of community solidarity is imagined both politically and socially. For example, the preamble of the 2006 Osage Constitution states: “Having resolved to live in harmony, we now come together so that we may once more unite as a Nation and as a People, calling upon the fundamental values that we hold sacred: Justice, Fairness, Compassion, Respect for and Protection of Child, Elder, All Fellow Beings, and Self.” This section of the preamble—an introductory statement outlining the fundamental principles and goals of the constitution—focuses on the shared values of the Osage Nation. However, as the preamble itself is not constituted as law, the outlined values serve as both political and
practice-based understandings of what it means to be a united Osage Nation. This rhetoric of unity and solidarity plays an important role in shaping constructions of Osage nationalism, particularly within the nation-building space of the In’lon-schka, which will be examined below.

The construction of boundaries that are imagined both in the context of political discourse and in local spaces of lived experience is an essential aspect of indigenous nation building. In his research on ethnic identities, anthropologist Frederik Barth (1969) focuses on the social processes that inform the construction and maintenance of boundaries between ethnic groups. While Barth’s research focused on ethnic identities, his emphasis on examining boundaries in particular has broadly informed studies of nation building. Anderson’s definition of the nation as limited emerges from these “finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations” (1983:7). The nation as a bounded entity serves to mark what exists within the boundaries, but also what lies outside of them. More specifically, the boundaries of national identification are often constructed through, as Kevin Bruyneel explains, “establishing what the group is not via the construction of a ‘constitutive outside’” (2007:8).

The majority of the negotiations during the constitutional reform process surrounded the criteria of citizenship, the boundaries that serve to constitute—politically—what it means to be Osage. The 2006 Osage Constitution outlines citizenship as consisting of “all lineal descendants of those Osages listed on the 1906 Roll” and “those enrolled members shall constitute the citizenry.” While certain practice-based imaginings of Osage citizenship were ultimately left out of the constitution, they continue to inform the everyday nationalism of
Osage citizens in various social and political contexts outside the formal apparatus of the constitution.

While the above definition of what it means to be an Osage citizen is quite broad in comparison to the manifold practice-based understandings of Osage belonging, globally speaking, Osage citizenship is narrowly defined by its limitation to those who can prove descent from the 1906 Roll. Similarly ambiguous, practice-based understandings of belonging can be used in ways that both expand and restrict what it means to be Osage outside of the juridical construction of citizenship. In fact, it is the elasticity of these boundaries—specifically those marked outside of the Osage Constitution—that maintain Osage nation building as an ongoing process. However, these boundaries also act to limit Osage conceptions of belonging in ways that exclude some Osage citizens while privileging others. As geographer Kay Anderson recognizes within her own work in Australia, these local, experience-based understandings of national belonging reflect existing power relations. For example, K. Anderson explains how conceptions of belonging can affect access to government resources:

> Although citizenship is the primary formal indicator of national belonging—and in the Australian case, of nationality—its granting by the state does not necessarily imply the communal will to include citizens equally in practical ways … The local level of everyday life is thus a crucial relational field within which qualitative determinations over national belonging are grounded. (2000:387)

In the Osage case, practice-based understandings of belonging are often tied to the land and residency as well as participation within Osage social institutions like the In’lon-schka. It is through these everyday experiences that particular constructions of Osage nationalism are negotiated and renegotiated. As K. Anderson argues, the “local spaces of lived experience” where nation building processes are enacted play an equally important role as the “spaceless clauses of national and international political and policy discourse” (2000:386-7). It is these
local, experience-based imaginings of Osage nationalism that the remainder of this study attempts to address, specifically within two nation-building spaces: 1) the In’lon-schka and 2) the virtual territory of the Osage Nation.

The In’lon-schka serves as an integral nation-building space in which Osage belonging and nationhood are marked outside of formal political and governance structures. In fact, the In’lon-schka plays a large part in informing the ways that the second nation-building space—the virtual territory of the Osage Nation—communicates and utilizes Osage nationalism. This second nation-building space will be examined through the official website of the Osage Nation in addition to other websites used by Osage citizens. As ribbon work occupies an important position within each of these nation-building spaces, the analyses of them will focus on use and symbolic deployment of ribbon work as a means of shaping and reinforcing specific Osage national imaginings.

In her research on Choctaw nation building, anthropologist Valerie Lambert found that, “the materials out of which leaders produce the ideas and icons that legitimize and express the nation are sufficiently flexible and polysemous that they can be selected, assembled and deployed in different ways and with different meanings at different points in time” (2007:10). Here, Lambert points to the inseparable relationship between deployments of nationalism and the broader power relations and inequalities inherent within nation building projects. As Lambert further argues, such deployments are not fixed, but rather should be recognized “as claims that are negotiated and renegotiated, institutionalized and reinstitutionalized over time” (2007:10). Similarly, Osage nation building must be understood as an ongoing, flexible, and contentious process in which individuals, groups, and
the apparatus of the state use varied imaginings of Osage nationalism as tools for maintaining power and legitimacy.

Above all, the continual, contentious, and ever-changing aspects of Osage nationalism reflect and recognize the diversity of the Osage Nation. Dennison provides an account of a community meeting about the Nation’s constitution in which one of the participants—a middle-aged Osage man—argued, “We are a nation—nations have diversity” (2012:65). As a result of the multiplicity of Osage experience, Osage citizens and Osage nationalism fundamentally resist attempts at meaningful generalization (Lambert 2007:114). Therefore, while the following sections address important Osage nation-building spaces and specific constructions of Osage nationalism, the remaining analyses do not represent the entirety of Osage experience.
THE IN’LON-SCHKA AND THE EMERGENCE OF RIBBON WORK AS A SYMBOL FOR OSAGE NATIONALISM

Even though I have never lived there, in many ways, I consider Oklahoma to be my home. My father was in the Navy, and therefore, my family moved a lot when I was young. We lived in eight different places, even as far as Greece and Japan, before I began high school. No matter where we lived, however, nearly every summer we would go back to Pawhuska for the In’lon-schka. In fact, some of my earliest memories involve spending time with my family, visiting, and laughing, while putting on our Osage clothes in my Aunt Kathryn’s yard. One of my most vivid early memories is from when I was getting ready to dance for the first time. I was about four years old, and at that time, the road between my Aunt Kathryn’s house and the arbor—the structure that the In’lon-schka dances take place under—was not paved. As if walking two and a half blocks at such a young age did not seem long enough, doing so with gravel thrusting into the bottoms of my moccasined feet made it feel interminable. After a few steps, and a lot of whining, one of my uncles took pity on me and carried me the rest of the way.

In spite of the fact that this road has been paved for several years now, there are still chunks of gravel that make their way onto the asphalt from the unpaved driveways that line the streets surrounding the arbor. This past year, my three-year-old niece dressed and danced for the first time. As we were making our way to the arbor, she stepped on a piece of gravel and complained, just as I had when I was young. Someone picked her up and carried her the
rest of the way. As I walked behind them, remembering my own experience, I felt a renewed sense of belonging, a connection to the past, and hope for the future.

