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Washed Away:
Native American Representation in Oklahoma Museums and High Schools, 2000 – 2020

A Thesis Presented
by
Catherine E. Thompson

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies,
University of Massachusetts Boston,
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

August 2020

History Program

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Native American Representation in Oklahoma Museums and High Schools, 2000 – 2020

A Thesis Presented
by
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ABSTRACT

Washed Away:
Native American Representation in Oklahoma Museums and High Schools, 2000 – 2020

August 2020

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Each state in our union has a unique history and story as it plays into the formation of the United States; one of the unique and historically relevant narratives to United States is that of Oklahoma. The state of Oklahoma has gone through a multitude of changes over the last several centuries. Unfortunately a significant part of the history that has made Oklahoma so singular continues to be overlooked by the public and through education. Native Americans were forced off their ancestral lands and moved to Oklahoma. The state was then developed through a series of federal acts and invasive Euro-American settlement, but the dominant historical narrative taught in public education across the state, and in public history venues, rarely reflects the harsher realities of the 19th century as they impact Native peoples in Oklahoma. This thesis builds on the works of scholars working at the intersections of history, Native American Studies, and public history, such as Jean O'Brien, Roxanne

Dunbar-Ortiz, and Amy Lonetree, in order to shed light on the limitations and active erasures pervasive in the presentation of Oklahoma history. Through the study of Oklahoma museums, high school textbooks, and state standards, this research shows there is a severe lack of representation of Native American histories and peoples in Oklahoma history, and it argues that this lack of representation can lead to an increase in high school dropout rates, continuing cultural genocide, and perpetuation of colonial mentalities.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

It is the home of the Red People, Indian Territory, the Twin Territories, the Sooner State, Cowboy Nation, and Texas Lite. All these names and more have been used to describe our nation's 46th state. Admitted into the Union in November 1907, Oklahoma had already had a long and bloody history, first as an unincorporated territory, then as "Indian Territory," and finally as Twin Territories, creating the Oklahoma Territory from lands previously promised as Indian reservations. The name 'Oklahoma' reflects the history of the state as it is formed from two Choctaw words.¹ "Oklahoma" means home of the "red people." Yet, in many schools and other educational venues across the state, the rich histories of Native peoples have been limited, usually to a quick mention of the Trail of Tears or a few scattered accounts of army brutality, if anything at all. Given the education they receive, we might not be surprised if Oklahoma school children think that Native people are largely irrelevant to this state in both the past and present.

In this thesis, I consider the status of Native American history taught in two of the largest educational contexts in Oklahoma: state-specific museums and public high schools. In these two educational venues Euro-American perspectives dominate the presentation of Oklahoma history. This thesis demonstrates the lack of Native American perspectives in

¹ The suffix "-homa" is a derivation of the word "humma" meaning "human" or "people" and the prefix "okla," meaning "red." Thus, the name "okla homa" translates roughly to "red people," referencing either the color the Native American's skins or to the Trail of Tears. The Trail of Tears was a period of Indian Removal from the east to the Indian Territory in the 1830s, in which thousands of Native Americans, mainly Cherokee, lost their lives along the journey west. George H. Shirk, *Oklahoma Place Names* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press: 1965), vii.

historical education and argues for the importance of providing both Euro-American and Native American perspectives when educating the next generation, building upon the work of Indigenous Studies scholars such as Jean O'Brien, Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz and Amy Lonetree.² By only providing a Euro-American centered perspective on Oklahoma's history, public educational systems limit the historical understanding of students around the state, and this limited understanding leads to less informed members of society. The consequences of perpetuating such incomplete histories are discussed in the works of such scholars as Jean O'Brien, Susan Sleeper-Smith, and Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz. Each of these historians is concerned by problematic myths and absences regarding Native American histories within the dominant understandings of United States history. For example, the presentation of the history of displacement and violence as a history based in 'manifest destiny' justifies the destructive actions of colonization that formed the state.

In the U.S.A., education of American youth is left to the discretion of the states and is not widely overseen by the federal government, which means that education – specifically historical education – can vary significantly from region to region, and even from state to state. What has been happening across many states (though I only address Oklahoma here) has been an erasure of Native American histories from American school systems, and the prominent roles Indigenous peoples have had in this nation's history are all too frequently sidelined, downplayed, or outright ignored. As a secondary history teacher, I have seen this firsthand and have unfortunately and unknowingly been a part of the problem in my career.

The 2015 edited edition *Why you Can't Teach United States History without American Indians* sets an example for the importance of including Native American

² Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2014); Amy Lonetree, *Decolonizing Museums: Representing Native America in National and Tribal Museums* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012).

perspectives in the U.S. historical narrative.³ The goal of the anthology is to have a collection of works that directly contest the common narrative of U.S. history, which tends towards removing Native Americans' importance. For example, an article by Robert J. Miller that examines the power of the ideal of Manifest Destiny and the discovery of the Americas explains how problematic it is that typical historical narratives about the 'discovery' of the Americas do not emphasize or even acknowledge the people who were already present before European contact, thereby perpetuating the idea that this land was uninhabited, or open for the taking. Miller writes,

The United States and most of the non-European world were colonized under an international legal principle known as the Doctrine of Discovery, which was used to justify European claims over the indigenous peoples and their territories. The doctrine provides that "civilized" and "Christian" Euro-Americans automatically acquired property rights over the lands of Native peoples and gained governmental, political, and commercial rights over the indigenous inhabitants just by showing up. This legal principle was shaped by religious and ethnocentric ideas of European and Christian superiority over other races and religions of the world.⁴

The problem with perpetuating the narrative that European explorers were somehow entitled to the discovery of the Americas is not an issue that only concerns scholars. The popularity

³ Some articles in the edition include:

James D. Rice, "Rethinking the "American Paradox": Bacon's Rebellion, Indians, and the U.S. History Survey," in Susan Sleeper-Smith et al, *Why You Can't Teach United States History without American Indians* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015).

Sarah M. Pearsall, "Recentring Indian Women in the American Revolution," in Susan Sleeper-Smith et al, *Why You Can't Teach United States History without American Indians* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015).

Robert J. Miller, "The Doctrine of Discovery, Manifest Destiny, and American Indians," in Susan Sleeper-Smith et al, *Why You Can't Teach United States History without American Indians* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015).

Paul T. Conrad, "Why You Can't Teach the History of U.S. Slavery without American Indians," in Susan Sleeper-Smith et al, *Why You Can't Teach United States History without American Indians* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015).

⁴ Robert J. Miller, "The Doctrine of Discovery, Manifest Destiny, and American Indians," in Susan Sleeper-Smith et al, *Why You Can't Teach United States History without American Indians* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 87.

of James W. Loewen's book, *Lies my Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong*, also suggests that this issue is of broader interest to more audiences than just historians. For instance, Loewen writes, "deep down, our [U.S. / Western European] culture encourages us to imagine that we are richer and more powerful because we're smarter...since textbooks don't identify or encourage us to think about the real causes, "we're smarter" festers as a possibility...the notion that "it's natural" for one group to dominate another."⁵ The Doctrine of Discovery was initially a European legal principal invoked during the Age of Exploration in the 15th and 16th centuries. According to the thinking of the time, it gave rights of ownership to the European powers who "discovered" the so-called 'New World'.⁶ Over the intervening centuries, the ideology at root in the Doctrine of Discovery has since morphed into a belief that it was somehow destined for Europeans and their descendants to claim the land and grow a European population in the 'New World'. We see echoes of this thinking in the 19th century ideas around "Manifest Destiny." Europeans based much of their support for the Doctrine of Discovery in the fact that they were 'civilized' and Christian, and therefore were 'more able' to be stewards of the land since they were able to 'properly' and 'efficiently' manage the land.⁷ As long as the

⁵ James W. Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong* (New York City: The News Press, 2018), 37.

⁶ The 'New World' is only new to Europeans, as the land had been greatly populated for thousands of years prior to European contact and it was not until after contact that the mass destruction of Native populations began – mostly through the spread of deadly and untreatable diseases that were introduced and exacerbated by the conditions of colonization.

⁷ Civilization typically is defined as a group having a surplus of food, job specialization, advanced tools, growing population, and record keeping. A group is considered to be 'civilized' if the group has gone through the agricultural revolution to learn how to domesticate crops and animals, not all members of the group are solely focused on the finding or hunting of food, the group has made weapons or household items such as bows or spears, the population has a growth rate of at least 2 (2 children are born from each bonded couple replacing the generation before), and they have developed some form of writing, pictorial, or other form of physical communication. Based on this, each tribe in the Americas are now considered to be 'civilized', the difference that the European explorers were referring to as being 'uncivilized' is more accurately described as 'technologically less advanced' since tribes in the Americas did not have the explosives from Asia that would have made it possible to access the iron ore buried beneath the ground in the North American eastern coast.

history of the ‘discovery’ of the Americas is taught without any emphasis on prior Indigenous civilizations and their stewardship of the land, these ideas about Euro-American superiority are passed down to the next generation – whether intentionally or not – and the cycle of contemporary misinformation repeats itself. We see this especially clearly in the teaching of “Western history” in states like Oklahoma. In classrooms like my own, Oklahoman students are frequently taught that as the country was formed and grew, the settlement of the untamed West was itself evidence of the country’s greatness, or ‘Manifest Destiny’ as discussed in Miller’s and Dunbar-Ortiz’s works. As students are taught this, they grow up with this notion that the U.S.A. is the best country on earth, and if those students become teachers, they repeat the lesson to the next generation. This ideology is all predicated on how the historical narrative is taught, with Europeans and their descendants being the protagonists while all other groups, specifically in this case Native Americans, play a supporting role, perhaps even being presented as an impediment to the nation’s formation and prosperity.

Scholars such as Patrick Wolfe, Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz and many of the contributors to the anthology co-edited by Susan Sleeper-Smith address the idea of cultural genocide, Manifest Destiny, and other manifestations of Eurocentric historical perspectives on a national level, while scholars like Amy Lonetree bring attention to how the problem of erasure and misinformation also plays out in specific museums across the country.⁸

"civilization." In *The Columbia Encyclopedia*, by Paul Lagasse, and Columbia University. 8th ed. Columbia University Press, 2018.

<https://login.ezproxy.lib.umb.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fsearch.credoreference.com%2Fcontent%2Fentry%2Fcolumency%2Fcivilization%2F0%3FinstitutionId%3D766>

⁸ Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous Peoples’ History of the United States*; Lonetree, *Decolonizing Museums: Representing Native America in National and Tribal*; Sleeper-Smith et al, *Why You Can’t Teach United States History without American Indians*; Patrick Wolfe, “Settler colonialism and the elimination of the Native,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4. (December 2006): 387-409.

Lonetree's work is important to this study as she studies the decolonization of national museums. Her studies have shown that it is possible to remove the colonizer bias from the presentation of early American history and add in Native historical perspectives throughout museums, which provides a more realistic view of these events, essentially 'decolonizing' the museum. The purpose of my thesis is to apply the approach of these scholars to educational contexts in Oklahoma. Through this study, I take the concepts of "cultural genocide" and "decolonization" advanced by these scholars and apply their understandings to how Oklahoma history is presented in Oklahoma museums and through Oklahoma-approved high school U.S. History textbooks. I will look at how cultural genocide – the process by which a culture is systematically removed from an ethnic group – continues in Oklahoma through the overly Euro-American centric presentation of Oklahoma history. This cultural genocide continues the ideals set forth by doctrines like Manifest Destiny and the Doctrine of Discovery that profess European conquerors and their dependents are entitled to the land. This essentially erases the importance and influence of other minorities on the history of the formation of the United States, specifically the role in which Native American peoples played over the last four centuries.

This thesis is broken into three parts. Chapter two provides an overview of the limited historical narrative that Oklahoma students typically learn about the state's history within public schools and other educational settings. Key absences related to Native American history, people, and perspectives are highlighted in order to show how this is at odds with the more recent historiography addressing Oklahoma history and Native American history. Chapter three closely analyzes several Oklahoma museums in order to examine the perspectives that are presented in public history educational settings, another important place

where students acquire historical knowledge. The museums present a biased view of the state's history, which does not represent the diversity of the state and continues to marginalize Native Americans. Lastly, chapter four analyzes the quality of information presented in high school textbooks and required lessons set forth by state standards in Oklahoma. This analysis will show that there is a substantial absence of Native American representation in Oklahoma schools and classrooms in the 21st century and that this lack of representation leads to an incomplete view of Oklahoma history for Oklahoma students.

When approaching the main problem of “erasure” that this thesis addresses, one must also consider the history of education in the United States. Specifically, I am concerned with how events in the 19th century played a critical part in the formation of how U.S. education recounts minority, specifically Native American, perspectives of the last 400 years in North America. Between the signing of the Indian Removal Act in 1830 and the decades of forced marches and boarding schools in Indian Territory, the goal of the United States government was removal and elimination from the U.S. society.⁹ Andrew Jackson clearly articulates this goal in his 1830 address to Congress after the signing of the Indian Removal Act:

It gives me pleasure to announce to Congress that the benevolent policy of the Government, steadily pursued for nearly thirty years, in relation to the removal of the Indians beyond the white settlements, is approaching to a happy consummation...The consequences of a speedy removal will be important to the United States, to individual States, and to the Indians themselves...It will separate the Indians from immediate contact with settlements of whites; free them from the power of the States; enable them to pursue happiness in their own way, and under their own rude institutions; will retard the progress of decay, which is lessening their numbers; and perhaps cause them gradually, under the protection of the Government, and through the influence of good counsels, to cast off their

⁹ Patrick Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native” *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4 (2006).

savage habits, and become an interesting, civilized, and Christian community.¹⁰

Jackson states that his wish is for the tribes to "...cast off their savage habits, and become an interesting, civilized, and Christian community."¹¹ In other words, he is referring to the assimilation of Native people to American culture and the necessity of abandoning their cultural heritage.¹²

As numerous historians have considered, as Native peoples were forced off their lands, they were also being forced to abandon their culture. Educational historian Donald Warren in "American Indian Histories as Education History" sums up this phenomenon by saying "Euroamerican instructional institutions surfaced in Indian country as parts of colonizing strategies to quell resistance and appropriate lands. They promoted literacy, eventually primarily in English, and individualism (to counter tribalism), and forcibly groomed Indian children to look and speak like Euroamericans."¹³ It is this demand in the 19th century that has had a long-lasting impact on the overall educational system in the United States. Since 19th century Euro-Americans did not value tribal cultures as important, the culture was to be eventually removed. Furthermore, the removal of culture was tied with the removal of land through the Indian Removal Act of 1830 as ties to ancestral land were severed and replaced by smaller allotments of land in Indian Territory, modern-day Oklahoma. This land would be further removed from tribal control by the Dawes Act of 1887, which forced communities to start adapting Western ideals of individual ownership.

¹⁰ Andrew Jackson. "President's Address to Congress," *Register of Debates in Congress of the Second Session of the Twenty-First Congress: An Appendix*, Vol. VII. Gales and Seaton: Washington, 1831.
<https://memory.loc.gov/l1/lrd/010/0400/0439r009.tif>.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Assimilation in the context of the Native tribes refers to the total removal of their native culture, history, and language to replace it with the Western-European culture dominating the U.S.A.

¹³ Donald Warren, "American Indian Histories as Education History," *History of Education Quarterly*, 54 no. 3 (August 2014): 264.

During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Native children were removed from their families and tribes to be sent to Indian boarding schools, which continued the process of cultural genocide as Native children were forbidden to dress, speak, or engage in their cultural heritage. The much-cited quote by Colonel Richard Henry Pratt, the renowned American general who is best known for having founded and served as the longtime superintendent of the influential Carlisle Indian Industrial School in Pennsylvania founded in 1879 sums up how boarding schools were intended to destroy Indigenous culture. In describing the purpose of boarding schools, Pratt famously said they were intended to, “Kill the Indian to save the man.”¹⁴ Thus, as Native Americans were viewed in the 19th century as being ‘less than’ European settlers and their culture as being uncivilized in comparison, their part in the United States narrative was also viewed and recounted as being unimportant, if not a hindrance to the growth of the nation.

