



Indigenous Languages and Literatures in the Colonial Archive

Graduate Workshop in Research Methods

Newberry Consortium in American Indian Studies (NCAIS)

Amherst College, Amherst, MA

March 9-11, 2017

Presented by

Prof. Jenny L. Davis, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Prof. Birgit Brander Rasmussen, SUNY- Binghamton University

Mike Kelly, Head, Archives & Special Collections, Amherst College



This was a sign of gratitude used when words failed to interpret strong emotion

From *Old Indian legends, retold by Zitkala-Ša*,
1901. Ayer 324 .Z8 1901

This workshop will explore indigenous language and literacy resources in the collections of Amherst College. Traditionally the purview of historians, archives are now drawing researchers from a range of disciplines including literary scholars, linguists, art historians, along with tribal communities searching for language records as part of revitalization programs. Histories and archives have often served settler colonialism and participated in the erasure of Native voices, literacies, and anti-colonial resistance. How can scholars resist, rather than reproduce, the coloniality of such sites and practices? Can the archives be decolonized and if so, how?

Assistant professor of Anthropology and director of the Native American and Indigenous Language Lab at UIUC Jenny L. Davis will lead discussions about Native American language recovery and revitalization while Birgit Brander Rasmussen, author of the prize-winning study *Queequeg's Coffin: Indigenous Literacies and Early American Literature* (Duke UP, 2012), will guide explorations of indigenous literacy practices. Mike Kelly (Head of Archives & Special Collections) will show highlights from the Kim-Wait/Eisenberg Native American Literature Collection including extremely rare publications by Samson Occom, William Apess, Gertrude Bonnin, Joy Harjo, Gerald Vizenor, and others. He will be joined by Kiara Vigil, Assistant professor of American Studies, and author of *Indigenous Intellectuals: Sovereignty, Citizenship, and the American Imagination, 1880–1930*. Given the archival complicity with settler colonialism's erasure of Native peoples, languages, literacies, and knowledges, what kind of recovery is possible? If materials are scattered in ways that are difficult to trace using standard search engines, how may scholars and community members recover fragments that current cataloguing practices render invisible?

One student from each NCAIS institution may participate in the three-day workshop as part of an introduction to critical methodologies in American Indian Studies. **Interested students should apply directly to their NCAIS Faculty Liaison.** Housing will be provided and participants will be reimbursed up to \$600 for travel.