For many—but certainly not all—Osage people, the In’lon-schka is one of the most important events of the year. In fact, as the above narrative suggests, a number of families who live outside of the boundaries of the Osage Nation and Oklahoma plan their annual vacations around the In’lon-schka dances. The “dances” as they are often called, are specifically scheduled during the month of June to accommodate summer vacations from school and work. Participation in the In’lon-schka dances represents one of the most important social institutions by which Osage people build and strengthen nationhood as a means of securing an Osage future. While the In’lon-schka represents a central community-building space for the Osage Nation, it is also a practice that many Osages experience as deeply personal and familial. Thus, the In’lon-schka also establishes a way for participants to mediate their relationship with the larger community and mark belonging within the Osage Nation, outside of formal political structures.

In the mid-1880s, the In’lon-schka came to the communities of Pawhuska and Hominy from the Kaw, and the Grayhorse community received the dance from the Ponca (Callahan 1990:24; Granberry 1987:41). Even though the dance developed through trade networks with the other nations—similar to ribbon work—the Osage made the In’lon-schka a uniquely Osage practice by adding their own songs and adapting the dance over time (Dennison 2012:83). In a 2013 blog post about the In’lon-schka, Osage writer Charles Red Corn echoes this sentiment; he states “this bringing together, those things from the past, watching them work for the present, gives the Osage People a feeling of solidarity. It is a feeling that will endure.”

While the structure of the dance itself emerged from the Kaw and
Ponca as a War Dance\textsuperscript{50}—and some Osages still refer to it as such—rather than preparing participants for battle or celebrating victory, the In’lon-schka is best conceived as a social institution that ensures an Osage future by communicating, reinterpreting, and reinforcing important aspects of Osage experience (Callahan 1990:20; Granberry 1987:41). As Callahan asserts, the In’lon-schka “has become a manifestation of tribal loyalty and continues to be a strong means of uniting the tribe and giving it a sense of identity” (1990:21).

While scholars and Osage citizens commonly view the In’lon-schka as a means for uniting the Nation, it must also be understood as an institution that constructs very specific ideas about Osage belonging while simultaneously excluding those Osage citizens who do not participate. As previously discussed, Osage citizenship is defined quite broadly. However, practice-based understandings of Osage belonging—such as those constructed and reinforced through the In’lon-schka—work to exclude portions of the Osage population who are defined as citizens under the Osage Constitution but who do not take part in the In’lon-schka. In fact, during the Osage reform process, some community members suggested that participation in the In’lon-schka and other social institutions should be constituted as a means for evaluating citizenship (Dennison 2012:83-86). While these ideas were ultimately left out of the Constitution, they continue to shape ideas about Osage nationalism and belonging in the daily lives of Osage citizens.

Previous scholars have attempted to categorize the In’lon-schka as an institution that occupies a sacred space, separate from the secular daily lives of Osage people. In her book, \textit{The Osage Ceremonial Dance I’n-Lon-Schka}, Alice Callahan focuses largely on the history, organization, and practice of the In’lon-schka. Callahan describes the In’lon-schka as “the Osages’ most important ceremonial dance” (1990:7). In his own research, historian Daniel
Swan describes the In’lon-schka as, “a ceremonial society of male members that preserves and perpetuates many traditional Osage values while providing a focal point for the ethnic identity of the Osage people” (2004:157-8). One researcher even describes how the In’lon-schka “pulls Osage dancers away from every day life” (Granberry 1987:67). These descriptions demonstrate how the In’lon-schka dances are often categorized as “ceremonial,” “traditional,” “religious,” or “spiritual,” and set in opposition to the everyday experiences of Osage people. Although these categorizations are not incorrect—Osage people often use this type of language in their own descriptions of the In’lon-schka—these categorizations can limit possibilities for other aspects of the lives of Osage people. In other words, describing participation in the In’lon-schka in terms of binary constructions such as modern/traditional or secular/sacred is in danger of marking the “everyday experiences” of Osage people as “inauthentic” or “less Indian.”

The In’lon-schka defies the type of categorization and definition that scholarly work often demands. Even having participated in and experiencing the In’lon-schka for over twenty years myself, I find it hard to describe in writing. During a recent conversation with one of my aunts, I was reminded of something that is often said about the In’lon-schka: “it is for us and no one else.” In this moment, I came to the realization that there are certain aspects of the In’lon-schka that intentionally defy and resist description. Furthermore, as anthropologist Beatrice Medicine explains, “even when they are dealing with ‘one of their own’” Indian people are often wary of how interpretations and analyses of their communities might be used (2001:5). This concern stems from the use of written interpretations of Indian practices, as Dennison explains, in “ongoing colonial efforts to capture, categorize, and possess all things indigenous” (2012:80). Therefore, this and any description of the In’lon-
schka should remain incomplete, focusing not on the content of its practice, but the ways it contributes to Osage nation building. The following analysis examines narrative descriptions of the In’lon-schka, which emerges as an integral aspect of Osage nationalism that is imagined and experienced in various ways.

**Belonging and boundaries constructed within the In’lon-schka**

Some Osage people describe participation in In’lon-schka as a space that marks or heightens Osage belonging. During her research on the Osage reform process, Dennison found that many people described that they first understood themselves as Osage through their participation in the In’lon-schka (2012:83). As previously discussed, one of the ways that nations are imagined is through the establishment of a collective identity that clearly defines boundaries, and often times, these boundaries are imagined to what is left outside the boundaries. Just as Osage ribbon work is described as unique from other techniques in that it does not use curved lines and floral patterns, the In’lon-schka is often defined in terms of what it is not. As Robinson explains: “In the Osage today, we have what we call the In’lon-schka dance. This is a dance that has a lot of protocol, a lot of dignity, and a lot of pride. We do not contest, and we do not do the things that are done in the powwow. We have the ritual, more or less, that we follow.”

The In’lon-schka is often described as separate and distinct from the dances held by other Indian nations within northeastern Oklahoma and elsewhere. Even though the origins of the In’lon-schka emerge from the Ponca and the Kaw and the dance itself has certain characteristics that broadly relate to other dances—like the Grass Dance practiced by certain communities—much like ribbon work, the In’lon-schka represents a uniquely Osage practice today. The In’lon-schka—as a distinct Osage practice—is also distinct from powwows,
which by definition are “not tribe specific” and “intertribal in both origin and purpose” (Ellis et al. 2005:286). This is not to say that powwows are unimportant. In fact, powwows represent a significant aspect of contemporary Indian life within certain communities, and some Osage people participate in these events regularly. However, as a comment made by Harold Red Corn in a 1968 interview suggests, these events do not belong to the Osage alone: “we like to go to pow-wows, we like to go to—the Osages have a dance of their own.” An important feature of the In’lon-schka, and Osage nationhood, is its distinctiveness and independence from what lies outside of its boundaries.

Another way boundaries and belonging are marked within the In’lon-schka is through the clothing worn by participants. Ribbon work is a core component of the clothing worn by both female and male participants at the In’lon-schka dances. As Dennison argues, “such clothing then serves as a marker of heightened Osage belonging, particularly during the In-lon-schka, where one of the districts has gone so far as to mandate full dress for participation” (2013:123). At each of the three districts, full dress is mandatory for male dancers; however, at Grayhorse and Pawhuska, women are allowed to dance in “street clothes” as long as they wear a shawl. While some Osage people applaud the Hominy district for establishing this rule, others argue that this divisive policy runs counter to the rhetoric of the In’lon-schka as a unifying institution.