It is my contention that the lack of representation in museums and high school texts provides students with an unrealistic and incomplete version of American history, which can lead in turn to a lack of understanding of modern events. This is also detrimental to Native students who are still not seeing their cultural-historical perspectives presented in mainstream education; this is a problem that studies show leads to numerous negative effects, such as of Native students dropping out of high schools.¹⁵ Therefore, the problem here is not simply that teaching U.S. history without Native Americans presents an incomplete history; it is inaccurate, severely Eurocentric, and removes the vital role that Native Americans had in the formation of this country. This erasure, arguably, is a continuation of the colonial practice of cultural genocide in the present.

¹⁴ Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States*, 151.

¹⁵ Erinn Unger. “In Focus High School Dropouts.” *McClatchy-Tribune Business News*. Washington (June 2, 2013): 1-6.

CHAPTER II

UNDERSTANDING THE PAST TO IMPROVE THE FUTURE: NATIVE AMERICAN HISTORY IN OKLAHOMA AND CURRENT HISTORICAL DISCUSSION

Indigenous peoples and state sponsored education have had a long and tumultuous relationship over the last century and a half. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries boarding schools were established throughout Indian Territory as a way to impose a more Euro-American culture and lifestyle on Indigenous children while also stripping them of their heritage. While the Indian boarding schools have been closed for over fifty years, the practice of promoting a Euro-American centric culture remains strong in American public schools. Recent studies have explored the continuing effects of excluding Indigenous histories from public education, revealing a higher dropout rate among Native American students, lower college enrollment and college completion among Native students, and a continuing distrust of American public education among some Native communities.¹⁶ In order to best encourage young Native American students to stay in school and attend higher education, fundamental changes are needed in how the history of the United States is presented. Currently, the Euro-American narrative in museums and public schools overshadows Native American perspectives. This can be traced through museum exhibits, online archives, state educational standards, and high school textbooks. The common narrative in all of these educational settings is one of the heroic settler/explorer (someone of European or Euro-American descent) who wants to build a new life in the untamed wilderness and the barbaric savage (the Native

¹⁶ Carol A. Lundberg and Shelly C. Lowe, "Faculty as Contributors to Learning for Native American Students," *Journal of College Student Development* 57, no. 1 (January 2006): 3-5; Erinn Unger, "In Focus High School Dropouts," *McClatchy-Tribune Business News* Washington (June 2, 2013): 1-6.

American) standing in the way of progress. This narrative is pervasive in museums and in American high schools across the nation and continues to reinforce the disillusionment of many Native communities with the public education system. In this chapter major historical events and topics in Oklahoma history that are intertwined with Native American histories are outlined in order to demonstrate how damaging the absence of Native American histories is. This chapter also addresses how the relevant historiography on Native American history might inform changes in Oklahoma schools and museums.

Native American History as Oklahoma History

Like most American middle and high school students, young people in Oklahoma are taught that the United States started as small British colonies that started to grow into a unified country through the 17th and 18th centuries. While students are taught to some extent that during this growth, Indigenous peoples on the East Coast were continuously pushed west, rarely is this history or westward expansion framed as a violent process of displacement and dispossession, as historians such as Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz would have us understand. As Dunbar-Ortiz explains, “The notion that settler-indigenous conflict is an inevitable product of cultural differences and misunderstandings, or that violence was committed equally by the colonized and the colonizer, blurs the nature of the historical processes.”¹⁷ The emphases in most Oklahoma history classrooms is usually placed on how this westward expansion was an arduous and uncertain process for the pioneers or settlers that embarked west to expand the new nation rather than on the violent upheavals and forced removal of Native tribes. For example, the newest edition of *America’s History* describes the homesteading experience in Chapter 15 by saying “Homesteaders faced a host of challenges, particularly the natural environment of the Great Plains...Over the long term, homesteaders

¹⁷ Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous Peoples’ History of the United States* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2014), 8.

discovered that the western grasslands did not receive enough rain to grow wheat and other grains...Clearly, 160-acre homesteads were the wrong size for the West: farmers needed either small irrigated plots or immense tracts for dry farming...¹⁸ Native American experiences are covered later in the chapter. Indian Boarding Schools are described as “acculturation was difficult when children lived at home, agents and missionaries created off-reservations schools...Native peoples were nonetheless forced to accommodate, as independent tribal governance and treaty making come to an end.”¹⁹

Initially, the line of demarcation between the new English colonies and Indigenous territories was drawn at the Appalachian Mountains west of the Atlantic Ocean, but this was proved to be too restrictive to Eurocentric expansion, and students are typically taught that the European Americans wanted more and more land. Following the Louisiana Purchase by Thomas Jefferson at the start of the 19th century, the so-called Five Civilized Tribes—the Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Creek, and Seminole—were moved to the new Indian Territory through what would become known as the Trail of Tears.²⁰ If there is one aspect of Native American history that students in Oklahoma might learn about, it is usually this.²¹ Oklahoman students might learn that a total of 39 tribes would move into Indian Territory over the course of the 19th century. However they rarely learn that prior to this move, there were already Native people living in what is now Oklahoma – the Osage, Caddo, Kiowa,

¹⁸ James A. Henretta, Eric Hinderaker, Rebecca Edwards, and Robert O. Self. *America's History*. (Boston: Bedford / St. Martin's, 2018), 474-476.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* 482-483.

²⁰ These tribes were so named for their ability and seemingly willingness to become more ‘civilized’. In other words, they were the tribes that tried to incorporate more Western practices into their culture as a way to try and keep their sovereignty and rights when negotiating with the United States Government. This ultimately failed as all were forcibly evicted from their lands. Rennard Strickland, *The Indians in Oklahoma* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980), 4.

²¹ James A. Henretta, Eric Hinderaker, Rebecca Edwards, and Robert O. Self, *America's History* (Boston: Bedford / St. Martin's, 2018), 288-292.

Comanche, and Wichita.²² If students are taught more on this topic, they might learn that the new Native arrivals were slowly stripped of many rights and freedoms, and placed on harsh rations. They saw their homes raided, lands repossessed, and their children stuck in boarding schools that would systematically destroy much of their language and culture.²³ Chapter IV of this thesis focuses entirely on high school state standards and textbooks, but it is important to note that through the standards and textbooks provided in Oklahoma, students are not always taught the harsher sides of American history. In regards to lessons covering certain inflammatory subjects like actions taken against Native Americans, it is usually left to the discretion of the classroom teacher if students are taught any of this content.

In Oklahoma, students are taught that by the start of the 19th century, talks among the Euro-Americans turned to a process of full “removal” of Native peoples from the Southeast, into what became the “Indian territory.”²⁴ Students learn about how in May 1830, President Andrew Jackson signed the Indian Removal Act into law.²⁵ This Act enumerated the requirements and stipulations for the redistribution of lands west of the Mississippi River to tribes from the East and the purchase of lands currently held by the tribes east of the Mississippi River. The eight sections of the Act should have provided enduring protection for the tribes in Indian Territory but none of these sections was enforced. The Removal Act includes protections for payments of released lands, new lands in Indian Territory, life on the lands, and guarantees of ownership of the land for all future generations. Section 1 introduces the purpose of the Act: to grant to the tribes in Oklahoma “...any territory belonging to the United States, west of the river Mississippi, not included in any state or organized territory,”

²² David W. Baird, and Danney Goble, *Oklahoma: A History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2008), 21-31; Strickland, *The Indians in Oklahoma*, 3.

²³ Baird and Goble, *Oklahoma: A History*, 91-104.

²⁴ Strickland, *The Indians in Oklahoma*, 3.

²⁵ *Ibid.* 4.

in payment to “such tribes or nations of Indians as may choose to exchange the lands where they now reside, and remove there.”²⁶ By allowing tribes the ability to “choose to exchange the lands,” this section indicates that the removal of the tribes will be voluntary.²⁷ The second and third sections continue in this vein and give the President the power to make treaties for the removal of peoples from their ancestral lands, to negotiate the terms of such treaties, and to officially purchase and sell lands for the purpose of removal. The third section has one extra component; “...that the United States will forever secure and guaranty to them, and their heirs or successors, the country so exchanged with them...”²⁸ This clause is interesting in light of what eventually happens to Indian Territory, but the Act initially guaranteed that the exchange was voluntary and that the lands would remain in Tribal hands from that point forward.²⁹ The next notable parts of the Act are sections five and six. These sections provide for the protection of the tribes “against all interruption or disturbance from any other tribe or nation or Indians, or from any other person or persons whatever” and to provide aid to the tribes as they make the transition.³⁰ Ignoring for a moment that the Act was put into place to move the tribes off what was left of their ancestral homes into the West, away from ‘civilized society,’ the Act assumes fair negotiations and protected conditions of removal. It anticipates none of the horrors that will be seen along the Trail of Tears or the eventual Land Runs at the end of the century. While this is a simple overview of the Act, in most high school classrooms, the Indian Removal Act is not even covered in this much detail. In most cases,

²⁶ U.S. Congress, Senate, *An Act to provide for an exchange of lands with the Indians residing in any states or territories, and for their removal west of the river Mississippi (Indian Removal Act) 1830*, CH. 148, Sess. I. <https://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=llsl&fileName=004/llsl004.db&recNum=459>.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ There is a provision in the Act that if the tribe were to “become extinct, or abandon [the land]...”, then the ownership of the land will revert to the United States.

³⁰ U.S. Congress, Senate, *An Act to provide for an exchange of lands with the Indians residing in any states or territories, and for their removal west of the river Mississippi (Indian Removal Act) 1830*, CH. 148, Sess. I. <https://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=llsl&fileName=004/llsl004.db&recNum=459>

including the textbooks studied in Chapter IV, the Indian Removal Act is discussed in a few paragraphs, which cover both the passing of the Act and the Trail of Tears. Students often are not given the opportunity to look deeper into the sections of the Act as it is not a standard primary document for high school students. This means that the nuances of the Act, and its ramifications, are not always taught nor understood by high school students. This is a prime example of why some Native communities are still not trusting of public education, since monumental actions in American history such as this are not portrayed adequately and Native perspectives are ignored.

Students in Oklahoma also rarely learn about how the Trail of Tears impacted the tribes differently. More often than not, the Trail of Tears is taught as if it were a single event that happened to just one tribe: the Cherokee. In fact, a few months after the passage of the Indian Removal Act, the Choctaw nation became the first to sign a treaty and start the process of removal. The Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek was signed in September 1830 and scheduled for implementation in February 1831.³¹ The Cherokee would later follow suit in 1835. Under terms of the Treaty of Echota (which is the historical event most students learn about if they are taught anything about this history), the Cherokee would cede all lands east of the Mississippi River for lands in Indian Territory and they would do so for a payment of 5 million dollars from the United States, along with an agreement of representation in the U.S. Congress.³² It is important that students learn that many of these tribes were coerced, bribed, or intimidated into signing these agreements, a fact that is often glossed over or ignored in high school classrooms.³³ By 1838 only one-eighth of the Cherokee's population had

³¹ Edwin C. McReynolds, *Oklahoma: A History of the Sooner State* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1954), 135-136.

³² *Ibid.* 154-155.

³³ Baird and Goble, *Oklahoma: A History*, 94 – 106.

voluntarily left for their new home, infuriating the federal government and sparking radical action to remove the Cherokee from their ancestral lands.³⁴ The federal government responded with force, sending some 7,000 troops to remove all remaining Cherokee from the East and escort them to Indian Territory.³⁵ Finally, in October 1838, the removal known as the Trail of Tears began with an estimated one-quarter of the Cherokee population perishing along the 1,200-mile walk.³⁶ While Indian Removal continued through the next several decades, with a change in focus from Removal to the opening of the lands for American settlement, students in Oklahoma are taught in ways that might encourage them to think that the process of Removal was a singular historical event.³⁷ This is problematic because, as education professor Valerie Ooka Pang writes, “educators must be aware of possible attitudes, behaviors, situations, and expressions that reinforce prejudicial beliefs.”³⁸ Removal was a long arduous process that still has a significant impact on the tribes of the Great Plains. However, by teaching students that Indian Removal was a singular historical event, educators do not engage with the full history and ramifications of Removal, thus diminishing the impact and suffering experienced as a result by Native communities, past and present.

Teaching about the Trail of Tears in Oklahoma offers an opportunity to expose students to the complexities of U.S. history. While this history is commonly taught mostly in reference to the Cherokee removal, the truth is it speaks to a much larger systemic problem that ran through the early 19th century: the United States had to find a way to expand its

³⁴ Grace Steele Woodward, *The Cherokees* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1963), 195. This equated to only about 2,000 of 16,000 Cherokee leaving for Indian Territory.

³⁵ *Ibid.* 200.

³⁶ *Ibid.* 218.

³⁷ Seminole removal from Florida will take over two decades and there were bands that were never removed from the everglades. Woodward, *The Cherokees*.

³⁸ Valerie Ooka Pang, “Ethnic Prejudice: Still Alive and Hurtful,” in *Facing Racism in Education* Reprint Series, No. 21 eds. Nitza M. Hidalgo, Cesar L. McDowell, and Emilie V. Siddle, (Cambridge: Harvard Educational Review, 1990), 28.

territory while it recognized (albeit partially) the sovereignty of individual tribes. Historian Tim Allen Garrison describes this:

The United States could not unilaterally relocate the eastern tribes, however, for between Jefferson's first articulation of the idea of removal and his acquisition of Louisiana, the federal government had come to recognize that, for all intents and purposes, the Indian tribes were separate, sovereign nations possessing a legitimate title to their lands. As such, American policymakers of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries agreed that the Indian tribes had to consent to any effort to remove them to the West.³⁹

Students might be asked to think about how Cherokee sovereignty should have kept Andrew Jackson from forcing the removal of the Cherokee from what remained of their lands in the east. The tribe did not have comparable military strength or adequate legal standing in the government, nor would they be treated as sovereign nations. So while the Cherokee should have had the protection of sovereignty, their political and military strength could not enforce it. By not engaging students in a discussion about Cherokee sovereignty and the lack of available enforcement, these students cannot fully understand the historical significance of the Removal or of current Indigenous attitudes towards the U.S. Federal Government.

If there was an attempt to engage students more in the complexities of U.S. history that a focus on Native American history allows for, then students might be asked to consider how by ignoring the federal recognition, Jackson turned the United States into an invading country. This different way of framing the historical narrative of U.S. history is what scholars like Dunbar-Ortiz discuss. She argues, "US policies and actions related to Indigenous peoples, though often termed "racists" or "discriminatory," are rarely depicted as what they

³⁹ Tim Alan Garrison, *Legal Ideology of Removal: The Southern Judiciary and the Sovereignty of Native American Nations* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2002), 14.

are: classic cases of imperialism and a particular form of colonialism – settler colonialism.”⁴⁰

In this particular historical example, students might be taught that Jackson’s decision was fueled by the Euro-American desire for the fertile lands that the tribes occupied east of the Mississippi River in an attempt to benefit the developing nation. What is not always discussed is that the land was already developed for agriculture due to the actions of the tribes who were already present with a well-developed farming tradition. These tribes had cleared the land, erected fences, built barns, and built homes.⁴¹ On one hand, Jackson is portrayed as working in the best interests of a developing nation, but what is often ignored is the continuation of colonization in North America after the American Revolution. Indian Removal would turn a hefty profit for speculators, including Jackson himself. Students are often taught the Manifest Destiny view of expansion, where the United States was meant to grow to encompass the lands between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. Rarely are students provided with a historical framing that focuses on Indigenous societies and economies that pre-dated European settlement outside of the construct of their importance to the United States. The lessons on the Great Plains region are most often framed around the potential available for European colonial growth, rather than on the societies that inhabited the region.

Other details of this history that add complexity to the simple story of national growth but which are rarely taught in any depth, include how initially some of the tribes tried a peaceful negotiation in hopes of retaining their homes or at least in an attempt to be properly reimbursed for their lands.⁴² Also, rarely are students asked to consider how in the process of Removal, many Native peoples died from starvation and exposure and were buried in

⁴⁰ Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous Peoples’ History of the United States*, 1-2.

⁴¹ McReynolds, *Oklahoma: A History of the Sooner State*, 166-67.