Regardless of whether or not full dress is mandated, the clothing—and particularly the ribbon work—worn by the dancers remains an important focal point of the In’lon-schka. In one interview, Robinson described her own beliefs about how ribbon work functions within the In’lon-schka: "ribbon work is the dance… the dance is ribbon work. Without the clothes the dance wouldn't be the same; they would just be men and women… the clothes
make you one with the dance.”57 While the clothes worn by In’lon-schka dancers serve to mark Osage belonging, they also express individuality and other specific community affiliations within the nation.

One of the ways that Osage people express individuality during the In’lon-schka is through their clothing. Although each dancer must comply with a certain standard of components and elements, the clothing worn by In’lon-schka dancers also reflects the diversity of individual Osage dancers (Nunley and Standing Bear 2004:195). For example, some dancers choose their ribbon work patterns by looking through old family photographs. However, rather than matching the colors of the original patterns—which is next to impossible, especially when using black and white images—the dancers choose colors based on their own personal aesthetics or even based on their college alma mater or favorite NFL team (Powell 2009:20). Recently, the decreased availability of taffeta ribbon has also led some Osage ribbon workers to begin experimenting with other materials. These design shifts reflect the ongoing and future-oriented process of Osage nationalism as something that is both informed by the past and functioning in the present.58 Furthermore, the variety of ribbon work designs speaks the ways that individual Osage citizens imagine Osage nationalism in different ways.

Each year, the In’lon-schka dances are held at three geographically separate districts of Hominy, Grayhorse, and Pawhuska. As John Nunley and Sean StandingBear explain, “Each dance unites the larger Osage community while allowing each district to express its own individuality. Individuality and community are mediated to create the larger Osage society” (2004:195). Furthermore, the clothing worn by the various district participants marks group belonging within the Nation. For example, during the Friday evening sessions,
many of the In’lon-schka dancers from the Hominy district wear purple. In addition to marking belonging within the broader Osage community, by wearing “Hominy purple,” these dancers also mark belonging within their home district. As one Osage woman describes, “Different districts have outstanding clothes. I go to the dances and I enjoy it and I take it in. But that ribbon work is my eye catcher. And that’s what I look at when I go to the dances. I look at the designs and the ribbon work and the pretty ways they put the colors together.”

The ribbon work and other elements of Osage clothing worn during the In’lon-schka reflect the creativity, capacity, and diversity of Osage experience. As these elements conform to certain standards, the clothing worn at the In’lon-schka also marks belonging to larger communities and the Nation as a whole. However, as demonstrated by the mandatory dress policy within the Hominy In’lon-schka, the use of clothing also serves as a tool for excluding specific portions of the Osage citizenry and reinforcing existing power structures. For those who participate, the coming together of individual Osage experience within the In’lon-schka contributes to their understanding of Osage nationalism.

**Rhetoric v. reality: community solidarity and political divisions**

The In’lon-schka, as an institution, performs a specific role as an informal governance structure that serves to strengthen Osage national solidarity. During a 2013 interview for the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian “Meet Native America” interview series, Assistant Principal Chief Scott N. BigHorse was asked, “Does the Osage Nation have a functional, traditional entity of leadership in addition to your modern government system?” BigHorse responded, “The In Lon S’kah ceremonial dance has three districts with one leader from each district. And I believe we have four active Native American Churches, which would have four different Road Men [leaders of the ceremony].” BigHorse’s
response emphasizes the important role that the In’lon-schka plays in Osage nation building and shaping Osage nationalism.

In describing his own perspective on the In’lon-schka, Herman “Mogri” Lookout, the 2012 Pawhuska District Head Committeeman says: “it’s a place that gathers; nothing gathers Osages more than these drums do … It seems like nothing gathers people, but the fellowship and the relationships we form, that’s the beauty of it … It’s getting along with one another, treating one another good, respecting one another, and that’s what it does. It makes a good life.”62 This description highlights the fact that the In’lon-schka is a key component of Osage national solidarity, even when “it seems like nothing gathers people.”63 Here, Lookout—one of the informal leaders mentioned in BigHorse’s statement—describes the In’lon-schka as a space that is separate from the divisiveness and inequality that exist elsewhere within the Nation.

While the In’lon-schka represents an intrinsic element of contemporary Osage nationalism, it is also rhetorically positioned outside the formal structures of Osage governance and divisive politics. This is most apparent during Osage election years, when campaigning is strictly prohibited in the arbor and surrounding area (Dennison 2012:84). Although formal campaigning is prohibited during the In’lon-schka, the overwhelming majority of Osage politicians participate in the In’lon-schka. Furthermore, politicians often use their participation in the In’lon-schka as a source for garnering political legitimacy among Osage constituents. For example, when Osage Congressman Geoffrey StandingBear announced his candidacy for Principal Chief in September 2013, his experience as a member of the Pawhuska In’lon-schka Committee since 1975 was highlighted in his Osage News announcement.64 In this same election, Principal Chief candidate Margo Gray sent out a
brochure highlighting her experience as the Chairwoman for the National Center for American Indian Enterprise Development. Additionally, she made the following statement:

While entrepreneurship runs strong in my family heritage, my own background includes many years in tribal law enforcement and tribal government service. I am active in our Osage culture. I have served as Head Cook for my family’s Native American Church, but also was a committee cook for two former Drum Keepers in the Pawhuska District. I am very passionate about our Osage ways and take our language, customs, and ceremonies and do my best to apply them to my everyday life in the way of kindness, prayer, lover, and respect for all people, from our children to our valued elders.65

In addition to her leadership experience with economic development of Indian nations, Gray highlights her participation within the In’lon-schka as a committee cook and other Osage social institutions. These examples demonstrate that rather than placing the In’lon-schka in binary opposition to the contentious and divisive realm of formal political structures, the In’lon-schka should be recognized as a nation-building space that plays an integral role in Osage politics.

Still, the In’lon-schka is a space that both informs and is shaped by a rhetoric in which unity and solidarity are defined as Osage national values. In describing the In’lon-schka in 1968, Leonard Maker said, “It’s very dignified and these dancers they hold themselves back. They don’t want to get out there and show that they are a better dancer. That’s not the point…”66 As Maker emphasizes, the In’lon-schka is not a powwow, and it is not about competition. Rather, the In’lon-schka is often described as a place where Osage people come together and help one another as a means of solidifying Osage community.

The importance of this idea within the In’lon-schka is also acknowledged within Callahan’s research. She describes how the unification of Osage community is demonstrated at the In’lon-schka through the concern and support expressed for Osage individuals and families who have experienced hardship (1990:20). The community is also strengthened
through the acknowledgement and celebration of Osage achievements at the In’lon-schka (Callahan 1990:20). These values—reinforced as integral characteristics of Osage experience at the In’lon-schka—are then communicated throughout the year by individual Osages, as demonstrated through acts of kindness, such as the actions of Robinson and her niece completing ribbon work without receiving full payment. Another important value expressed through the In’lon-schka and echoed in the daily lives of Osage people surround expressions of encouragement and bolster the lives of young Osages.

**Building an Osage future through children and families**

In his introduction to *Osage and the Invisible World: From the Works of Francis LaFlesche*, historian Garrick Bailey describes a conversation that occurred during his research on the In’lon-schka:

One day, during the course of this research, and Osage friend and I were discussing historic changes in the I’n’lon-schka dance. In the middle of the conversation, my friend, Morris Lookout, suddenly interjected that although the history of the dance was interesting, what truly concerned him was what the dance was like today and what it would be like in the future … contrary to popular conceptions about American Indians, the traditional Osages were, and the contemporary Osages continue to be, strongly future-oriented. (1995:6)

The In’lon-schka marks Osage belonging and strengthens community solidarity, but like Osage nationalism and the practice of ribbon work, the In’lon-schka resists the logic of elimination through its emphasis on the future. The future-oriented nature of this institution is often expressed through statements highlighting the importance of families and young people within the In’lon-schka.

While the dances themselves take place under the arbors in Hominy, Grayhorse, and Pawhuska during three weekends in June, as a nation-building space, the In’lon-schka also occupies a place within the daily lives of many Osage people. Being at the In’lon-schka,
surrounded by family and other Osages, provides an opportunity for Osage participants to imagine the possibilities for an Osage future and to reimagine and act on those possibilities in their daily lives throughout the remainder of the year. Various narrations reference the prominence of family as a means for strengthening community. For example, in a 2012 video posted on the Osage News website, Hominy Drumkeeper William Shunkamolah said, “When I’m not dancing, its always good to kind of visit with people and catch up and see how things are going with them, especially my own family. You know you hear a lot of laughter in all these areas, in all these camps, and it’s really good to hear that you … I really like that aspect of not dancing is seeing all the interactions that happen.” Moving the focus away from the dancing, Shunkamolah emphasizes the importance of the sense of community shared among family and friends that exists within the In’lon-schka. Here, Osage families contribute to the larger project of Osage nation building through their participation in the In’lon-schka.

In addition to the important role families play in fostering a sense of community, the In’lon-schka also provides a space in which Osage families imagine an Osage future through their children. “Dance of the Osage,” a poem written by Talee Red Corn and published on Facebook demonstrates how some Osages imagine the In’lon-schka through family:

The first born will be honored, as I’ve done so, my own Son
They’ll dress in distinguished red, others to follow, different ones
Dressed dashingly in differing hues, like the flowers of my meadow
The children will follow the steps of their parents and in their shadow …

Alas on the last day of the month they will eventually call June
Will end this gentle association when they wish others ado
And proceed to their homes, with heartfelt blessings and manner
And remember the moments of togetherness, to flourish again the next summer

And I will look down, and surely bless them with strength
And continue their learning, unceasing, everlasting, without length
They will be the expression of my joy, my manner, all together
And continue this song, this movement, in the beginning and forever …
Throughout the poem, T. Red Corn evokes the relationship between the Christian God and His children in semblance with the relationship between Osage children and their parents. In addition to signaling the ways that the In’lon-schka exists within and alongside Christianity the lives of various Osage citizens, these selected stanzas illustrate the significance of the relationships between Osage parents and their children as well as the futurity signaled by the In’lon-schka.

In the above poem, T. Red Corn describes how “the first born will be honored” during the In’lon-schka, once again drawing on Christian themes. In this context however, the honoring of the first-born relates to the meaning of the name In’lon-schka. The term In’lon-schka means “playground of the eldest son,” and refers to the selection of the Drumkeeper who is the eldest son of an Osage family within each district (Callahan 1990:19). This recognition—given to some Drumkeepers as young as five years old—serves to mark the achievements of outstanding Osage youth and brings both respect and responsibility to the Drumkeeper and his family (Callahan 1990:20).

Just as examinations of indigenous resistance and expressions of nationalism have focused on momentous events like the occupation of Alcatraz, they have also focused on the work dominated by men (Rickard 2002:145; A. Smith 2008:173). In her research on indigenous feminism, Andrea Smith notes how the work done by indigenous women, “such as cooking,” goes undervalued (2008:174). Here, Smith speaks to the importance of recognizing the contributions of indigenous women within examinations of nation building. The emphasis placed on Osage sons within the In’lon-schka perpetuates and reinforces gender inequality within Osage communities. However, Osage women play an integral role
in maintaining and perpetuating the In’lon-schka, and therefore, play an integral role in the Osage nation-building project.

In describing her own experiences of the In’lon-schka, Grayhorse committee member Sydna Yellowfish said,

I’m a cook, I’m on the committee this year and it’s helping with the preparation of the meals everyday, noon, evening, and then the snack afterwards, and then, also maintaining our own camp, which is my grandmother’s camp. So we also keep that going as well, and trying to serve food to visitors, guests, and other family members that come home to participate in these dances. The dances are very important to myself and my family, and they always have been. I really believe that it’s how we were raised. My grandmother always made a point, and my mother and my relatives, that this is where we come every June, no matter what … My boys … they’ve been coming every year and we’ve instilled in them that they are to be here every June and they have been.

As a committee member and a cook, Yellowfish worked throughout the year to prepare for the meals held for the Grayhorse district committee and invited guests in addition to helping maintain her family’s own camp. Furthermore, Yellowfish describes her upbringing and how it has influenced the expectations for her own children to participate in the In’lon-schka. Borrowing C. Red Corn’s words, Yellowfish is “bringing together, those things from the past, watching them work for the present,” in an effort to ensure an Osage future for her children.

Preparation is also required outside of the formal committee structures of the In’lon-schka. As Robinson explains, “in the dance itself … all of the different parts of the dress of the man are made with much care and concern because we take great pride in dressing our children—our sons and daughters—in bringing them into the dance. We all sit around and thoroughly enjoy watching them dance.” Ultimately, the ribbon work and clothing worn during the In’lon-schka are more than garments; they become simultaneous connections to the past and bridges to the future (Her Many Horses 2007:62). As Robinson describes, the preparation that goes into making the clothing used in the In’lon-schka, emphasizing the pride that Osage
parents feel when they watch their children dance. For Osage parents, and particularly Osage mothers in the case of ribbon working, the preparation required for In’lon-schka participants is no small undertaking. In fact, the skill, time, and costs associated with making the clothing worn during the In’lon-schka further contribute to the exclusion of those Osage citizens who might otherwise participate in the dances. The preparation also brings the nation-building space of the In’lon-schka into the homes and daily lives of Osage people.

Above all, the In’lon-schka represents a fundamental Osage nation-building space where participants come together and strengthen Osage community, employing their own experiences to imagine and reimagine Osage nationalism. Drawing on lessons from the past, the In’lon-schka—like Osage nationhood—serves present needs and works to secure an Osage future. As an integral component of the In’lon-schka, ribbon work emerges as a symbol of this nation building space and the nationalist rhetoric surrounding the In’lon-schka. As a result, ribbon work is often deployed as a symbol that evokes particular ideas about Osage nationalism in spaces outside of the In’lon-schka. The following section examines some of the ways the government of Osage Nation has deployed ribbon work as symbolic tool for shaping narratives of Osage nationalism.
BUILDING AN OSAGE NATION ONLINE: THE VIRTUAL TERRITORY OF THE OSAGE NATION

Before beginning my graduate studies in Chapel Hill, I worked as a Research Assistant at the Denver Museum of Nature & Science (DMNS). I specifically worked on three National Park Service grants funding the consultation and repatriation of human skeletal remains in the museum’s collection under the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation ACT (NAGPRA). On one grant alone, we directly consulted with 142 individual nations.