⁴² *Ibid.* 166.

unmarked graves along the trail far from their ancestral homelands.⁴³ The Choctaw were especially hit hard on the Trail of Tears as they left in the winter of 1831 with a group that included the wounded, the sick, young children, and elderly members. Hundreds would die as they slowly made their way to their new home in Indian Territory. The plight of the Creek was even worse because they were forced to endure the march in chains.⁴⁴ The Trail of Tears, a name that came from a Cherokee survivor, only lasted for about a decade, but Removal continued well past the end of the Civil War. By teaching the Trail of Tears as a singular event in the 1830s, students are not exposed to the long reaching implications of the rest of the 19th century. The Civil War tends to monopolize most of the lessons on the later 1800s, and the continuing Removal is largely ignored until the Land Runs in the 1890s. This means that students are not taught nearly 60 years of history as it pertains to Native Americans, and therefore will not have the necessary background understanding of Removal to fully comprehend what was occurring in Oklahoma in 1897. Students also will not have the foundational education necessary to trace changes in education and legal practices pertaining to Native Americans, nor will they fully understand the Native American position in the 1960s as they fought for their own Civil Rights alongside African Americans. Unfortunately, segregation and the African American Civil Rights Movement largely overshadow Native American history from the Civil War onward.

Another common “lesson” that students walk away with when learning about this history is that Indian Territory was thought to be an answer to continuing conflicts between Native Americans and the Euro-American settlements along the east coast. The white population would live east of the Mississippi River, while the lands west would be

⁴³ Andrew K. Frank, “Trail of Tears (term),” *Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, Date Accessed: October 3, 2019. <https://www.okhistory.org/publications/enc/enry.php?entry=TR003>

⁴⁴ Woodward, *The Cherokees*, 218.

permanently set-aside for Native Americans. As discussed previously, the Great Plains were already inhabited by many different Native nations who had their own traditional lands and customs in regard to the land. While the land was rich in resources, the addition of thousands of new inhabitants would greatly diminish the resources available. Relocation of eastern tribes to the Great Plains would create increased competition for limited resources, which could lead to growing hostilities between warring tribes. There was an extensive history of the U.S. Federal Government breaking and renegotiating treaties solely to benefit Euro-Americans over Native peoples. The ways in which this leads to little trust between the tribal governments and the federal government helps in understanding much of the history of American Indian politics in the Civil Rights era, but these historical connections are largely lost on students, if not entirely absent from their education.

Crucial to the understanding of Oklahoma history, yet rarely taught in ways that emphasize the cost to Native communities, is how two key Acts allowed for the opening of Indian Territory for Euro-American settlement. First, the Dawes Act of 1887 changed the designation of reservation land from communal ownership to individual land parcel ownership.⁴⁵ By dividing the land in this manner, tribal members were forced to accept Western views of private property, farming, livelihood, and familial relations. All lands not allotted to Native Americans for private ownership were then open for sale to Euro- and African-American settlers. Theoretically, the proceeds from the sale of these lands were slated to be returned to the tribes in order to help them buy farm machinery, seed, and other necessities; however, Native Americans never received much of this money. Second, the Organic Act of May 1890 created the Oklahoma Territory – the actual territory for non-

⁴⁵ In this way, the Dawes Act of 1887 redistributed tribal lands between members of each tribe so that, instead of the lands being held communally allowing people to live more traditionally, the land was divided up among individual adults. On average, every single adult received 80 acres and the head of households receive 160.

Native settlement – in the western part of what was Indian Territory.⁴⁶ In total, seven Land Runs were staged to allow for non-Native settlement. The Land Runs were advertised events held throughout the territory in order to sell off the parceled lands cut from reservations.⁴⁷ Men, women, and families congregated at the appointed time and location waiting for the start of the Run. From there, they raced into the Oklahoma plains searching for the perfect place to set up a homestead.⁴⁸ By the turn of the 20th century, the Twin Territories had nearly a million people living within their borders.⁴⁹ There was a movement to create two states out of the Twin Territories – Oklahoma in the west and Sequoyah in the east. This was not to be, and the Twin Territories – Indian and Oklahoma – were joined as one state and admitted into the United States in November 1907.

The historical events I have just briefly described are the result of three of the most significant legislative acts that lead to Oklahoma becoming the 46th state, but this is not what students are taught. Nor are students commonly asked to think about the consequences of these events for the Native communities who lost their lands. Between educational field trips to reenact settlement to the heroic narrative that is repeated throughout textbooks, students are taught a perspective of history that places the Euro-American settler at the center of the narrative, and relegates Native Americans into supporting roles. Students are taught that the settlers of Oklahoma struggled against insurmountable odds to tame the ‘Wild West’ and bring life to the Great Plains. They are not taught in equal measure about the tribes that

⁴⁶ McReynolds, *Oklahoma: A History of the Sooner State* , 292 – 297.

⁴⁷ Ibid. 289-307.

⁴⁸ Those who began the Run at the appointed time were called ‘Boomers’; those who snuck out early and hid in the plains before the Run started in order to claim the best plots were called ‘Sooners.’ Once the claim was filed, the new owners were free to start building their new life on the Oklahoma prairie. Part of the agreement between the new settlers and the U.S. government was that the government would sell the land very cheaply – the average cost of a claim was \$14, with an additional \$1.25 for each acre. In return, the settlers had 5 years to pay the price of the land, and make improvements to the land. Once both criteria had been met, they would officially receive the title for their property. McReynolds, *Oklahoma: A History of the Sooner State*, 289-307.

⁴⁹ The name ‘Twin Territories’ was given to collectively refer to Oklahoma Territory and Indian Territory.

cultivated the lands and moved with herds of Bison, or the men who fought to protect the lands that were theirs by tradition or treaty. The entire Oklahoma historical narrative is built upon the stories of the settlers, and continues to neglect the stories of the Native peoples here as well as the losses they incurred as a result of Oklahoma's settlement and creation.

Historiography

When one examines the way in which Oklahoma's history has been written, it is clear that the problems identified above are also repeated in the historiography. In the discussion of Oklahoma's history, two texts have been considered cornerstones of the study; Arrell Morgan Gibson's *Oklahoma: A History of Five Centuries* (1965) and W. David Baird and Danney Goble's *Oklahoma: A History* (2008). These two texts have been used in college classrooms throughout the state, and are the starting point of any line of inquiry into Oklahoma's past. Both start with an analysis of the pre-contact period of the region, discuss European contact and follow the development of Oklahoma through the last two centuries up until the present-day.⁵⁰

Since Gibson's book was published in 1965, it allows for an understanding of how scholars have changed the discussion of Oklahoma history during the last fifty years. Written at the height of the Civil Rights Movement when both African-Americans and later Native Americans were fighting to have their voices heard both in policy and in history, it prioritizes pro-Euro-American perspectives by relegating Native American histories to a secondary role, and continues the colonization practices in the 20th century. A prime example of this comes from Chapter 12 of Gibson's book, "The Second Trail of Tears." This short passage is all Gibson has to say about the Ponca removal to Oklahoma:

⁵⁰ The present-day for when they were published – Gibson's text was published in 1965 whereas Baird and Goble's text was published in 2008.

The Poncas, a Siouan-speaking people from the Dakota Territory, had lived briefly in Nebraska but were confronted with removal in 1876 when Congress passed an act providing for the relocation of the 680 members of this tribe on a reservation in Indian Territory...Chief Standing Bear led his people first to the Quapaw Reservation in northeastern Oklahoma, where they remained while tribal leaders looked over the Cherokee Outlet for a permanent home.⁵¹

In this quote, Gibson implies that the Ponca removal was uneventful and peaceful. However, the removal process started several years earlier with the U.S. Federal Government slowly chipping away at Ponca lands in the northern Plains through treaties with the Sioux, an enemy of the Ponca.⁵² The Ponca were soon faced with removal to Oklahoma or annihilation by the Sioux who controlled large tracts of what was once Ponca land. After reaching a loose agreement for removal with the federal government, several Ponca elders including Chief Standing Bear traveled with a U.S. government representative to look at the proposed lands in Indian Territory. When those lands were unsatisfactory to the Ponca leaders, the representative left them to find their way back to their northern lands without supplies.⁵³ The Ponca did eventually make their way to Indian Territory in the late 19th century, and found lands suitable for them in north-central Oklahoma, but their journey was not as simple as Gibson makes it out to be.

Even though Gibson's book purports to be a survey history book, his bias towards Euro-American historical understandings can be seen throughout the book. Even the front cover of the book shows Spanish conquistadors marching through the wilderness, and below it a photograph of large wheat combines circa 1940. Similarly, the back-cover description

⁵¹ Ponca lands had been in what is now northern Nebraska and southern South Dakota. Arrell Morgan Gibson, *Oklahoma: A History of Five Centuries* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1981), 147; Chris Littlecook, "Ponca Nation" (lecture, Ponca City High School, Ponca City, OK, October 10, 2019).

⁵² Chris Littlecook, "Ponca Nation" (lecture, Ponca City High School, Ponca City, OK, October 10, 2019).

⁵³ *Ibid.*

focuses on Euro-American perspectives to the exclusion of Native Americans. In the final chapter of the book, “The Image of Oklahoma,” Gibson showcases several recognizable aspects of Oklahoman culture such as Augusta Metcalf, a famed Oklahoma artist, and the Bizzell Library at the University of Oklahoma (OU) in Norman. Gibson does mention some renowned Native American artists and the growth of an art program at OU, “developed by Oscar Jacobson [who] encouraged the Indian students to use indigenous themes and a simple form derived from the Indians’ historical style of pictorial art.”⁵⁴ However, this hardly qualifies as recognizing Oklahoma’s Indigenous past and peoples, and he does not include any photographs of any Indigenous art or artists. Instead, the photographs in the chapter capture Euro-American artists and scholars along with memorable buildings built by Euro-American architects. The book’s obvious Euro-American bias in its text and photographs belies its claim that “betrayal of the Indians, racism, and political corruption are told in their entirety.”⁵⁵ The second edition of *Oklahoma: A History of Five Centuries* was printed by OU in 1981, and was still used in college courses into the early 2000s. As a college student myself, I was introduced to the text through an Oklahoma history course in 2009, nearly 50 years after the book was first published.

The newest version of a survey Oklahoma history text is W. David Baird and Danney Goble’s *Oklahoma: A History*, published in 2008. Despite being published almost five decades after Gibson’s book, this text follows much the same historical timeline as Gibson’s text by beginning the book with the physical landscape and pre-contact understanding of the region. The key differences between the two texts is that Baird and Goble have managed to remove some of the pro-Euro-American bias and thus are able to include more diverse

⁵⁴ Gibson, *Oklahoma: A History of Five Centuries*, 283.

⁵⁵ Ibid. Back cover.

perspectives in a single book. The best example of this comes from Chapter 3 “Europeans Encounter Oklahoma.” Even in a chapter devoted to Euro-Americans, Baird and Goble include Native points of view. The chapter begins by denying Columbus’s claim of ‘discovering’ North America and continues to discuss how European explorers traveled across the plains and their encounters with Native peoples. Here is a description of one encounter with the Wichita: “they gave the Spaniards free access to their villages and willingly told them about their land. But they soon tired of all the questions. Their irritation, perceived as hostility, caused Onate and his men to leave Quivira and return as they had come.”⁵⁶ While this is a simple example, there are a few key parts that demonstrate the differences in writing between *Oklahoma: A History* and *Oklahoma: A History of Five Centuries*. First, the quote refers to the sovereignty of the tribe by referring to the land and villages as ‘theirs’. This is a small semantic detail that gives the Wichita back their agency, which has often been removed through historical writing. Second, it shows the Wichita as being an open and welcoming civilization instead of as savage barbarians. The authors continue to incorporate more perspectives than just the Euro-American perspective in their text. The book is meant as a survey text, so its goal is to provide a sweeping glance at Oklahoma history. This means that not every perspective can be shown, nor can each perspective be shown equally. What Baird and Goble have done is level the playing field and allow for more equal representation of both Native American and Euro-American perspectives.

If we turn our attention to the work of more recent scholarship that is attempting to reframe an understanding of U.S. history by placing Native American histories and peoples at the center, we see how these two foundational works on Oklahoma fall short of the

⁵⁶ Baird and Goble, *Oklahoma: A History*, 36.

considerations that historians such as Susan Sleeper-Smith and Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz would insist that U.S. historians build into their work. In *Why You Can't Teach United States History Without American Indians*, Robert Miller's discussion of the Doctrine of Discovery—the 17th century idea that if a group 'discovers' the land they are entitled to the land—exemplifies this approach.⁵⁷ He points out how the United States Supreme Court justified continental expansion, how other colonizing countries used this doctrine around the world, and how U.S. presidents like Thomas Jefferson and James Monroe used the Doctrine of Discovery as justification for expansion across the continent: "American politicians, citizens, and newspapers used the Doctrine of Discovery to justify Manifest Destiny and the expansion of the United States to the Pacific Ocean."⁵⁸ Due to the justification given through the use of these two doctrines (Manifest Destiny and the Doctrine of Discovery), Miller claims that the writing of U.S. history, problematically, has followed a similar path, pushing aside those who were here first in order to present American history as a *fait accompli*, or something that was predestined. For scholars such as Brian Dippie, Robert Miller, and Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, this way of writing and teaching can be seen as cultural genocide. Native peoples suffered a physical genocide by being forced off their lands and enduring harsh conditions which lead to the deaths of thousands of people. The Trail of Tears is a prime example of physical genocide where thousands of men, women, and children died because of the actions of the federal government. Yet, as historian Patrick Wolfe writes in his seminal article, "Settler Colonization and the Elimination of the Native," "Indigenous North Americans were not killed, driven away, romanticized, assimilated, fenced in, bred White,

⁵⁷ Robert Miller, "The Doctrine of Discovery: Manifest Destiny, and American Indians" In Susan Sleeper-Smith et al. *Why You Can't Teach United States History without American Indians* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 87.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* 98.

and otherwise eliminated as the original owners of the land but as Indians.”⁵⁹ They have also suffered a cultural genocide as their history and narrative has been eliminated from the historical record. Many tribes were highly connected to the lands that they were forced from, social rituals were discouraged or banned, and boarding schools were established as a way to ‘Americanize’ Native children in Indian Territory. The goal was not to conquer but to eliminate, to remove what was at the heart of who they were as a people.

Like many scholars working in the intersections of Indigenous Studies and American history, both Wolfe and Miller expand upon the historical narrative beyond the simplified version presented by Baird and Goble. They also seek to delve into the nuances of the history, expanding on the same arguments as other Indigenous scholars as they attempt to incorporate more of the decolonizing historical practices espoused by Amy Lonetree. Lonetree presents the idea of ‘decolonizing’ the historical narrative, specifically in national museums, by removing colonizing bias and incorporating both Euro-American and Indigenous historical narratives when presenting the historical record. What is clear when we apply the lessons of the scholarship presented by those like Sleeper-Smith, Miller, and Wolfe, to the histories written by Baird and Goble, is that the general understanding of Native American histories and Oklahoma history is incomplete. Since books like *Oklahoma: A History of Five Centuries* and *Oklahoma: A History* are attempting to be surveys, some of the deeper implications behind historical events are lost, which is where Wolfe and Miller both come in. They clarify some of the rationale behind the federal government’s actions that are not fully explained in either of the Oklahoma history texts, but are vital to understanding how Oklahoma was formed. Wolfe’s focus on cultural genocide helps to explain the brutal

⁵⁹ Patrick Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native” *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4 (2006): 388.

actions of men like General Custer against the Sioux, where the goal was not simply removal but annihilation. Miller also touches on this by helping to explain the rationale behind expansion and the ‘victor takes all’ mentality that prevailed throughout the history of the American West. The details of federal action in the American West need to be tied in with the survey material in order to provide students with a better and more complete understanding of historical events, that includes multiple perspectives and explanations that are not often included in survey classes.