During my time at DMNS, I was responsible for ensuring that the contact information on file for each of the 566 federally recognized Indian tribes was accurate. The majority of my time as the NAGPRA Research Assistant was spent trying to access up-to-date contact information for tribal leaders. Even the most useful databases, provided by the National Park Service, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and the National Congress of American Indians, rarely provided correct contact information. Most days, I ultimately found myself typing the names of individual Indian nations in a Google search. Each time I pressed the search button, I was equally hopeful—that an official website would appear in the results—and fearful—that the most promising link would be from Wikipedia or Ancestry.com.

For better or worse, the World Wide Web has become the primary resource people use to access information, and websites can be incredibly effective vehicles for communicating information to various populations. In the case of the Osage Nation, the official website primarily serves two distinct populations, Osage citizens and non-Osages.
Unlike the In’lon-schka—which is a nation-building space fundamentally about Osages—the official website is a nation-building space that communicates Osage nationalism to those located both within and outside of the boundaries of the Osage Nation. Focusing primarily on the Osage Nation website, this section examines the ways that the virtual territory of the Osage Nation is both a product and source of Osage nationalism. It also analyzes the ways that ribbon work is deployed as a tool for communicating particular conceptions of this nationalism.

Prior to the emergence of this virtual territory, it was more difficult for Osage citizens living outside of the boundaries of the Osage Nation to stay connected to the issues affecting the Nation. The virtual territory of the Osage Nation—both within and outside of the Nation’s official website—has allowed Osage citizens to participate more fully in shaping Osage nationalism. However, as critical theorist and historian Mark Poster cautions:

Two tendencies above all must be avoided: to celebrate the virtual as an evolutionary or dialectical “next stage” beyond the real or to dismiss the virtual as a false instantiation of the real. Instead, the virtual must be understood as an historical articulation of the real, fully as actual as any other such articulation but one connected specifically with computer-mediated communication technologies. (1998:200)

In order to avoid privileging this virtual territory as a teleological step in the advancement of Osage nationalism, however, like any other territory, it must be understood as socially constructed and negotiated by particular historical, cultural, social, and political forces contingent upon the distribution of power within a society (Ogden 1996:123). Therefore, it is important to recognize the power relations that are both constitutive of and produced by the Osage virtual territory.

In 2005, the Osage Nation launched a new official website. The Nation contracted the design and development of the website to a company called Onefastbuffalo (OFB) that
specializes in “the art of brand manufacturing.” The fact that the website was designed in conjunction with a brand strategy company indicates that the Osage Nation set out to craft and portray a particular national image both within and outside of the Nation’s citizenry through the use of branding, or the use of repetitive imagery (Dennison 2015). In his work on China’s national image management, political scientist Sheng Ding describes how national image can be used as a “valuable power resource” that can help the state “better wield its national power and achieve its policy goals in international relations” (2011:296). In the case of the Osage Nation, the official website represents an important tool for creating and maintaining a national image that reflects specific ideas about Osage government, economics, and society.

According to the OFB website, the content designers were tasked with creating a website that: 1) presented the Osage Nation as a contemporary living people, working and thriving in today’s modern business world; 2) would serve as the central communication tool between the Osage Nation government and its people; and 3) emphasized the importance of the Osage language. The designers of OFB also worked closely with Osage leaders and artists in order to incorporate Osage patterns into the design of the website. The resulting design prominently features ribbon work and Osage orthography throughout the website (fig. 7).

The use of ribbon work as a primary design element of the official website of the Osage Nation speaks to the importance of ribbon work as a medium for communicating Osage nationalism. Drawing on the work of Walter Benjamin, B. Anderson attributes the emergence of national imaginings to the rise of print capitalism, which portrayed a sense of simultaneity in time and space within an imagined community (1983:25;44-46). The growth
of print capitalism also resulted in an emphasis on common print languages that, as anthropologist Samah Sabra suggests, represented “a medium through which national communities could be imagined” (2007:81). Similarly, the Osage Nation website portrays a sense of simultaneity among the Osage citizens accessing the site, emphasizing not only a common language, but also ribbon work as a common medium or symbol for imagining the Osage Nation.

Ribbon work and the Osage clothing used during the In’lon-schka mark heightened Osage belonging as well as signal the unification and perpetuation of the imagined national community. By using images of ribbon work on its website, the Nation evokes similar sentiments and uses ribbon work as a symbol to mask difference, inequality, and other tensions that counter the state-sponsored narrative of Osage nationalism. Anderson makes a particular distinction between spontaneously occurring “popular nationalisms” and state-constructed “official nationalisms” that “pirate … popular nationalist enthusiasm” in order to promote the desires of the state and its elites (Anderson 1983:102-105; Sabra 2007:82). In this case, ribbon work most certainly reflects what Anderson calls “popular nationalist enthusiasm,” and the website represents state-constructed “official nationalism.”

The following examines how popular nationalist values are used as tools to shape the Osage national image and communicate Osage nationalism to both Osages and non-Osages.

**A virtual territory for and by Osage citizens**

In addition to evoking a particular construction of Osage nationalism through the use of ribbon work and Osage orthography, the website enables Osage citizens living within and outside of the reservation to stay informed about important issues and obtain access to various services. As described by the OFB website, “The site serves as a virtual community
gathering spot, communication center, educational tool, online market center, and powerful political voice for the Osage Nation.” In creating a virtual space in which Osage people can come together in order to access information and services, the website constructs a narrative of Osage nationalism that focuses on accessibility and equality for all citizens. However, many services are only available to Osage citizens living within the boundaries of the Osage Nation or at least those who live close enough to access them. While the website does provide all Osage citizens online access to social services, health benefits, higher education scholarship funding, and Osage language training, it also draws attention away from the fact that many resources remain inaccessible to those living outside of the physical boundaries of the Osage Nation.

In 2007, the Osage State of the Nation marked the first event that was streamed on the Osage Nation website. Today, the Congressional and Minerals Council sessions are also available online. By enabling Osage citizens everywhere to watch these streamed events, the website has become an integral Osage nation-building space for promoting political engagement. Since the passage of the 2006 Osage Constitution, all Osage citizens over the age of 18 have been eligible to vote in Osage general elections. In recent years, the Nation has promoted political engagement as an important aspect of Osage nationalism. In 2012, the Osage Nation Elections Office enlisted the services of Buffalo Nickel Creative to create marketing collateral encouraging Osage citizens to vote. The resulting materials draw on the popular nationalism of ribbon work, depicting voting as an act that is just as important, and just as Osage, as participating in the In’lon-schka (figs. 8-11).

As previously discussed, Osage politicians garner political legitimacy through their participation in the In’lon-schka, and candidates often evoke the institution within their
campaigns. During the 2012 Osage Elections, Congresswoman Maria Whitehorn used ribbon work designs on her campaign materials (figs. 12-13). This symbolic deployment of Osage ribbon work communicated to Osage constituents that Whitehorn participated in specific Osage social institutions, like the In’lon-schka, and thus, that her own imagining of Osage nationalism was informed by these institutions. An Osage News article describes that the ribbon work design featured on her campaign materials—which included “Hominy purple” koozies—was based on a ribbon work design of her aunt, Frances Kilpatrick. Whitehorn’s use of ribbon work provides a striking visual representation of the important role ribbon work plays in Osage nation building. More recently, Principal Chief candidate Margo Gray and Assistant Principal Chief candidate Raymond Red Corn both used ribbon work designs on campaign materials mailed to voters ahead of the 2014 Osage Primary Elections (figs. 14-16).