Museums and high schools rely on general historical overviews that shape the next generation’s understand of Oklahoma history. Anthropologist Bryan Brayboy explains the role of education in his article, “Culture, Place, and Power: Engaging the Histories and Possibilities of American Indian Education”:

Education is not simply the passing on or transfer of knowledge from one generation to the next...Education in its many forms is imbued with power: power to control young peoples’ bodies, epistemic engagement, curriculum and teaching; power to best determine how education and schooling are utilized and to what end; power to control what kinds of knowledge is shared – or not – when, and where.⁶⁰

If the education is biased, the understanding of the histories will be biased as well; therefore changes need to be made in educational settings like schools and museums, to remove this bias from their structure.

My thesis aims to take the practices of decolonizing the histories of the United States as discussed by scholars such as Amy Lonetree, Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz and others, and apply them to the educational settings of public schools and museums in Oklahoma. While the historical narrative has changed over the last fifty years to be more inclusive, museum

⁶⁰ Bryan McKinley Jones Brayboy, “Culture, Place, and Power: Engaging the History and Possibilities of American Indian Education,” *History of Education Quarterly* 54, no. 3 (August 2014): 396.

exhibits and high school textbooks have not kept pace. Both educational venues tend to follow the more survey style of education without incorporating the understanding presented by authors like Miller and Wolfe. A survey style instruction should strive to limit or eliminate bias in order to present the material, but the problem in Oklahoma museums and textbooks is the bias presented in this survey instruction. Historian Jean O'Brien also shows that this one-sided viewpoint of any state's history can have long-lasting repercussions if not addressed. In the introduction to her book *Firsting and Lasting: Writing Indians Out of Existence in New England*, O'Brien discusses a New England narrative that took root in the mid-19th century. The narrative claimed that all the Native peoples from Massachusetts had vanished; this led "to a larger national narrative of the 'vanishing Indian' as a generalized trope."⁶¹ The idea of the "vanishing Indian" holds on in the present day, where Native cultures are not fully understood, respected, or even recognized. O'Brien goes on to argue that the view that Native cultures have vanished limits how Native people are seen in the present day, and that their cultures cannot be appreciated as a 21st century culture if the narrative does not change. By allowing the myth of the extinction of Native peoples to persist, it allows for the justification of European explorers to continue; if there are not any Native peoples on the land, the land is free for settlement. The best place to start to change the narrative is where the new generation first learns it – in museums and high schools.

⁶¹ Jean M. O'Brien, *Firsting and Lasting: Writing Indians Out of Existence in New England* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), Xiii.

CHAPTER III

FROM A YOUNG AGE: AN EXAMINATION OF OKLAHOMA MUSEUM EXHIBITS, MUSEUM EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES, AND REPRESENTATION OF NATIVE AMERICAN HISTORIES

The state of Oklahoma boasts several different organizations that support a large network of museums and historical sites across the state. These museums and sites work to promote, preserve, and spread the history of Oklahoma not only to residents but to tourists as well. The most serious limitation of the historical organizations is their lack of representation of Native American histories when presenting Oklahoma's history. The purpose of museums is to collect, preserve, and research the history of a society to help educate future generations.⁶² In three study museums I found a lack of focus on Native American histories coupled with a prioritization of Euro-American perspectives in the years between the end of the Civil War (1865) and statehood (1907). For example, the three study museums neglect even to mention the original tribes that called the region home - the Osage, Caddo, Kiowa, Comanche, and Wichita - in their exhibits. They also neglect Native Americans' lives during three important eras: the lead up to the Civil War, the time between the end of the Civil War and the Dawes Act in 1887, and the 10 years between the opening of the Cherokee Strip in 1897 to Oklahoma statehood in 1907. Throughout the study of these museums, I frequently asked, "What is/are the goal(s) of the museum" to help determine how Native American perspectives may be presented. Two of the museums took the position that it was not the job of their organization to present material about Oklahoma tribes and their histories and that

⁶² Barry Lord, "The Purpose of Museum Exhibits" in *Manual of Museum Exhibitions*, ed. Barry Lord and Maria Piacente (California: Rowan & Littlefield Publishers, 2014), 27.

this is best left to the tribes to present and preserve. The other claims they are under the guidance of their overseeing organization, and it was not up to the museum to determine what would be presented. As a result, these museums present only a fraction of the history, thus continuing to ignore the importance of tribal perspectives on events in Oklahoma by having such a divide between alternative ways of presenting the state's history. Many of the larger tribes do maintain cultural centers that showcase their unique histories, cultures, and perspectives. One such center is the Chickasaw Cultural Center in Sulphur, Oklahoma, which I will also examine briefly in this chapter to provide a contrasting perspective to the three main museums analyzed here.

Methodology

To explore the interpretation of Native American history in Oklahoma museums, I visited three institutions maintained by two different historical organizations. During these visits, I evaluated the physical space afforded to Native American history, the perspectives presented through the exhibits, the sources, the theme and method of presentation, the overall mission of the museum and the extra educational resources available. The physical location of each museum and available educational programs were also important. Each museum included either information about ongoing and past school exploration days or had interactive stations throughout the museum that encouraged children to engage with the program. These research questions helped establish a basis for comparison between the museums.

Amy Lonetree's scholarship, particularly her article "Museums as Sites of Decolonization: Truth Telling in National and Tribal Museums" emphasizes the ever-present need for critical examinations of Native American historical representation in our nation's museums. She asks, "...how does one effectively represent the complicated and challenging

history that both addresses the hard truths of colonization and also honors Indigenous understandings of history.”⁶³ It is this challenge that shapes my interrogation of Oklahoma historical museums. In her study of the Saginaw Chippewa’s Ziibiwing Center for Anishinaabe Culture and Lifeways in Michigan, Lonetree begins to answer this question and demonstrates that state histories, in this case Michigan’s history, can be shown but still respect and incorporate Indigenous perspectives. In her examination of the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI), she condemns how several important national museums present early English settlement in the 17th century and the creation of the United States at the end of 18th century, noting that the NMAI “fails to tell the hard truths of colonization and the genocidal acts that have been committed against Indigenous people.”⁶⁴ Conceding that the “NMAI represents the most ambitious collaborative project to date,” Lonetree seeks to “raise awareness of the complicated identity of the NMAI, which reflects a still-evolving relationship between Indigenous people and the museums.”⁶⁵ To help support her conclusions, she analyses the Saginaw Chippewa’s Ziibiwing Center for Anishinaabe Culture and Lifeways in Michigan, asserting that it is the embodiment of “decolonizing museum practice” and its methods for creating “an engaging learning experience for visitors” should be replicated in other museums.⁶⁶

The Center, she explains, uses the Saginaw Chippewa traditional method of teaching through oral presentation by using a multitude of methods of conveying information, such as film, first-person voice recordings, and focusing more on the theme of information rather

⁶³ Amy Lonetree, “Museums as Sites of Decolonization: Truth Telling in National and Tribal Museums” in *Museums and Indigenous Perspectives* ed. Susan Sleeper-Smith. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 324-325.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* 322.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* 324.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* 325.

than simply chronologically presenting historical events.⁶⁷ This governs the way in which the museum divides its content. “By representing historical events within the context of the prophecies instead of through a rigid adherence to the specifics of U.S.-Indian relations, the museum is engaging in an important decolonizing strategy that privileges the oral tradition and Indigenous conceptions of history.”⁶⁸ The goal of decolonizing a museum exhibit is to represent an event without the bias of the colonizers. In the United States one way to represent history without the influence of Euro-American bias is to remove Western traditions of presenting history as much as possible. This is accomplished in cultural centers like the Saginaw Chippewa by presenting the historical events using their traditional methods of teaching—oral presentation and prophecies. The prophecies that structure the Saginaw Chippewa’s Ziibiwing Center are part of the Saginaw Chippewa religious tradition. The use of the prophecies – both written and orally presented - through the museum helps to bring in more of the Saginaw Chippewa cultural tradition, ensures that their traditions and perspectives are at the forefront of the museum’s design. Lonetree’s analysis of the Center demonstrates that it is possible to discuss the realities of colonization without ignoring differing Indigenous perspectives. Museums can represent Indigenous and non-Indigenous perspectives of history by incorporating multiple tribal narrations’ histories and traditions such as oral narration. According to Lonetree, this method honors not only “tribal understanding of history, but also [provides] a well-organized structure in which the visitor can engage with the material.”⁶⁹ Lonetree’s guidelines inform my critical examination of Oklahoma museums. Based on Lonetree’s criteria, my study of these Oklahoma museums

⁶⁷ Ibid. 327-328.

⁶⁸ Ibid. 328.

⁶⁹ Ibid. 329.

concludes that Oklahoma museums do not do an adequate job at balancing the Native American and Euro-American perspectives on Removal and the formation of the state.

The three study museums are: the Rose Hill School – Cherokee Strip Museum in Perry, Oklahoma; the Oklahoma Territorial Museum and The Carnegie Library in Guthrie, Oklahoma; and the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.⁷⁰ Three criteria determined the choice of museums to study; organizations, Internet prominence, and location.⁷¹ First, two different organizations established and fund each institution; exploring different organizations allows for an analysis of the discrepancies across these organizations to determine whether any of the chosen museums had inadequacies in representation, or if potential inadequacies were limited to one organization.⁷² Second, all three museums are on TravelOK.com, a virtual portal accessible to visitors to the state seeking local history museums.⁷³ I chose this portal because it is the first website result when searching for attractions in Oklahoma, and it is printed on every Oklahoma license plate making it easily recognizable. According to a 2017 state report investigating the impact of the travel advisement success for the state, over 50% of visitors received information about Oklahoman attractions through digital and online advertisements,

⁷⁰ Perry was one of several pop-up towns established during the Land Runs. Perry was established during the opening of the Cherokee Strip in 1897. Guthrie was the Territorial Capital and was the first state capital, but the state seal was stolen from Guthrie and taken to Oklahoma City. Oklahoma City, commonly referred to as OKC, is the state capital.

⁷¹ Internet prominence refers to the ease to which a searcher can locate information about each museum in a general Internet search.

⁷² Two museums are under local management, while the third is a national organization.

⁷³ It should be noted that the site has many links one has to comb through to find any specific attraction in Oklahoma. So while one could find all three linked on the website, the National Cowboy Museum is the easiest to find – it is also the biggest of the three museums. The website is structured to allow for visitors to digitally explore all attractions available in Oklahoma, the design flaw is the overuse of redirecting links embedded in the website. So while the National Cowboy Museum has a direct link, the other two museums are buried further in the site and not as easily viewed.

with a third of that viewing online media.⁷⁴ Third, all three are in relatively close proximity to one or more major interstates through the state, making them more accessible to the average traveler than some of the other museums in Oklahoma.

Throughout this analysis of the study museums, three phrases occur frequently, ‘text panels’ and ‘display’ or ‘exhibit’. First, ‘text panels’ refers to the mounted panels and labels that provide information about an adjoining artifact or exhibit case of materials. Second, the terms ‘display’ or ‘exhibit’ refer to the installation of artifacts behind Plexiglas or similar materials that allows the viewer to see the artifacts, documents, photographs, and other primary sources. Usually explanatory text panels and labels accompany installed artifacts.

In contrast to the study museums’ Euro-American perspective, the Chickasaw Cultural Center provides an example of a Native American perspective on these same historical events. While this is only one of 39 tribal perspectives in Oklahoma, it is important to discuss the viewpoint presented by the Center as it helps to solidify the overall analysis. The Chickasaw Cultural Center not only offers the Chickasaw perspective of the journey to Oklahoma, but also displays Euro-American perspectives. The Center managed to do what the other museums could not, which is to integrate the two parts of the conversation in order to provide a more complete view of the history.

Oklahoma Territorial Museum and Carnegie Library

The Oklahoma Territorial Museum in Guthrie, Oklahoma is managed by the Oklahoma Territorial Museum and the Carnegie Library organization with oversight from the

⁷⁴ “Oklahoma 2017 Advertising ROI Research.” *Longwoods International*. 2017. <https://ds8hbldo2z4gr.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Oklahoma-Advertising-ROI-Research-2017.pdf>

Oklahoma Historical Society.⁷⁵ The museum and adjoining historic library share a campus near the downtown district of Guthrie, off Interstate 35, which bisects the state. The mission of the museum “is to preserve the heritage of Oklahoma through the collection and interpretation of archival material culture to present the development and influence of urban institutions. The museum documents the creation of the Unassigned Lands, the Land Run of 1889, the homestead experience, and the territorial and state government.”⁷⁶ The museum’s mission identifies its primary focus as the Land Runs and their centrality to the creation of the state, which is appropriate since the museum is located in the territorial capital. Claiming to “preserve the heritage of Oklahoma” but offering only the Euro-American perspective, the museum not only ignores the value of Native perspectives, but also implies that the only ‘relevant’ history is that of Euro-American settlers. While the Oklahoma Territorial Museum concentrates on Euro-American experiences, it provides more information on the Trail of Tears, the thirty-nine Native American tribes relocated to Indian Territory, and the movement to establish a Native State of Sequoyah than the other two museums in this study.

The museum is home to artifacts, reproductions, text panels, photographs, and maps, but the Native American exhibit lacks the same physical artifacts that are present in the other study museums. Erin Brown, one of the museum curators, explains that there were two justifications for the lack of Native American artifacts,

We currently do not have any Native American artifacts on display for 2 reasons: 1 - we loaned them to another more appropriate site. The mission of the Oklahoma Territorial Museum does not cover Native American tribal history or Indian Territory. Those topics are best left for the tribes to

⁷⁵ “Carnegie Library.” *The Oklahoma Territorial Museum*, 2020.
<https://www.okterritorialmuseum.org/LIBRARY.html>.

⁷⁶ “Oklahoma Territorial Museum.” *The Oklahoma Territorial Museum*, 2020.
<https://www.okterritorialmuseum.org/ABOUT.html>

discuss. We only address it minimally because our visitors frequently ask.
2 - This area of the gallery is currently in redevelopment.⁷⁷

While Brown does explain the lack of artifacts in the museum, this gives a perfect example of the systemic problem of lack of equal representation that would provide a full and accurate presentation of Oklahoma history. Brown claims that the mission of the museum is not to discuss Native American histories but in the mission statement it says, “to preserve the heritage of Oklahoma,” which would seem to imply discussing both perspectives of the history since both peoples lived in the area.⁷⁸ The museum works with the Oklahoma Historical Society, so the artifacts Brown is referencing are currently on display in other museums in the same network. There are not any formal connections with any of the tribal museums or heritage centers since Brown claims it is not the mission of the museum to tell that part of the history. By having such a division between the tribes and the museum, it adds to the disconnection between the two sides of Oklahoma’s history and does not allow for a full understanding of events.

An analysis of the series of panels that line the entry to the museum proper reveals much about the presentation of Indigenous history at this institution. As visitors enter the museum, they encounter a series of text panels discussing the Trail of Tears, Andrew Jackson and the Indian Removal Act, the Five Civilized Tribes, and the Dawes Act.⁷⁹ These panels do not go into much detail beyond the years of events and a general overview of what happened without any artifacts of the period or the people who were impacted. The first text panel in the Native Americans in Oklahoma exhibit is the “Tribes of the Southeastern United States.”

⁷⁷ Erin Brown, Email with author, January 23, 2020.

⁷⁸ “Carnegie Library.” *The Oklahoma Territorial Museum*, 2020.
<https://www.okterritorialmuseum.org/LIBRARY.html>.

⁷⁹ The Cherokee, Choctaw, Muskogee (Creek), Chickasaw, and Seminole – so called because of their actions in the east prior to removal to incorporate more Western ideals and governing practices were seen as an attempt to become ‘civilized.’

The non-Native bias is subtle but evident as the panel is simply defining these tribes in terms of the southeastern boundaries of the United States. By labeling these tribes in terms of the formation of the United States, this panel title perpetuates 19th century ideas of Manifest Destiny by taking U.S. expansion as inevitable. Referring to the Native Peoples – here, specifically, the Seminole, Muskogee (Creek), Cherokee, Chickasaw, and Choctaw – as the ‘Tribes of the Southeastern United States,’ this implies that the founding of the United States was a foregone conclusion and that the tribes were subordinate to that greater nation, therefore the people that initially lived here should be described by their geographic location as it relates to the boundaries of the United States.