The importance of political engagement within constructions of Osage nationalism has also emerged in areas of the Osage virtual territory that extend beyond the formal apparatus of the state, specifically within online discussion forums, Facebook, and other social media sites. In her own work, Dennison describes her personal experience with this realm of the Osage virtual territory: “I had followed online discussions during the reform process, but it was not until I was away from the reservation that I truly appreciated the Osage territory that existed on the World Wide Web” (Dennison 2012:120). This territory is constructed through the posts of individual Osage citizens, and thus reflects the multiplicity of Osage experience and opinion. Similar to the In’lon-schka—where participants simultaneously express individuality and mark Osage belonging through the use of ribbon work—these spaces provide users an opportunity to mark Osage belonging and express
individual political views. Unlike the In’lon-schka, however, these spaces and the discussions that occur within them are overtly contentious and often argumentative.

One of the most active spaces within the Osage virtual territory is the “Osage Community for Responsible Citizenry” page on Facebook. As of November 2013 there were just over 1200 members in this group, many of whom post pictures of their participation in the In’lon-schka or even use an image of themselves dressed for the In’lon-schka or other social institutions as their profile picture. A recent discussion by several members of the group raised concerns about the combative nature of the discussion on the page. The thread was started by Billy Keene who posted, “It's just my opinion, but I think anyone who resorts to name calling on this forum should be banned. I enjoy commenting and engaging in lively, healthy debate but in the past few weeks I've seen an onslaught of childish, petty, immature behavior. Everyone have a good weekend and God bless.” In response to Keene’s comment about banning members, Jim Gray posted the description of the group. The page, started by Yancey Red Corn, was initially created as a response to the censorship of his own comments on the Facebook page “Osages for Fiscal Responsibility.” The following description of the “Osage Community for Responsible Citizenry,” in which Red Corn quotes a post from group member Richard Chissoe, reveals a particular construction of Osage nationalism that focuses on the importance of political engagement:

“I advocate the concept of responsible citizenry. We hear so many Osages demand responsible government, but rarely seem to acknowledge their own duty to responsible citizenry. This includes stepping up and engaging our government in legitimate and meaningful ways—not just tearing it down on online forums. This means discussing the affairs of the Nation through thoughtful, productive and responsible dialogue—not simply spreading innuendo, gossip and ‘the word is...’. Being a responsible citizen means voting. It means showing up and speaking up in the light of day, being truly proud and getting in the game. It is not responsible citizenry to simply resigning one's self to the opinion that nothing matters, no one cares,
everyone's dishonest and out for themselves, no effort is worthwhile and we are not empowered to shape our own Nation." –Comment by Richard Chissoe

I will not administrate this site for any comments. Hopefully, the people can moderate it and call people out when there is innuendo, gossip and "the word is" comments that Richard Chissoe stated above.86

This description of “responsible citizenry” recognizes the diversity of opinions that exist among Osage citizens by promoting the importance of thoughtful, productive, and meaningful debate and dialogue. However, this construction of Osage nationalism represents an ideal form that is not often realized in practice.

In addition to providing a space for Osage citizens to communicate with one another, these online forums also provide Osage constituents a means for communicating with Osage leaders, making the government aware of and “pressured to be more responsive to popular will” (Ogden 1996:128). It is in these spaces, however, that old power structures are reinforced, even as they begin to change (Ogden 1996:131). For example, during the 2004-2006 reform, the Osage Shareholders Association (OSA) created a webpage with a discussion forum that remained critical of the 2006 Osage Constitution until the site was discontinued in 2012.87 While the OSA certainly does not represent the majority of the Osage citizenry, as Dennison explains, “the group is made up of the most vocal and politically active of the Osage citizens and therefore continues to play a formidable role in Osage politics” (2012:121). Even though this virtual territory provides a space for greater political engagement by wider range of Osage citizens, the discussions in these forums often reinforce existing power dynamics and inequalities.
Self-representation within the Osage virtual territory: communicating ideas about the Osage to non-Osages

In 2013, the Osage Nation Information Technology Department created an online survey to collect feedback from Osage citizens about the current website as a means of informing a redesign of the website’s structure. One of the reasons given for the redesign was the fact that “a lot of the website’s traffic is of individuals researching the tribe.” Unlike the In’lon-schka—a nation-building space for and by Osages—the public nature of the Osage Nation website affects its content. For example, as previously discussed, a primary goal of the existing website design was to present the Osage Nation as a contemporary living people, working and thriving in today’s modern business world. Here, the Nation’s website becomes a tool for communicating specific ideas about Osage nationalism as a means for establishing legitimacy and authority in non-Osage contexts.

One of the proposed features of the new website will “enable constituents to register, log in, and create a profile on the website.” As the use of the term “constituents” suggests, the website registration will most likely be limited to enrolled Osage citizens. Again, the establishment of boundaries emerges as an integral aspect of Osage nation building. In fact, the Osage News website, which occupies another important space within the Osage virtual territory, restricts access to unregistered and unsubscribed users. While the majority of the Osage News content is accessible to visitors, certain content is restricted to subscribers. For example, unsubscribed users cannot access the photos taken during the In’lon-schka. This specific restriction reflects and reinforces the fact that the In’lon-schka widely excludes participation by non-Osages.

In addition to communicating Osage nationalism through the website, in 2012 the Osage Nation Tax Commission began issuing photo identification cards to Osage citizens.
Like the Osage Nation website, the ID cards feature ribbon work—in addition to the official seal of the Osage Nation—as a primary design element (fig. 17). The ID cards have many of the same features as a state-issued driver’s license. Similar to other Indian nations in recent years—such as the Navajo Nation and the Cherokee Nation—the Osage Nation photo identification cards can be used by enrolled citizens both within and outside of the boundaries of the Osage Nation. A recent comment by John Baker, Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation, reveals the impact that these types of ID cards have on indigenous nationhood: "The Cherokee Nation photo ID citizenship cards have been wildly successful … Our people are using the photo IDs to access tribal services, get through major airports or cash checks at their neighborhood banks. We created a tool that is not just a source of pride, but an exercise of our tribal sovereignty."92 The Osage ID cards, like the Osage Nation website, perform different functions within and outside of the boundaries of the Nation. Regardless of the context, however, both the ID cards and the website are tools used by the Nation to convey specific ideas about Osage nationalism and to present a national image that reflects the capacity and sovereignty of the Osage Nation.

Like ribbon work, the Osage virtual territory provides a medium for communicating Osage self-representation both within and outside of the Nation’s boundaries. The state-sponsored nationalism promoted by the Nation’s website limits Osage nationalism to a single narrative emphasizing the unity, solidarity, and capacity of the Osage Nation. This singular narrative of Osage nationalism is wielded by the state as a powerful tool for establishing legitimacy and flattens the multiplicity and complexity of Osage nationalism. On the other hand, the virtual territory that exists outside of the Nation’s website acknowledges the diversity of Osage experience and constructs Osage nationalism around a narrative of
political engagement. While the Osage virtual territory has fostered greater accessibility and participation in shaping Osage nationalism, it also reinforces existing power structures and inequalities.
Figure 7. This screenshot captures various pages within the Osage Nation’s official website.
Figures 8-9. These images depict “Vote” posters designed by Buffalo Nickel Creative on behalf of the Osage Nation Election Office, which feature an Osage woman (left) and man (right) voting in the clothes that are typically worn during the In’lon-schka and other Osage social institutions.

Figures 10-11. Osage “Vote” button (left) and t-shirts (right) designed by Buffalo Nickel Creative on behalf of the Osage Nation Election Office, which feature a four-ribbon pattern. Figure 11 (right) was originally published by the Osage News (osagenews.org) and is used with permission.
Figure 12. (left) Congresswoman Maria Whitehorn standing in front of her campaign sign, which features a four-ribbon pattern, during the 2012 Osage elections. This image was originally published by the Osage News (osagenews.org) and is used with permission.

Figure 13. (right) This cake represents one of the ways Congresswoman Maria Whitehorn used ribbon work designs in her campaign materials. This image was originally published by the Osage News (osagenews.org) and is used with permission.

Figure 14. Scan of the brochure sent to Osage constituents by 2014 Principal Chief Candidate Margo Gray, featuring a stripped ribbon work pattern, and Gray pictured in clothes worn during the In’lon-schka or other Osage social institutions.
Figure 15. Scan of the brochure sent to Osage constituents by 2014 Principal Chief Candidate Margo Gray featuring a stripped ribbon work pattern.

Figure 16. Scan of the brochure sent to Osage constituents by 2014 Assistant Principal Chief Candidate Raymond Red Corn featuring a four-ribbon pattern.
Figure 17. Osage ID Card issued by the Osage Nation Tax Commission. This image was originally published by the Osage News (osagenews.org) and is used with permission.
CONCLUSION

Several years ago, my twenty-year-old self read the same transcripts used in this research with a focus on the past. However, revisiting these same transcripts several years later, I understood them completely differently. In the beginning of this text, I discussed a story about an experience Philip Deloria had as a sixth grader. As an adult retelling his experience, Deloria recognized the ways the story had changed through other experiences and time. Similarly, my own experience, not only as a graduate student engaging with decolonization but also, as a mother, has changed my reading of the same transcripts I used as an undergraduate. My ultimate goal for this project was to revisit my previous work in a way that opens possibilities for an Osage future, and my own experiences as an Osage mother ultimately allowed me to connect to this research in a more meaningful way.

This project—which began as a reimagining of my previous research on Osage ribbon work—explored how ribbon work developed through and against colonial processes and became a symbol of Osage nationhood. Through an engagement with decolonization, this examination of ribbon work moved away from the analytical frame of culture and focused instead on nation building. As ribbon work represents a creative form of self-representation that is primarily produced by Osage women, this project also examined nation building from a gendered and indigenous perspective.

Through its symbolic deployments in both political and social contexts, ribbon work has become an important tool for constructing and communicating Osage nationalism. As different Osage citizens imagine the Osage Nation differently, Osage nationalism is an
inherently contentious and continuous process. The concept of nationalism described in this text was explicated through an examination of Osage belonging and the construction of boundaries in two different nation-building spaces—the In’lon-schka and the virtual territory of the Osage Nation. The symbolic meanings of ribbon work are constructed primarily within the In’lon-schka and thus reflect the values promoted within this social institution. Politicians and government officials then deploy ribbon work and other popular constructions of Osage nationalism in order to obtain political legitimacy and maintain authority. Although this study focuses on the use of ribbon work as an integral component of nation building, unique to the Osage Nation, it also contributes to the growing body of scholarship examining indigenous self-representation and resistance more broadly.
APPENDIX

Basic technique for Osage four-ribbon pattern:

1. Choose two base ribbon colors in 2" or 3" width
2. With right sides together, sew a 1/8" seam on long edge of ribbons
3. Press center seam open
4. Trace pattern onto two top ribbons being sure they will mirror when sewn onto base ribbons
5. Baste one top ribbon onto the base ribbon along the outside long edge - finished edge will be approx. 1/4" from center seam
6. Trim along traced line leaving 1/4" seam - clip on a diagonal into all inside corner
7. Turn ribbon under along traced line and baste to the base ribbon
8. Baste second top ribbon onto opposite base ribbon mirroring the first ribbon - repeat previous two steps
9. Machine stitch top ribbons to base ribbons staying as close to the pattern edge as possible

Basic technique for Osage stripped ribbon pattern (example using 7 ribbons):

1. Choose 4 ribbon colors. Three colors will be mirrored on either side of a single center ribbon color.
2. If using 2” or 3” ribbons, strip ribbons to 1” lengthwise. Ribbon lengths will be determined by finished piece you are working on (breech, tailpiece or leggings).
3. Layer ribbons behind first ribbon with a ¼” reveal. Baste first ribbon to second ribbon and continue layering until all ribbons are basted together. First and seventh ribbon colors should match, second and sixth, third and fifth will match on either side of a single center ribbon color.
4. Trace pattern onto first ribbon and cut at 90 degrees to inside angles. Fold and baste along pattern lines onto second ribbon. Continue tracing, cutting and basting subsequent ribbons until you complete the center (fourth) ribbon. The fifth ribbon pattern will mirror third ribbon pattern, sixth to second, and seventh to first.
5. Machine stitch center ribbon as close to pattern edge as possible. Continue machine stitching corresponding colors working from the inside to the outside ribbon.
ENDNOTES

1 See Medicine, Learning to be an Anthropologist and Remaining Native; Ramirez, Native Hubs: culture, community, and belonging in Silicon Valley and beyond and “Henry Roe Cloud: A Granddaughter’s Native Feminist Biographical Account”; Lomawaima, They called it Prairie Light: the story of Chilocco Indian School; Lambert, Choctaw Nation: A Story of American Indian Resurgence; Dennison, Colonial Entanglement: Constituting a Twenty-first-century Osage Nation; Deloria, Playing Indian, Indians in Unexpected Places, and “Thinking about Self in a Family Way.” In 2009, a special issue of American Indian Quarterly (vol. 33, no. 4) focused on “Working from Home in American Indian History,” which also speaks to these issues.

2 Personal communication, November 6, 2012.

3 See also Dennison, Colonial Entanglement, 12.


5 The twelfth Congressperson was absent for the voting on this piece of legislation. See ONCR 10-30.

6 Amendments to the Osage Nation Constitution must be approved by 65% of the Osage electorate, and only 47.6% of the Osage electorate voted in favor of ONCR 10-30. 2006 Osage Nation Constitution, 18.


8 For more on this idea, and examples of other ways Indian people have been complicit in the perpetuation of certain images—particularly within the context of performance and filmmaking—see Deloria, Indians in Unexpected Places.

9 Dennison, Colonial Entanglement.


11 Ethnographic approaches to objects focus on providing a great deal of context about the “function and indigenous meaning of objects.” An art-historical approach, on the other hand, focuses largely on aesthetic and stylistic descriptions of objects. Glass, Objects of Exchange, xii.; See also James Clifford, “On Collecting Art and Culture,” 222.