An average visitor may not notice how the museum reinforces the doctrine of Manifest Destiny, but these underlying messages have harmful consequences as described by Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz in an explanation of a teaching strategy she uses in her classes. She writes, “I ask students to quickly draw a rough outline of the United States at the time it gained independence from Britain. Invariably most draw the approximate present shape of the United States from the Atlantic to the Pacific—the continental territory not fully appropriated until a century after independence.”⁸⁰ What Dunbar-Ortiz’s example demonstrates are the long lasting impacts that Manifest Destiny has had over a century after its promulgation. In her example, she notes how students are taught at a young age that there were thirteen colonies that fought and won a war of independence against the British, and all thirteen of them were situated along the eastern seaboard of North America. Yet, these college-age students still drew out on paper the present-day continental United States when asked to draw the nation at the time of the Revolution. What this example shows is that the ideas espoused by Manifest Destiny are deeply engrained into American history and culture,

⁸⁰ Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous Peoples’ History of the United States* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2014), 2.

such that it proves difficult for students to separate their conception of the nation from those 19th century ideals.

Other graphic elements in the exhibit share this same perspective through the use of biased language or omission of information. The first panel, “Tribes of the Southern United States,” tries to rectify the implications of its title by saying that “These tribes reluctantly ceded large areas of land ... to accommodate settler demands.”⁸¹ This sentence alludes to the fact that these tribes were coerced and lied to so that they might cede land to the United States, but the implication is more of a reluctant agreement to the inevitable rather than the seemingly endless series of legal and military battles that forcibly stripped Indigenous people of their land, which include the Trail of Tears and the Battle at Wounded Knee. Omitting the specific events and violent histories that contributed to this process, such as the military resistance to Removal, and explaining Native land-loss in vague, non-inflammatory terms negates the lasting impact these actions have had on the tribes and continues to ignore the significance of their experiences while elevating the needs and desires of the United States.

The United States signed federal treaties with many Indigenous nations. These federal treaties are significant documents of Oklahoman history in particular. The Cherokee’s second treaty with the United States in 1791, which established peace between the Cherokee and the U.S., set out new borders between the Cherokee and the U.S., and secured payments for such lands while also giving the United States complete control over the Cherokee nation’s trade.⁸² The Second Treaty limits the autonomy of the Cherokee since any limitations on trade would diminish the sovereignty of the tribe and thus their bargaining power during

⁸¹ *Movement of Native Americans into Oklahoma*. [Guthrie: Oklahoma Territorial Museum].

⁸² “Treaty With the Cherokee: 1791,” July 2, 1791, *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties*, Vol. II (Treaties), *Yale Law School: Lillian Goldman Law Library*, Date Accessed Aug 20, 2019. https://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/chr1791.asp.

subsequent treaty negotiations. This treaty should have prevented any infringement onto Indigenous lands or further limitations to tribal sovereignty, yet when Andrew Jackson was elected into the Presidency in 1828 he worked towards the approval of the Indian Removal Act that would be passed in 1830, which sent eastern tribes to their newly appointed lands in the west. This Act forced the Cherokee and over thirty other tribes to move west into Indian Territory (Oklahoma). The text panel describing Removal as ‘reluctantly ceding their lands’ completely ignores the social and cultural devastation experienced by nations like the Cherokee and negates the brutality of the United States government in their dealings with Native nations in the 19th century, while also ignoring those who already lived in the West.

The physical design of the museum is just as important to the visitors’ experiences as the information provided. The museum occupies two floors, and visitors are self-guided through a circular design that begins at the museum’s lobby/gift shop. From there, the exhibit loops around the first floor before ascending a set of circular stairs to the second floor to follow a similar path. The museum relegates Native American history to a series of mounted text panels with non-specific information, a few photographs on the second floor, and a few maps that line an entryway to the museum proper from the lobby. The first floor exhibit lacks artifacts of any kind to go alongside the text panels, and the panels themselves only have a few photographs and eyewitness accounts depicting life from the mid-19th century. The museum curators acknowledge the lack of artifacts and offer reasons for this absence including the assumed mission of the museum and budgetary constraints. Unfortunately the museum’s lack of Native American materials does impact the exhibit’s message, however. By contrast, the adjoining exhibit room, home to elaborate displays on the Homesteaders and Land Runs, is large, brightly lit, and showcases hundreds of artifacts and replications. The

juxtaposition between a small, dimly lit hallway and the vast openness of the adjoining room has an impact on the visitors. The intention of the design implies that visitors should ‘spend a little time here in the Native American section but hurry on to where the real museum is,’ since most people are more interested in looking at the artifacts on display than reading text from a wall. The rest of the two-floor museum continues with its open concept design by offering large rooms housing a variety of exhibits to walk through and interact with, creating a warm and welcoming feel to the rooms as visitors journey through the exhibits, artifacts, photos, and personal accounts.

The entrance hall from the lobby has a dark, narrow design and is the only museum exhibit without artifacts. It is also the main body of information about Native Americans. By not displaying relevant artifacts around the text panels, the museum continues to diminish the significance of Native people who lived through Removal and the Land Runs. The physical distance between the two exhibits reinforces the notion that Native American histories are separate from Euro-American histories instead of being two perspectives of the same history. Here, the implication is that the Land Runs were just for non-Native people and that the Native Americans living throughout the Territory were not affected by these events. Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz argues in *An Indigenous Peoples’ History of the United States* that such histories are not separate but interdependent on one another; “attempts to tell the story of the United States as a colonialist settler-state, one that...crushed and subjugated the original civilizations in the territories it now rules. Indigenous peoples...inhabited and thrived for millennia before they were displaced to fragmented reservations and economy decimated. This is a history of the United States.”⁸³ It is not possible to tell adequately the history of the

⁸³ Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous Peoples’ History of the United States*, 13-14.

United States without including the histories of the Native peoples who were already living on the land.

Finally, the very name of the museum reveals a single-minded focus on the Oklahoma Territory (not the Indian Territory); it is located in the territorial capital of Oklahoma and within walking distance of the quaint downtown area that draws many visitors to Guthrie, and to the museum. One of the curators, Nathan Turner, told me that the museum is working to rectify the lack of information on Native Americans. He also noted the museum staff is continuing to do more research to provide the most all-encompassing representation of Oklahoma, but he said they were limited by the scope of the museum's purview and budgetary cuts.⁸⁴

Rose Hill School–Cherokee Strip Museum

The Rose Hill School – Cherokee Strip Museum is located right off I-35 in north-central Oklahoma in the town of Perry. It is part of the Oklahoma Historical Society, a large state organization dedicated to the preservation of Oklahoma history. The Society oversees thirteen museums, five historical military sites, and seven historic houses across the state. The Society also runs a large research center, and an online encyclopedia; it helps preserve historic sites and publishes articles and books about Oklahoma history. Given the breadth, one would assume the museums under the Society's umbrella would contain comprehensive information about Oklahoma history from multiple perspectives; unfortunately, this is not the case. The Society does run a central museum in downtown Oklahoma City near the capital that has a larger collection, but only having one museum in the network that provides this more comprehensive view limits the spread of information to visitors of the network museums. The Cherokee Strip Museum is almost entirely dedicated to the Land Run of 1897

⁸⁴ Nathan Turner, Phone interview with author, January 28, 2020.

and those who staked their claims near Perry. Only minimal information is provided about Native peoples who inhabited the land prior to the Land Runs.

The Society claims that its mission “is to collect, preserve, and share the history and culture of the state of Oklahoma and its people.” It also claims to “chronicle the rich history of our state,” via its “research archives, exhibits, educational programs, and publications.”⁸⁵ This mission statement suggests the Society seeks to represent the histories of all peoples living in the state. Yet, in the Cherokee Strip Museum, only the histories of the state’s non-Native inhabitants are displayed, even while claiming its mission is “to collect, preserve, and interpret the history of the Cherokee Outlet.”⁸⁶ When questioning the curator of the museum, she revealed that the museum’s mission is solely focused on the Land Run in 1897, not about the tribes, and it was up to the discretion of the Society to determine the purpose of each museum.⁸⁷ Both Dunbar-Ortiz and Sleeper-Smith would ask whether one can understand the Land Runs without understanding the Native American aspects of the history since the lands being auctioned off during the Land Runs were Indigenous lands. As with many educational structures in the state, the Euro-American view is the prominent focus in this museum, while Native American perspectives continue to be ignored even when the mission statement would seem to indicate an inclusive presentation of the history.

Only two of this museum’s text panels are about Native peoples who lived in the region prior to the Land Runs. These panels are easy to miss, at the entrance to the museum proper, and focus solely on the Otoe-Missouria without mentioning other nations that were also present. The limited information provides only an overview of where the people lived,

⁸⁵ Larry O’Dell, “Oklahoma Historical Society Press Room” *Oklahoma Historical Society*, 2020. <https://www.okhistory.org/about/pressroom>.

⁸⁶ “Cherokee Strip Museum and Rose Hill School.” *Oklahoma Historical Society*. 2020. <https://okhistory.org/site/cherokeestrip>.

⁸⁷ Diana Simon, Telephone conversation with author, February 4, 2020.

how they arrived in the territory, and the transition to individually owned land forced upon them by the Dawes Act. The text, however, never specifically explains the Dawes Act or addresses any of the other governmental actions. The only suggestion that Native people in Oklahoma were negatively impacted is found on the text panel that describes a “cultural shift” that had to occur within the Otoe-Missouria due to the Dawes Act and the forced individual land ownership that it imposed: “while the Otoe-Missouria viewed the land as communally owned, allotment eventually forced them into individual ownership of the land.”⁸⁸ This exhibit panel gives the impression that the opening of Native lands to American settlement was an easy and peaceful transition rather than a half-century battle between the federal government and the tribes as Native communities tried to preserve what was left of their homes and cultures.

The rest of the exhibits in the museum are dedicated to glorifying the impossible odds that new settlers faced as they struggled against the rugged Oklahoma terrain and weather in order to turn part of Lewis and Clark’s Great American Desert into a habitable locale. Detailed information about the growth of railroads—as related to the growth of business—along with ranching and farming struggles, and countless firsthand accounts of life in Oklahoma Territory, support this heroic narrative. The deliberate exclusion of Native-American materials and perspectives reinforces the idea that only Euro-Americans could make the wild terrain profitable or useful, reinforcing the narrative of Manifest Destiny and the superiority of Euro-American descendants over Indigenous peoples.

Finally, the online resources of the OHS offer more information than the exhibits in the museum by presenting a general historic overview of specific tribes and digitally preserved firsthand accounts of tribal members and early non-Native settlers alike. There is

⁸⁸ *Otoe-Missouria*. [Perry: Rose Hill School – Cherokee Strip Museum].

also an extensive genealogy section. However, these resources are not readily used in the smaller network museums, which reinforces the assumed cultural divide between Native and non-Native perspectives.⁸⁹ By limiting or excluding Native American perspectives on history from the museums, the curators continue to send the message that their perspective is not as valid, vital, or relevant.

National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum

Near the heart of Oklahoma City, a vast building, expansive gardens, and monuments easily attract the eye of passing motorists from I-44, one of three large highways that cross the state. From its location, size, and Internet prominence, the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum wields a wide influence in the promotion of not only Oklahoma history but also the history of the American West.⁹⁰ Alas, here is another influential museum that falls short by providing only the most basic information on Native American histories. In fact, of the three museums, the National Cowboy Museum provides the least specific information and does not mention the Land Runs, Indian Removal, or Indian Territory at all.

The museum claims to be “America’s premier institution of Western history, art and culture” and boasts that it “collects, preserves and exhibits an internationally renowned collection of Western art and artifacts while sponsoring dynamic educational programs to stimulate interest in the enduring legacy of the American West.”⁹¹ Such language suggests the museum equally represents all aspects of the American West. Instead, the museum has embraced the idea of ‘American West history’ as primarily the history of the Cowboy Era

⁸⁹ “Research Center.” *Oklahoma Historical Society*. 2020. <https://www.okhistory.org>

⁹⁰ A quick Internet search of “Things to do in Oklahoma” shows that the museum is number three of the top things to do in Oklahoma. It is also the only museum of the three that is directly linked off of the TravelOk.org site.

⁹¹ “About the Museum.” *National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum*. 2020. <https://nationalcowboymuseum.org/about-the-museum/>

and the modern rodeo. The Curator of Ethnology and the Native American exhibits, Dr. Eric Singleton, was more than happy to address these deficiencies. First, the museum's goal of presenting the history of the American West does not end at the Rocky Mountains but extends from the Mississippi River to the Pacific Coast. This means the museum strives to showcase the cultures of all persons living in the western two-thirds of the continental U.S.A. The museum's Native American exhibit is confined to about 2,000 square feet of space of the nearly 200,000 square feet in the museum.⁹² The expansive museum has permanent exhibits on rodeo, cowboys and cowboy life, western dress, horse tack, weaponry, western books and movies, and Native American art and culture.⁹³ The museum also dedicates half of the available space to an art gallery for the display and sale of current American West-inspired paintings and sculptures, pottery, and decorative horse tack.

The Native American exhibit room has some similarities to the Oklahoma Territorial Museum. It is dimly lit, with dark walls and recessed display cases, giving the atmosphere a quiet, somber, and almost mournful presence. By contrast, the adjoining art gallery and cowboy exhibit rooms are colorfully painted, and extensive lighting that shows off the Native American art pieces, some of which are quite old, while other pieces are modern examples of traditional artistic techniques. Singleton mentioned that this design was implemented prior to his time and that there were two reasons for this design. First, the consulting elders from local tribes desired a darkened room to show reverence and respect to the past. Second, the dim lighting is specially designed to protect the artifacts in the permanent exhibit; the lighting is kept between 5 – 10 candle watts in order to protect the fragile artifacts. His long-term goal is to have a redesign of the space with slightly lighter walls in order to make the

⁹² Eric Singleton, Telephone interview with author, February 4, 2020.

⁹³ Horse tack includes bridals, reigns, saddles, whips, and any other necessity for handling horses.

room more welcoming while keeping the reverence and protection of the artifacts desired by the original curator and tribal advisors.⁹⁴ While exploring the exhibit, I noticed that many people spent very little time in the room, preferring to move on to the bright, colorful exhibits seen on the other side of the two doorways. While part of the purpose of the design is for the preservation of the artifacts, the other design elements contribute to the overbearing and depressing atmosphere of the exhibit room compared to the brightly lit and colorful art gallery and other adjoining exhibits. Another notable feature of the National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum is that the Native American displays do not focus solely on tribes of the American West. Displays include home goods and weaponry from the Pacific Northeast, the Southwest, the Plains, and the Northeastern regions.

The museum is a labyrinth of adjoining exhibit rooms with the art gallery accounting for roughly half of the total museum exhibition rooms. From there, the gallery gives way to an exhibit of original and reproduction artwork by a variety of tribes across the Central Plains and Southwest regions. Following the art exhibit comes the rest of the museum, beginning with the Native American exhibit room that houses examples of headdresses, moccasins, hatchets, needles, knives, and art from a multitude of tribes across what is now the United States. The artifact section has over-generalized information with very little recognition of the differences between the tribes or even cultural differences between regions. One example is the display cases that house artifacts categorized as ‘clothing’; this display includes examples from different tribes and regions but without the clarification that not every tribe dressed in the same manner.⁹⁵ By simply categorizing artifacts in general terms, it creates an

⁹⁴ Eric Singleton, Telephone interview with author, February 4, 2020.

⁹⁵ Tribes in the east may use more deer and beaver pelts, while tribes in the Plains would have access to buffalo hides as well as deer, and the cut and design of the garments would differ based on weather and availability of resources.

oversimplified and generalized view that removes the uniqueness, tradition, and history of each tribal nation.

The Native American exhibit also fails to discuss the role of Native people in the American West and the connection they had to the extension of the American border. This was the only museum not to address the Trail of Tears, Indian Territory, and the Land Runs. Singleton's personal view on this omission was that there was such a large historical conversation surrounding the Trail of Tears, Removal, and the growth of Indian Territory that it cannot be adequately presented in the limited space while still giving attention to other tribal nations west of the Mississippi River. According to Singleton, the purpose of the museum is to provide a general overview of all peoples west of the Mississippi River, and the specific presentation of Oklahoma needs adequate space in order to tell Oklahoma history correctly and accurately—space that the museum does not have.⁹⁶ Singleton also mentioned the issue of possibly overlapping with other institutions and indicated that tribal museums would be better positioned to present the history in more detail. While Singleton's explanations are valid to some extent, there is still the issue of a large, national museum in the Oklahoma state capital that does not mention a vital aspect of the history of the American West. With a museum that aspires to represent Western Heritage, the exhibits must discuss some of the harsher sides of that heritage in order to present a comprehensive and historically accurate narrative.

It is bizarre that a museum that purports to capture the American West devotes more attention to the Rodeo Hall of Fame than it does to Native American life. This omits much of the history of what made these rodeos possible and glorifies the mythical view of the American West as 'wild' while rendering Native American perspectives nearly invisible. For

⁹⁶ Eric Singleton, Telephone interview with author, February 4, 2020.

example, the Rodeo Hall gives detailed information about some of the most celebrated competitors in rodeo events, displaying medals, trophies, photographs, and even iconic articles of clothing like shoes and pants. In contrast, the exhibit of Native American artifacts lacks specific dates or detailed tribal information. The goal of the exhibit is to showcase the different tribes from across the American West, but the large scope of that goal means that there is little room for specific history. Instead, the exhibit strips away the individuality of the different tribal nations.

The mission statement of the museum would suggest that it dedicates time and space to the preservation of all aspects of the American West experience, but the reality reflects the same non-Native bias evident in the other two museums. The Native American exhibit is dark, somber, and uninviting. While the museum had preserved and displayed a large collection of Native American artifacts, many people rushed through the exhibit in order to explore other more inviting exhibits. Like the Oklahoma Territorial Museum, the National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum is designed to encourage visitors to spend more time in non-Native exhibits.

Chickasaw Cultural Center

As a point of contrast to these three museums, we can consider the Chickasaw Cultural Center, which is located in Sulphur, Oklahoma in south-central Oklahoma on a section of what is left of the Chickasaw Nation's lands following allotment by the Dawes Act. The Center is important to this study in order to better understand the history in Oklahoma museums. The Center has several distinct areas, including a theater, outdoor gardens, a museum, a small village, and an art gallery. The theater shows movies of the history of the Chickasaw, on Chickasaw culture, and the building of the Center, along with

live demonstrations of their dances and discusses the components of the dance and dress of the participants. There is a small village that allows visitors to see traditional Chickasaw houses, food storage, and large meeting halls common to each village.

The museum is housed in one of the three larger buildings on the campus, the other two being the theater and an administration building. The museum utilizes text panels, audio and visual recordings, interactive displays, and detailed artifact displays that show history through a chronological view and oral tradition. In this way, visitors learn about tribal history from the Chickasaw perspective by listening to the oral history recordings and from a Euro-American perspective by studying the provided chronology. Throughout the museum there are audio speakers that play different Chickasaw songs in the Chickasaw language and instrumental music performed with traditional instruments that give the visitor a feeling of being surrounded by many people telling their history. Motion detectors trigger specific audio and visual recordings that give life to the information on the text panels. The Center uses modern technology to incorporate their oral traditions to present the information to visitors and provides an experience of a living history.

Throughout the museum, there are tribal members available to discuss certain tools or manners of dress in more detail. One such guide, who wished to remain anonymous, said that the museum was designed to show the journey of the Chickasaw. The best representation of this was through an exhibit titled 'Removal.' The exhibit is displayed in a long, low-lit hallway lined with backlit silhouettes and nondescript mannequins that represent those who traveled the Trail. Another guide, who also wished for anonymity, said the Chickasaw do not refer to their move to Indian Territory as the 'Trail of Tears' but rather 'The Great Removal'. While the Chickasaw underwent many of the same sufferings as the Cherokee, they do not

consider these experiences of Removal to be the same event. This is a key point to consider. In the other study museums, if the Trail of Tears is discussed it is presented as a single event that the ‘Five Civilized Tribes’ all experienced together. But the Chickasaw clearly identify their experience with Removal as being separate from the others. This reinforces the fact that each tribe has their own experience with Removal and that history is not of just one single Removal, typically taught as the Cherokee Removal, but a conglomeration of multiple experiences from those involved. The Removal exhibit is designed with a slight uphill gradient and is unevenly paved to represent the struggles of those who suffered along the journey. The mannequins are not given specific identification outside of gender and a vague age (young versus old, man versus woman) so that they may represent many different people. Some are equipped with motion detectors that trigger a voice giving personal testimony of someone who made the journey. The detectors force visitors to walk slowly through the hallway in order to hear each of the recordings, allowing for the gravity of the event to be felt.⁹⁷ The museum is designed to have the atmosphere of a living record, allowing visitors not just to learn about the events but also to feel the gravity, importance, and continuing resonance of the history.

The Chickasaw Cultural center uses a variety of technologies and displays, such as text panels and movies, to integrate their historical traditions with Euro-American traditions. By designing their museum this way, the Center has been able to present multiple perspectives while staying true to Chickasaw heritage. Although the approach of the Center is not without flaws, as they do not fully engage with Euro-American perspectives either, this cultural institution at least provides more engagement with multiple perspectives than the other museums. The Chickasaw Cultural Center shows that it is possible to represent the

⁹⁷ *Removal*. [Sulphur: Chickasaw Cultural Center].

history of a particular tribe from multiple perspectives, which is what Amy Lonetree argues for at the national museums and details an example of in her examination of Saginaw Chippewa's Zibiwing Center for Anishinaabe Culture and Lifeways in Michigan.⁹⁸

Educational Interaction

Each museum lacks adequate representation of Native American history in their permanent exhibits, but that does not necessarily mean that their extracurricular activities have the same limitations, which encouraged this thesis to examine their opportunities of educational enrichment. Many Oklahoma schools have partnerships with local historical societies to provide a more hands-on experience for children. Districts such as Stillwater and Perry Public Schools have similar programs where elementary students spend a day at a one-room schoolhouse to experience what school was like for children before the 20th century.

The Rose Hill School–Cherokee Strip Museum provides an interactive day for elementary students from around the state. Preceding the field trip, students learn about what life was like for children their age attending school over one hundred years ago. They study a box of materials that includes photographs, textbooks, and readings for the teacher to utilize in class. While attending the school, students dress in period costume, eat from sack lunches, and go through a typical day's lessons. While the museum would not release the curriculum directly, the teacher materials are available for open source use.⁹⁹ It is important to note, however, that a Native American child would not have experienced this typical school day in 1910.¹⁰⁰ While this type of field trip is important since it does give hands-on experience

⁹⁸ Amy Lonetree, "Museums as Sites of Decolonization: Truth Telling in National and Tribal Museums" in *Museums and Indigenous Perspectives* ed. Susan Sleeper-Smith. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009).

⁹⁹ "Teacher's Guide." *Cherokee Strip Museum*. Accessed Nov. 2, 2019. <http://www.cherokee-strip-museum.org/teachersGuide.htm>

¹⁰⁰ The curator did mention that the new schoolmarm – the woman who leads the experience – has started to teach parts of the Cherokee language during these field trips, but the focus of these days is not on Native American history nor even on the Land Runs, which is the focus of the museum.

about what school would have been like for non-Native children right after Oklahoma statehood, the disconnect between Euro-American history and Native American histories is perpetuated.

The Oklahoma Territorial Museum has started to move away from interactive experiences due to educational budget cuts. The museum does provide educational opportunities to primary schools, but these focus on the Land Runs and homesteading with very little attention to Native American history during the time. According to the museum, “Oklahoma Or Bust is a history education program designed for the use with 3rd through 6th-grade students [that was sponsored by the museum in the early 2000s]. The goal is to provide students with an understanding of the experiences, difficulties, and choices faced by the Oklahoma pioneers.”¹⁰¹ This program leads students through the steps of the Land Run; they participate in gathering materials needed for the Run, run to ‘claim’ land, and go through the filing process of the land claim. While the Land Runs are undeniably important to the formation of Oklahoma into a state, the museum once again ignores the multiple perspectives of these events. The experience focuses only on the non-Native perspective of the Land Runs and in a way encourages the reenactment of colonization by children, both Native and non-Native. This reinforces the unsaid belief that Euro-American perspectives are more relevant since there are not similar experiences for Native historical events, and this continues to deny Native American children representation in their classrooms. The value of a kinesthetic learning style is important for young learners, but neither “Oklahoma or Bust” nor the day at a One-Room Schoolhouse reflects Native American children’s historical experiences.¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ *Oklahoma or Bust*. [Guthrie: Oklahoma Territorial Museum].

¹⁰² As defined by the Institute for Learning Styles Research, kinesthetic learners tend to learn “by doing, direct involvement.” One day experience programs such as these provide students with this more hands-on way of learning that can help reach those children that are not auditory or visual learners, and reinforce concepts for

The National Cowboy Museum also provides interactive educational programs for primary schools and has a few programs that represent Native American art and culture. However, these are just as over-generalized as the museum's Native American exhibits. For example, the museum offers an interactive section in the Native American Art exhibit, which provides coloring pages of clay pots to allow children to decorate the pots in a 'Native American pattern.' This lacks the information to help children understand the activity outside of coloring and would seem to be more of a distraction tool to allow parents to visit the art exhibit rather than a learning opportunity for children. The oversimplification of these instructions diminishes the rich cultures of the western tribes, and continues the pattern of misinformation to the next generation.

While the National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum, the Oklahoma Territorial Museum, and the Cherokee Strip Museum offer extra educational opportunities for primary school children, the opportunities are just as limited as the museums themselves. Students receive a one-sided view of the growth of Oklahoma. These students turn into young adults without a full understanding of the complexity of race relations in the 19th Century as they relate to contemporary society. This erasure of Native American histories is a continuation of what Indigenous Studies scholars such as Patrick Wolfe, Jean M. O'Brien, and Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz have called a 'cultural genocide'.¹⁰³ Through their exhibits and educational programs the museums examined here have continued to diminish the importance of Native American perspectives as they relate to the expansion of the United States into the American West.

students who are auditory-visual learners. "Kinesthetic Modality." *Institute for Learning Styles Research*. Accessed Dec. 1, 2019. <https://www.learningstyles.org/styles/kinesthetic.html>

¹⁰³ Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States*; Jean M O'Brien, *Firsting and Lasting* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010); Patrick Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native" *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4, (Dec. 2006), 387-409.

Conclusion

The National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum, the Oklahoma Territorial Museum, and the Cherokee Strip Museum focus their exhibits between 1865 and 1907, offering limited space to events prior to the Civil War and following statehood; none venture past the two World Wars and only one addresses the Indian Removal Act of 1830 or the Trail of Tears. All three have close ties with local schools and encourage young students' engagement with the history, but once again these activities offer only Euro-American viewpoints, rather than incorporating aspects of Native American history that is essential to a complete understanding of the American West. Oklahoma history museums do not represent Native Americans to a significant degree, and children learn a Euro-American version of Oklahoma History. The *Manual of Museum Exhibitions* explains, "Many museum workers see exhibitions primarily as a means of learning. From this point of view, exhibits succeed if they educate visitors about their subject matter, and fail if they do not."¹⁰⁴ Since these exhibits do not adequately represent Native American histories alongside Euro-American histories, by the standard of the *Manual of Museum Exhibitions*, these exhibits fail to provide the education to their patrons. The effect of these inadequacies and the real-life consequences of such one-sided presentations of history are not purely academic. Ignoring a population's experiences can result in an unrealistic and incomplete view of the history of our nation, which continues the act of colonization practice into the 21st century. To combat these misrepresentations, museums must begin to limit colonial biases and incorporate more perspectives of the events that built the United States.

¹⁰⁴ Barry Lord, "The Purpose of Museum Exhibits," in *Manual of Museum Exhibitions*, ed. Barry Lord and Maria Piacente (California: Rowan & Littlefield Publishers, 2014), 29.

CHAPTER IV

COASTING THROUGH: NATIVE AMERICAN REPRESENTATION IN SECONDARY EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS AND TEXTBOOKS IN OKLAHOMA

Part 1: Proportional Representation

The final part of this research examines Native American representation in Oklahoma high school education. This will be done using a thorough analysis of high school state standards in Oklahoma in comparison to other states before examining the quantity and quality of information presented in textbooks approved for use in Oklahoma public high schools. High school classrooms, specifically history classes, have an important part to play in the development of young students as functioning members of society. This means that in the contemporary age, history classes should prepare students for the social environment which they are about to enter.¹⁰⁵ Professor of Education Kamel Desouki El Hosary summarizes the argument of retired Professor of Education Gayle Mindes' book *Teaching Young Children Social Studies* quite eloquently by saying, "Mindes clarifies how the social studies curriculum can facilitate the development of attitudes, knowledge, and skills that would enable students to function positively in their communities and with others."¹⁰⁶ The goal then is that the social sciences, including history classes, should facilitate educating young students in their social and civic skills. Following this logic, the social sciences should then present a comprehensive understanding of the society in which the student would

¹⁰⁵Kamel Desouki El Hosary, "Teaching Young Children Social Studies: A Journal for Readers, Students and Teachers of History" *The Social Studies* 99, no. 6 (Nov. 2008): 277-278.
<https://login.ezproxy.lib.umb.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.lib.umb.edu/docview/274799251?accountid=28932>.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

eventually be a participating member. Therefore, the materials available for high school teachers should reflect changing demographics and present a proportional representation of events for students to understand what happened in the past that shaped our present.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau in 2010, Oklahoma's total population stands at about 3.8 million people with nearly 8% of Oklahoma's population reporting as American Indian or Native American only, and another 5% reporting as Native American and another race.¹⁰⁷ Even though Native Americans make up over 13% of the Oklahoma population, my study shows that Native American representation in high school textbooks averages around 2% of the entire content, meaning that through Oklahoma museums, available high school texts, and state standards, the Native American perspective in Oklahoma history is sorely underrepresented, which contributes to a continuing lack of historical understanding in our society and the perpetuation of the cultural genocide that comes from a lack of adequate information.

Educational Terminology

Before diving into the heart of this part of the research, there are a few terms, concepts, and structures that are specific to the educational field that need clarification. These are widely known and understood in the education field but are rarely discussed beyond educational professionals. The first concept is the difference between 'on-level' and 'AP' courses in high schools and, for the structure of this research, is limited to 10th and 11th-grade high school students. 'On-level' refers to classes that have the difficulty appropriate for an average student, while Advance Placement (AP) is a college-level class that has been adapted to the high school setting. For this research, Advance Placement U.S. History (APUSH) texts

¹⁰⁷ U.S. Census Bureau. "United States Census Bureau: Oklahoma," *United States Census Bureau*. 2020. https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=oklahoma%20&g=0400000US40&hidePreview=false&table=DP05&tid=ACSDP1Y2018.DP05&vintage=2018&cid=DP05_0001E&lastDisplayedRow=79

are examined. The second concept is the definition of a ‘standard’ in high school education; these are regulations for the teaching of the class, which include the availability of textbooks. For on-level classes, the state department of education determines standards, while College Board sets class standards for AP classes.¹⁰⁸ Some schools offer lab classes for their Special Education Department; these are content-specific classes that have been adapted for students who may not be able to adhere to the rigor of an on-level class, but those classes are not examined here since there are not widely used textbooks available for these types of classes.