13 See McClintock, “No Longer a Future in Heaven,” 89; and Sabra, “Imagining Nations,” 78; for more on the issues of gender and indigenous nationhood see Jennifer Denetdale, “Chairmen, Presidents, and Princesses,” “Securing Navajo National Boundaries,” and “Carving Navajo National Boundaries.”

For critiques on external constructions of “authenticity” and how conceptions of “authenticity” limits possibilities for indigenous peoples see, Page Raibmon, Authentic Indians; Philip J. Deloria, Playing Indian; Jessica Cattelino, High Stakes; Daniel Usner, Indian Work; and Colleen O’Neill, “Rethinking Modernity and the Discourse of Development, an Introduction.”

For more about the problematic nature of “good intentions” within academic discourse, see Cowlishaw, “Racial positioning, privilege and public debate.”


Georgeann Robinson, interview by George Horse Capture, 1982, transcript.

For further reading on Osage trade networks (1673-1840), see Rollings, The Osage: An Ethnohistorical Study of Hegemony on the Prairie-Plains; see also Din and Nasatir, The Imperial Osages: Spanish-Indian Diplomacy in the Mississippi Valley which focuses particularly on the interactions between the Osage and the Spanish between 1763—when the Spanish acquired the Louisiana Territory from France—and 1804—when U.S. officials arrived after the Louisiana Purchase.

Ibid.

Louise Gray Red Corn, interview by Katherine [Kathryn] Red Corn, August 25, 1968, transcript, Doris Duke Collection, University of Oklahoma Libraries Western History Collections, Norman, OK.

Ibid.

Ibid.
In her own research, Lomawaima reveals that alumni of Chilocco Indian School often valued their experiences at the school. See Lomawaima, *They Called it Prairie Light*, 166.

Louise Gray Red Corn, interview by Katherine [Kathryn] Red Corn, August 25, 1968, transcript, Doris Duke Collection, University of Oklahoma Libraries Western History Collections, Norman, OK.

Georgeann Robinson, interview by George Horse Capture, 1982, transcript.

Ibid.

Interview transcript, courtesy of Jean Dennison.

“From high-end Osage regalia to supplies, Osages are open for business,” *Osage News*, November 4, 2010.


Art historian Elizabeth Hutchinson examines the role that “Indian stores” and the mainstream interest in American Indian art played in the development of U.S. Indian Policy. While this is outside of the scope of this research, for a more detailed discussion, see Hutchinson, *The Indian Craze*.

In another publication, *Trading Identities: The Souvenir in Native North American Art from the Northeast, 1700-1900*, Phillips also describes how indigenous objects created for the market economy carried discrete meanings for indigenous peoples and non-indigenous consumers. For more on Indigenous cultural expression within art markets and an analysis of the distinctive roles that objects made for internal and external use play, see also Nelson Graburn, *Ethnic and Tourist Arts: Cultural Expression in the Fourth World*.

Georgeann Robinson, interview by George Horse Capture, 1982, transcript.

For a more detailed discussion of the hobbyist phenomenon see Deloria, *Playing Indian*.

For a detailed analysis and case study of the commoditization of Indian art, see Parezo, *Navajo Sandpainting: From Religious Act to Commercial Art*.


For a more detailed discussion of the power to define and represent as well as the distinctions anthropology has made between words and objects in particular see Julie Cruikshank’s “Oral Tradition and Material Culture”; for a discussion of issues relating to Indian art and “value” see Nancy Parezo’s “Indigenous Art” chapter in *A Companion to American Indian History*; for a discussion of decolonizing museums and issues of

41 Interview transcript, courtesy of Jean Dennison.


43 Interview transcript, courtesy of Jean Dennison.

44 Individuals who hold a headright in the Osage Mineral Estate—which is owned by the Osage Nation and held in trust by the U.S. government—receive a portion of the profits produced through the extraction of natural gas, oil, and minerals from the subsurface of the reservation. For a more detailed discussion of the headright system see Dennison, *Colonial Entanglement*.

45 See Dennison, *Colonial Entanglement*.

46 2006 Osage Constitution.

47 Ibid.

48 For a more detailed discussion, see Dennison, *Colonial Entanglement*.


50 There is some debate about whether or not the dance was received by the Osage as a War Dance. Some scholars assert that the dance was no longer a war dance by the time it was received by the Osage, see Granberry, “The Expression of Osage Identity: Ethnic Unity and the In-lon-schka,”41; and Callahan, *Osage Ceremonial Dance I’n-Lon-Schka*. Some scholars claim that it was received as a War Dance, see Meadows, *Kiowa Military Societies: Ethnohistory and Ritual*, 261. Still, others trace its origins to the Grass Dance, see Ellis, *A dancing people: powwow culture on the southern Plains*, 52; and Swan, “Osage Dancing Societies and Organizations,” 158. Regardless of its origin, the In’lon-schka has never functioned as a War Dance within Osage society. However, many Osage community members past and present refer to the In’lon-schka as a War Dance, which is why I have chosen to include this interpretation in the text.


52 In his own work, anthropologist Darren Ranco explains, “I experienced difficulty writing something that seemed anthropological without treating my friends and family in disrespectful ways.” See Ranco, “Toward a Native Anthropology,” 65.

53 See also Simpson, “On Ethnographic Refusal.”
Within the context of non-Osage specific events, the style of Osage ribbon work and clothing serves as a marker of Osage identity.

Historian Joshua L. Reid also talks about the dialectic between the past and present/future within the context of Makah whaling and nationhood. See “Articulating a Traditional Future: Makah Sealers and Whalers, 1880-1999.”

Interview transcript, courtesy of Jean Dennison.


Ibid.


Ibid.


“Vote Margo Gray for Principal Chief of the Osage Nation.” Campaign brochure received in the mail February 2014. For more information on Gray campaign see www.margogray2014.com.

Leonard Maker, interview by Katherine Maker, May 16, 1968, transcript, Doris Duke Collection, University of Oklahoma Libraries Western History Collections, Norman, OK.


See also Dennison, Colonial Entanglement, 83-4.


Red Corn, “I lo'n schka,” July 26, 2013.

Georgeann Robinson, interview by George Horse Capture, 1982, transcript.

For more information about NAGPRA, visit http://www.nps.gov/nagpra/.


Ibid.

Ibid.

In a forthcoming article, “Situating Graphic Anthropology,” Dennison describes her own use of ribbon work as a design element for the graphic design work within Colonial Entanglement in an effort to create a product that “would be more likely to speak to Osage citizens and portray the complexity of Osage issues to non-Osage audiences” (6). Within this context, Dennison used ribbon work as a means to represent visually the concept of colonial entanglement as well as to create interest in the concept.

Ibid.

Ibid.


Ibid., accessed November 30, 2013.


Ibid.

While the OSA page has been discontinued, a website titled “Osage Blog” maintains a monthly discussion of “Osage Shareholder Matters.” http://osageblog.blogspot.com/


91 The Osage News is not associated with the government of the Osage Nation, as revealed in its mission statement: “As an independent news organization, we strive to report news and information with fairness and balance. While being the official news organization of the Osage Nation, we base our news judgments on our loyalties to our readers and Osage citizens, and we are not directly beholden to the Executive, Legislative, or Judicial branches of the Osage Nation,” accessed December 5, 2013. http://osagenews.org/content/about-us.

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