Third, the state government determines school standards. Each state’s schools do teach the basic courses, such as history, math, science, and English; there is some flexibility in the details of what teachers can teach. So, the state of Colorado will have a course on Colorado History while Oklahoma will have a course on Oklahoma History. Fourth, schools are on a schedule for purchasing new textbooks for each subject. Departments are assigned a year in which they may buy new books and resources for the department, called adoption years. These adoption years occur every six to seven years for each subject as the district budget allows, and a district buys material for at least one department each year. Textbook publishers follow a similar cycle in each state and only publish new material every six to seven years for a state. Since AP classes follow the guidelines of College Board, textbook publications follow a different cycle, completely dependent on the new standards and tests put forth by College Board. For example, a three-year-old AP textbook may now be out of date if College Board has changed some aspect of the test, the grading, or the requirements of the class, forcing the publishing company to reprint the text and schools to purchase at least one new book to be in compliance with College Board. Fifth, since the state government

¹⁰⁸ College Board is a national organization that prints, develops, and maintains the standards for the SAT, ACT, and all AP classes.

regulates high school standards, and these are different from state to state, each textbook company prints a version of their book specifically for the state; for example an American History textbook for Oklahoma high schools is the “Oklahoma Edition.” This means the content and supplemental materials align with the standards and testing of the state, and the state approves them for use in high school classroom. Again, AP texts are different; as the APUSH test is a national standardized test there is not an Oklahoma Edition of an AP textbook. It is up to the teacher to align their AP course with College Board and with the state standards. Finally, American History / U.S. History classes are survey courses, meaning that teachers have a very short amount of time in which to provide a detailed look into the history of the United States. Survey courses typically start in one of three places: at European contact, at the American Revolution, or at Reconstruction in 1865, while APUSH courses start prior to European contact. No matter the starting point, the expectation is that students will reach the contemporary age, typically defined as 9/11 in 2001. With these restrictions, it is extremely difficult for a high school history course to cover every aspect of U.S. history no matter the starting point.

Professor of Curriculum Studies E. Wayne Ross describes education through social studies as “the preparation of young people so that they possess the knowledge, skills and values necessary for active participation in society.”¹⁰⁹ He goes on to say that “there is [a] widespread agreement that the proper aim of social studies is “citizenship education.””¹¹⁰ By this standard, the goal of the instructor should not be to cover every aspect of the last 400 years (1607 – 2020) but to give a proportional representation of peoples and events in the

¹⁰⁹ E. Wayne Ross, ed. *Social Studies Curriculum: Purposes, Problems, and Possibilities*, (Ithaca: State University of New York Press, 2006), 18.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.* 20.

United States as they apply to the 21st century in order for students to become active participants in the society.

State Standards

Each state has the opportunity to structure educational standards.¹¹¹ States put forth generalized standards for each grade and each subject matter, and from there, teachers may interpret these standards to meet the requirements of their school and personal interest.¹¹² For example, in my classes, I typically spend more time on World War II (WWII) over the Spanish-American War since WWII has a more direct impact on the 21st century. So while I will start a school year with a review of events prior to the Civil War and follow the standards through to the 21st century, I have some liberty to design my course to showcase events or histories that I view as being more vital to the 21st century.

In order to better understand how curriculum differs from state to state I compare Oklahoma standards to eleven other states, specifically looking at how states in different regions approach Native American history. The additional states I examine are: Maine, Mississippi, Georgia, Ohio, Indiana, New York, Kansas, Colorado, Texas, and New Hampshire. They provide a representative geographic snapshot of the nation whose histories are heavily influenced by Native American histories, including four states from the American West, two from New England, two from the Mid-West, and two from the South.

State standards consist of roughly the same categories; time/era, content skills, and process and literacy skills, with each standard having a series of sub-entries giving specific examples of material to cover, but these are still rough guidelines. This helps establish a timeline for schools to follow, broad guidelines of content to cover, and cross-curricular

¹¹¹ A full list of citations for each state standard mentioned in this subsection can be provided in Appendix A.

¹¹² Ross, ed. *Social Studies Curriculum: Purposes, Problems, and Possibilities*, 25.

instruction (e.g. incorporating English or Math skills into a History class). Each standard gives broad guidelines that allow teachers to teach their class in a way that is most suitable to their students, interests, and school requirements. For example, Oklahoma’s Content Standard 6 of the U.S. History Standards reads “The student will analyze the foreign and domestic policies in the contemporary era, 1977 to the present.”¹¹³ This standard could cover anything from the fall of the USSR to terrorism and 9/11; it could also include the bombing of the OKC Federal building in 1995 and immigration changes in the 21st century. There is much room for interpretation within this standard, and while the state standards do provide some help to clarify and guide a teacher, these are just as vague. The vagueness allows for some level of interpretation and flexibility in the classroom, giving teachers more autonomy when choosing important subjects to discuss.¹¹⁴

To best understand how states standards differ, let us examine a small portion of the Oklahoma United States History Content Standards (USH) 1, which establishes the start of the course and provides three sub-standards with more detailed instruction.

USH 1: The student will analyze the transformation of the United States through its civil rights struggles, immigrant experiences and settlement of the American West in the Post-Reconstruction Era, 1865 to the 1920s.

USH 1.3 Analyze the impact of westward expansion and immigration on migration, settlement patterns in American society, economic growth, and American Indians

C. Examine the rationale behind federal policies toward American Indians including the establishment of reservations, attempts at assimilation, the end of the Indian

¹¹³ Oklahoma State Department of Education. *Oklahoma Academic Standards for Social Studies: United States History: USH 6*, 2019.

¹¹⁴ Currently at the school where I teach, both U.S. History teachers work to develop a curriculum map that consists of broad guidelines on time spent on each unit and what was to be covered in each unit. Even with the map and state standards, my counterpart still finished the 1920s ahead of schedule in the fall semester, while I barely finished discussing World War I in the same amount of time. While I, and most teachers, thoroughly enjoy this freedom, it does pose a problem in terms of what we teach, specifically when discussing Native American history in the United States.

Wars at Wounded Knee, and the impact of the Dawes Act on tribal sovereignty and land ownership.

D. Compare viewpoints of American Indians' resistance to United States Indian policies as evidenced by Red Cloud and his *Cooper Union* speech, Quahah Parker, and Chief Joseph as expressed in his *I Will Fight No More Forever* speech.¹¹⁵

As the excerpt above demonstrates, the expectation is that U.S. History classes will focus on the American West and the transformation of the land from Indian Territory into a state in the Union through an examination of certain key events in the mid-19th century. A teacher could trace back the unit to 1830 with Andrew Jackson and Indian Removal through the Trail of Tears before discussing the various military engagements and massacres that occurred prior to the Dawes Act in the 1890s and the opening of Indian Territory for Euro-American settlement. Others could skip the Indian Removal Act entirely and just focus on the few specific examples provided in the standard before moving onto foreign immigration and urbanization. While the state does require part of the course to discuss Native Americans in the American West, it does not specify how long or what depth a teacher must go into when discussing this subject. This means that a teacher could potentially spend one day on this part of the unit before moving on to discuss other events in the same time period, overlooking Native American perspectives on these events.

States like Mississippi, Ohio, and Kansas follow a similar starting point as Oklahoma for their U.S. History classes. Mississippi's standards are detailed in specific topics that should be covered:

¹¹⁵ Oklahoma State Department of Education. *Oklahoma Academic Standards for Social Studies: United States History: USH 1*, 2019.

U.S. 1: Westward Expansion: Trace how economic developments and the westward movement impacted regional differences and democracy in the post Reconstruction era.

1. Illustrate the impact of Manifest Destiny on the economic and technological development of the post-Civil War West, including: mining, the cattle industry and the transcontinental railroad.
3. Evaluate the Dawes Act for its effect on tribal identity, land ownership, and assimilation of American Indians.¹¹⁶

In comparison to Mississippi and Oklahoma’s standards, Ohio and Kansas’s standards are even vaguer. Ohio’s standards of the same time period only imply discussing the American West or Native Americans:

Topic: Industrialization and Progressivism (1877 – 1920)

...Growing industries enticed immigration, fostered urbanization, gave rise to the American labor movement and developed the infrastructure that facilitated the settling of the West...

12. Immigration, internal migration and urbanization transformed American Life.¹¹⁷

Ohio implies including a discussion of Native American history but including the American West. Kansas does not even imply discussing the growth and changes in the American West, even though Kansas is the heart of the American West. The difference between these standards, even when the chronological starting point for the course is the same, shows that there is the potential for vastly different educational focuses in a high school classroom depending on the state. Among these four states, Oklahoma and Mississippi are the only two that directly mention Native Americans in their standards even though all four states have a deep history with Native Americans and Removal. In her 1988 article in the *Harvard Educational Review* Marlys Duchene expands on this by saying, “in education, racism exists

¹¹⁶ Mississippi State Department of Education. *Mississippi College – and Career Readiness Standards for the Social Studies: US. 1*. 2018.

¹¹⁷ Ohio State Department of Education. *Ohio New Learning Standards: Social Studies – Topic: Industrialization and Progressivism (1877-1920)*, 2018.

today in the “Back to Basics” movement, in ethnocentric textbooks omitting Native American contributions and histories.”¹¹⁸ While Duchene is specifically discussing federal oversight for educating Indigenous children, her point still carries weight in the examination of public school systems. Limiting or completely removing Native American histories from public education erases their voices from the historical narrative.

The other states start their U.S. History courses at or around European colonization, meaning that the discussion of the American West and Native Americans is further along in the course. Maine’s standards briefly touch on Native Americans in the fourth standard, “United States territorial expansion between 1801 and 1861, and how it affected relations with external power and Native Americans.”¹¹⁹ Georgia includes Native American history in three units; European Content, American Revolution, and the American West. The standards specifically address the tribes in the American West in two ways; first, “Evaluate how the growth of the western population and innovations in farming and ranching impacted Plains Indians,” and “Explain the Plains Indians’ resistance to western expansion of the United States and the consequences of their resistance.”¹²⁰ Indiana, New York, Colorado, and Texas follow a similar pattern to Georgia where the standards focus on Native Americans primarily during the colonial-style expansion into the American West. New Hampshire is the only state that does not mention Native Americans specifically in their standards but does address expansion and internal migration. All the states that start at or near European Colonization do

¹¹⁸ Marlys Duchene, "Giant Law, Giant Education, and Ant: A Story about Racism and Native Americans" *Harvard Educational Review* 58, no. 3 (1988): 354, 22.

¹¹⁹ Maine State Department of Education. *United States History Content Standards for Grades 5 – 12: Era 6*, 2019.

¹²⁰ Georgia State Department of Education. *Social Studies: Georgia Standards of Excellence – United States History*, SSUSH12, 2016.

include in their standards a requirement to discuss Native Americans during this time period, typically starting with pre-contact histories and early settlement events.

This analysis shows that among these states, Oklahoma does require the most time in a U.S. History class to be devoted to the study of Native Americans in American history, but other areas that should have a similar requirement do not. For example, Ohio, Mississippi, and Georgia are all critical players in the history of Native American Removal and the Trail of Tears, but their state standards do not specifically have high school requirements regarding these events. This demonstrates a lack of respect or acknowledgment of the value of these perspectives in high schools, which then carries over into the rest of society, where Native American histories are not acknowledged.

In 2013 journalist Erinn Unger researched Washington state's high school dropout rate, which showed that the "highest dropout rates are among students in foster care, Native Americans, migrant students and those with limited English skills."¹²¹ The reason behind the high dropout rates for Native American students can be traced in part to Indian Boarding schools, which 'were meant to rid Native Americans of their heritage.'¹²² What this has set up is a belief that public, state-funded education's purpose is to hinder and hide the culture and identity of different tribes in the United States. Historians K. Tsianina Lomawaima and Jeffrey Ostler unpack this concept in their article "Reconsidering Richard Henry Pratt: Cultural Genocide and Native Liberation in an Era of Racial Oppression." Ostler writes, "In 1879, Richard Henry Pratt took command of Carlisle Indian Industrial School, the first U.S. off-reservation boarding school...He fully endorsed an 'erase and replace' approach to all aspects of Native societies – languages, religions, material culture, legal systems, family

¹²¹ Erinn Unger, "In Focus High School Dropouts" *McClatchy-Tribune Business News* Washington (June 2, 2013): 1.

¹²² *Ibid.* 3.

structures, economic institutions, and so on – in order to “civilize” Native individuals.”¹²³ While Pratt was only one of many in support of the ‘erase and replace’ practices of the late 19th century boarding schools, this practice is still in place – unofficially – in many public educational institutions. Not only does the lack of cultural representation in public school impact an Indigenous student’s desire and willingness to stay in public education, but it also continues the brutal assimilation process that began in the 19th century, attempting to eliminate the cultural identity of Indigenous communities from the American historical narrative. If U.S. History classes are not required to spend a proportional amount of time on Native American histories, it perpetuates the idea that Native American perspectives are not as vital to the overall historical discussion and reinforces what Patrick Wolfe describes as cultural genocide.

Textbook Data

For this research, textbooks from 2000 – 2020 from on-level and AP classes are analyzed to represent the two most common levels of instruction in a high school and provide a contemporary study of what is being taught in high schools today compared to other texts that have been studied through this research. Except for the AP editions, the books are all Oklahoma Editions, meaning they are or have been approved for use in Oklahoma classrooms. A few newly published editions for the Oklahoma adoption year, the 2020-2021 school year, are being sold now for schools to purchase before the start of the new academic year. The total pages versus Native American-centric pages, percentage of the glossary referring to Native American vocabulary, and percentage of the indexes listing key Native American reference locations, show the total amount of space allocated to Native American

¹²³ K. Tsianina Lomawaima and Jeffrey Ostler, “Reconsidering Richard Henry Pratt: Cultural Genocide and Native Liberation in an Era of Racial Oppression” *Journal of American Indian Education* 57, no. 1 (2018): 79-80.

history in each book. In the second half of this chapter, I discuss the quality of the information provided, but first, the discussion here concerns the amount of data provided.

The table, Native American Representation in High School Textbooks, shows the breakdown of the size of the book, the pages devoted to Native American history, the overall percentage of the book that this Native American content constitutes, the glossary totals and percentages, and the index estimated totals and percentages. For the sake of time, index estimates were gathered by adding together the number of words in the first 3 – 6 columns of the first to second pages (depending on the size of the font) [A] and then dividing that number by 3 – 6 [B] (depending on how many columns I used). This gives an average number of words per column, which was then multiplied by the number of columns per page [C], and then the number of pages in the index [D]. Equation: $(((A1 + A2 + A3)/B)*C)* D$. This gave a median of how many reference entries are in each index. The number of direct references to Native Americans was counted and divided by the estimated totals to produce the percentage. A direct reference consists of the name of a tribe, a battle / massacre of a tribe, a Treaty or governmental Act impacting a tribe, or any combination of the terms ‘Native American,’ ‘Indian,’ or ‘American Indian.’ Direct glossary entries consist of definitions that include a specific tribe or reference to ‘Native American’ or ‘Indian.’ Examples of direct entries in the glossary and/or index would be ‘the Dawes Act’ but entries of ‘the Great Plains’ were not counted as this had several different sub-entries, only one of which would meet the criteria.

Finally, books marked with an asterisk (*) are AP editions, and books marked with a double asterisk (**) are Oklahoma History books, not U.S. History books. Of the twenty-five books analyzed, seven were AP Editions from various years and six were Oklahoma History

editions, and all the books below are or have been available for adoption in Oklahoma schools over the past twenty years.

Table 1: Native American Representation in High School History Books¹²⁴

Book	Publication Year	Total Pages	Pages on Native Americans	Percentage of the Book	Glossary (totals & percentages)	Index (totals & percentages)
The American Nation	2001	1095	28	2.55%	16/771 2.07%	84/5400 1.55%
American Passage *	2004	904	34	3.67%	NA ¹²⁵	216/9954 2.16%
Oklahoma: Land of Contrasts **	2007	499	119	23.8%	9/218 4.12%	226/1882 12%
The American Republic	2007	921	21	2.28%	4/403 0.99%	160/5152 3.10%
United States History	2007	583	19	1.54%	12/296 4.05%	85/2736 3.11%
America's History *	2008	1017	35	3.4%	6/183 3.27%	170/11100 1.5%
America's History *	2011	1010	36	3.56%	4/183 2.18%	239/9108 2.62%
The Americas	2012	917	12	1.3%	8/462 1.73%	68/3432 1.98%
Oklahoma: Land of Opportunity **	2013	511	103	20.15%	5/217 2.30%	230/1920 11.97%
America's History *	2014	1035	38	3.67%	12/614 1.95%	296/10062 2.94%
United States History	2014	799	21	2.6%	10/515 1.9%	72/4590 1.56%
The American Pageant*	2016	1008	25	2.48%	10/710 1.4%	216/11025 1.95%
American History *	2017	881	50	5.6%	3/125 2.4%	117/9000 1.3%
America's History*	2018	975	48	4.92%	15/898 1.67%	364/10560 3.45%
America Through the Lens: US History, 1877 to Present	2019	789	21	2.66%	4/440 0.09%	95/4750 2%
Experience History: Interpreting America's Past *	2019	840	33	3.9%	1/218 0.46%	146/7203 2.03%
History Alive!: Pursuing American Ideals	2019	693	8	1.15%	3/800 0.375%	38/3300 1.15%
Oklahoma: Uniquely American **	2020	505	101	20%	2/218 0.917%	92/1200 7.66%

¹²⁴ A full list of citations for each textbook is provided in Appendix B.

¹²⁵ This edition did not have a glossary included.

Oklahoma: Our History Our Home**	2020	509	95	18.66%	7/217 3.22%	247/1872 13.19%
Oklahoma: The Sooner State**	2020	457	127	23.21%	2/287 0.696%	108/1350 8%
The American Pageant*	2020	1022	29	2.84%	23/754 3.05%	255/11052 2.13%
The Story of Oklahoma**	2020	348	70	20.11%	20/258 7.75%	321/1674 19.18%
American History	2021	989	19	1.92%	5/471 1.06%	66/3306 1.99%
United States: History and Geography, Modern Times	2021	673	12	1.78%	0/441 0%	52/3036 1.71%
United States History: Reconstruction to the Present	2021	789	13	1.65%	11/719 1.53%	73/5922 1.23%

What is evident from the table is that, other than the Oklahoma History texts, the average amount of space allotted to Native American history is typically 2 – 3 % of the entire book. The AP editions do allocate slightly more space to Native American histories, but this is partly due to the larger scope of the books. All the AP editions begin with pre-European Contact while the on-level books range in a starting point from the American Revolution to Reconstruction. By far, the Oklahoma History books dedicate the most space to Native American history, but the course only focuses on the history of Oklahoma.

The implications of the textbook breakdown are far-reaching. Between two required courses under Oklahoma state standards for High School Social Studies, the history of 13% of Oklahoma’s current population only accounts for roughly 6.68% of the printed space allotted. The data shows that there is a substantial lack of Native American representation in high school textbooks. Again, in conjunction with the examination of state standards, there is a societal acceptance of denying the histories of Native Americans and an acceptance towards continuing Native American cultural genocide. As with the lack of representation in museums, Oklahoma history is not presented to the public in a complete fashion and continues with the expansion of colonization ideologies into the 21st century.

Part 2: Fighting for a Voice

By studying four AP and four on-level texts, this section will provide a more comprehensive look at how Native American perspectives are being represented.¹²⁶ Further, Oklahoma History classes are typically a one-semester class for freshman students while American History classes, both on-level and AP, are typically yearlong classes for upperclassman, mostly 10th and 11th-grade students. Thus, the AP and on-level American History course textbooks will provide the most complete look at how Native American perspectives are represented in comparison to Euro-American perspectives. Since Europeans predominantly founded the United States, these classes tend to focus on the European and Euro-American perspectives. The question I seek to address is whether or not Native Americans are represented in the limited space allotted to their histories or are they being used in a supporting role to Euro-American historical narratives.

Methodology

This analysis is broken into two main parts – AP textbooks and on-level textbooks – for two reasons. First, AP and on-level courses have different starting points depending on the state. AP courses, per College Board, all start at or before colonization in the 15th century while on-level classes start where their state standards dictate. In Oklahoma, on-level American History classes start in 1865, after the Civil War. The textbooks reflect the differing starting points and thus should not be directly compared to each other since they do not cover all of the same information. Second, AP classes are college-level classes for high school students. This means the material presented is at a high reading level and tends to be more in-depth than on-level classes, the assumption being that high school students are

¹²⁶ Since Oklahoma History is a state specified course, the books focus on the history of the state and not on the American history narrative as a whole like that of the AP and on-level classes and will not be studied further in this thesis.

performing at a more advanced level than expected through the on-level instruction.

Therefore, the books are written at two different levels to meet the expectations of the classes. In the final part of this analysis, I will compare the two types of textbooks.

Three key historical events were chosen to be the sample of Native American representation; Early Contact / First Settlement (late 15th century through the early half of the 17th century), Indian Removal Act / Trail of Tears (1830 – 1860), and the Oklahoma Land Runs / Settlement of the West (1880 – 1900). These were chosen since they are key events in both Euro-American histories and Native American histories. The rest of the analysis examines the amount of space used for the subjects in question, the words or phrases used, and what or how much bias is projected through the text. While the first part of the analysis focused on the overall percentage of the book, this part looks directly at space allotted in a given chapter in order to determine if there is adequate space given to a subject to fully explain the concept. This part of the study is more subjective to each reader, but studying the space allotted for each topic, along with the words and phrases chosen by the authors to present the information, can provide a better understanding of the bias in each book.

AP Course Textbooks

College Board controls APUSH across the nation. The organization regulates the standards, the textbooks, the structure of the curriculum, and the final testing in order to have the class standardized across the country.¹²⁷ There are between ten and twelve books approved for use in an APUSH course during any given year; depending on published availability, updates and revisions to the standardized test, and the final approval from College Board members. The three most popular books used across the country are McGraw

¹²⁷ “About Us: How We’re Governed, Bylaws.” *College Board*. 2020.
<https://about.collegeboard.org/governance/bylaws>

Hill’s *American History: AP Edition* by Alan Brinkley, Bedford St. Martin’s *America’s History* by James Henretta et al., and Cengage’s *The American Pageant* by David M. Kennedy and Lizabeth Cohen. My analysis focuses on Henretta’s *America’s History* because my access to the last four editions of the book allows for a broader scope of the analysis over the last twenty years.

Three key historical events provide a sample for study that appears in the textbooks that should incorporate Native American and Euro-American perspectives. They are Early Contact / First Settlement (late 15th century through the early half of the 17th century), Indian Removal Act / Trail of Tears (1830 – 1860), and the Oklahoma Land Runs / Settlement of the West (1880 – 1900). These are key events in the formation of U.S. – Native American relationships, the creation of the United States of America, and the creation of the state of Oklahoma.

America’s History currently has nine printed editions. For this study, editions 6 – 9 are used to see how, or if, Native American representation has changed over the last 20 years. The first part of the study was the space given to each of the three topics. The graph below shows how many pages per chapter are dedicated to Native American history for each subject in each book.

Table 2: Space Allotments in High School Textbooks: *America’s History*

	9 th Edition (2018)	8 th Edition (2014)	7 th Edition (2011)	6 th Edition (2008)
Early Contact/ First Settlement	Ch. 1: 10/28 pg. on Native American culture / lives prior to contact [35.7%]	Ch. 1: 10/25 pg. on Native American culture/lives prior to contact [40%]	Ch. 1: 6/26 pg. on Native American culture/lives prior to contact [23%]	Ch. 1: 6/24 pg. on Native American culture/lives prior to contact [25%]

Indian Removal Act / Trail of Tears	Ch. 2 – 4/27 pg. of Native American resistance to colonization/settlement [14.8%] Ch. 9: 5/28 pg. on Indian Removal Act and Trail of Tears [17.86%] Ch. 11: 3/24 pg. on Native Americans and Manifest Destiny [12.5%]	Ch. 2: 5/27 pg. on Native American resistance to colonization/settlement [18.5%] Ch. 10: 4/22 pg. on Indian Removal Act and Trail of Tears [18%] Ch. 13: 3/25 pg. on Native Americans and Manifest Destiny [12%]	Ch. 2: 3/24 pg. on Native American resistance to colonization/settlement [12.5%] Ch. 10: 3/20 pg. on Indian Removal Act and Trail of Tears [15%]	Ch. 10: 3/24 pg. on Indian Removal Act and Trail of Tears [12.5%]
Oklahoma Land Runs / Settlement of the West	Ch. 15: 10/25 pg. on the American West and Native tribes in the West [40%]	Ch. 16: 8/24 pg. on the American West and Native tribes in the West [33%]	Ch. 16: 9/26 pg. on the American West and Native tribes in the West [35%]	Ch. 16: 6/25 pg. on the American West and Native tribes in the West [25%]

As can be seen from the table above, the publishers have expanded the amount of space allocated to Native American experiences. In the last twenty years, more space has been allotted, meaning there has been a move to be more inclusive towards the different perspectives of the American experience. However, these numbers still pale in comparison to the space allocated to other minority groups in the books. Immigration and slavery are more thoroughly covered in entire chapters, while Native American histories are reduced to subsections within the chapters. Again, this ties back into the discussion of cultural genocide. By allocating an entire chapter to slavery in the United States, but not allocating a similar amount of space to the removal of Native American lands, language, and culture, the

textbooks presents a historical narrative in which African American histories are more important to the overall American experience than the histories of the first peoples on this land.

Throughout all the editions, the terms ‘Indian(s)’, ‘Native people(s)’, and ‘Native American(s)’ are used. The use of the term ‘Indian(s)’ over that of a more politically appropriate term like ‘Native American’ shows a continuation of a Euro-American bias, since the term was first coined by an European explorer that launched the invasion and colonization of the Americas. According to an enrolled citizen of the Kiowa Tribe, Leah Two-Hatchett Montes, there has been a trend to ‘reclaim’ the word ‘Indian’ among some communities. This is not the case for every tribe, or for every community, but for Leah’s family and her community they are working to reclaim the term to mean something more positive and not weighed down by the historical stigma of the term.¹²⁸ But not all communities feel the same way.¹²⁹ High school textbooks should therefore be more careful about using terms like ‘Indian’ since it can still be preserved as culturally insensitive or repressive.

Other terms frequently used are in reference to geographical regions; the textbooks switch between non-political terms to political terms to reference these areas. An example of a non-political term would be ‘the Mid-Atlantic region’ while political terms would be terms like ‘New England.’ Since ‘New England’ was not an acceptable term for a region until after colonization, meaning that intentional or not, the author’s use of this and similar terms

¹²⁸ Leah Two-Hatchett Montes, Interview by author, Ponca City, OK, September 8, 2019.

¹²⁹ For example, I had a student who was a proud member of a local tribe and he was very upset when I discussed Indian Fry Bread, not because I was discussing the food but because I am a non-Native using the term ‘Indian.’ We did end up having a good conversation about cultural appropriation and current terminology, but the example does show that not every member of indigenous communities feels the same about the term.

continues in the expression of Euro-American centered perspectives by assuming that the colonization of North America was a forgone conclusion. This is seen through the other sections of the textbook as well. While the space allotted to the Native American histories has increased; the terminologies used through the sections have not been updated through the books.

AP level books have made moves to be more representative of Native American histories, but there is still a lack of cultural sensitivity presented through the sections. This means that an Indigenous student who is taking an advanced class may start to feel alienated due to the terminologies used, and the under-representation of Indigenous histories throughout the text. Referring back to Unger's study of high school dropout rates among Indigenous communities, if textbooks—especially texts for a college-level class—include more Indigenous histories not only will this encourage more inclusive understandings of history, but Native students may feel more accepted in the classroom and the rest of society.

On-Level Textbooks

The final part of this analysis concerns four of the on-level textbooks available for use in Oklahoma schools over the last twenty years. These books are National Geographic's *America Through the Lens: 1877 to the Present* by Fredrik Hiebert, Peggy Altoff, and Fritz Fisher, Holt McDougal's *The Americans: Reconstruction to the 21st Century* by Gerald A. Danzer et al., Glencoe and National Geographic's *The American Republic: Since 1877* by Joyce Appleby et al., and Holt, Rinehart and Winston's *The American Nation* by Paul Boyer et al. Following the same format as the AP level textbooks, these textbooks were studied based on key events, space allotment, word usage, and perspective through the sections. Since these books are designed for a course that begins after the American Civil War, only

one of the events chosen falls within the timeline, but what becomes apparent through this study is that the books and courses do not show the connections between events.

The only event that could be studied in the books is the expansion of the United States west of the Mississippi River. In Oklahoma, U.S. History is covered in two different year long courses, the first starts at European Contact and ends with the American Civil War, and the second course picks up at Reconstruction and typically ends at 9/11. Early contact and the Trail of Tears both fall before the American Civil War and therefore are in the ‘review’ chapters of the book. These chapters are not required in Oklahoma U.S. History courses, so it is up to the teacher to decide if or how much time is spent on these review chapters. This means that the topic of the expansion into the American West is separated from the discussion of Native American removal between the two sections of U.S. History. Added to this, there is a two to three-year gap between the first U.S. History course in the 8th grade and the second course in the 10th or 11th grade. Not only is there a gap in instruction, by dividing the history in this manner students cannot receive a full understanding of the history from the textbook alone. While the hope would be that the teacher would spend time helping students learn and understand connections between these events, not every teacher instructs in this manner.

Aside from the limitations of starting a course halfway through the historical narrative, we must look at the historical narrative presented in these textbooks. As stated, each book starts the content at or after the American Civil War. Three of the books specifically state their starting date of 1877, after the end of Reconstruction. All four have review chapters – the first four or five chapters of the book – where a very brief discussion is presented of early contact and settlement through the American Civil War. In the core

content of the books, only the settlement of the American West is discussed. This discussion focuses on the Euro- and African-American perspectives of the American West with stories of cowboys, outlaws, growth of the railroads, and the Wild West. No consideration is given to Indian Territory or the formation of Oklahoma as a state in the Union outside of a brief mention of the Dawes Act.

Overall, all four textbooks focus on the Euro-American perspective of the 19th century. For example, *The American Nation* writes this about Andrew Jackson's push for Congress to pass the Indian Removal Act of 1830, "For their own protection, he suggested, Indians should be moved westward."¹³⁰ This one example helps to demonstrate the Euro-American bias. The Removal of the tribes east of the Mississippi River was a long hard legal battle marked by numerous violent encounters between Euro-Americans and the different Native American tribes. The phrasing in the textbook, however, gives the impression that Jackson was looking out for the welfare of the eastern tribes rather than being one of the main supporters of their cultural annihilation and removal from the continent. Examples like this are seen throughout the sections on Native Americans in the West; the most notable aspect of the writing is the simplicity of the content and the lack of depth. Mikal Brotnov Eckstrom and Margaret D. Jacobs discuss this problem and possible solution to it, in their article "Teaching American History as Settler Colonialism":

Many of us would like to include more on Indians [in survey classes], but our overall narratives and the themes and textbooks we choose often make it awkward to insert a more meaningful coverage of Indian history. A survey class based on settler-colonial paradigm, however, keeps Indians in

¹³⁰ Paul Boyer et. al, *The American Nation* (Austin: Hold, Rinehart, and Winston, 2001), 244.

the frame throughout both halves of the survey and still enables historians to cover a wide variety of historical material.¹³¹

The authors present valid reasons for the limits on including Native American histories – namely, there are a lot of histories to tell and there is not a lot of time to tell them – but the problem with this view is there are gaps in the histories that are needed to fully understand the events. As argued in Chapter III, all perspectives of an event need to be represented in order to gain a full understanding of the events. By only providing part of the history, the student cannot hope to fully understand the importance of an event or its contemporary importance. In *America's History*, the subsection on the Indian Removal Act was focused around Jackson and his administration rather than on those it affected. The same is true in the chapter on the American West, where most of the chapter focuses on the Wild West, cowboys, and other Euro-American centric events in the American West, with very little consideration given to the Native American impacts; less than 25% combined of the two chapters on the Great Plains and the American West discussed Native Americans.¹³² The same trend seen in Oklahoma museums is being repeated here, and students are continuing to learn the Euro-American view of the American West without the historical context of Native Americans, giving students an incomplete perspective of history.

The last aspect to study is the change in the books over the last twenty years. For the most part, each of the books follows the same format with very little change in content or structure in the material. All of the books are overly-generalized with just the basic time, place, and people involved with the event. While this is true for the majority of information

¹³¹ Mikal Brotnov Eckstrom and Margaret D. Jacobs, “Teaching American History as Settler Colonialism,” in *Why You Can't Teach United States History without American Indians*. Susan Sleeper-Smith et al eds. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 260-261.

¹³² Henretta, James A., Eric Hinderaker, Rebecca Edwards, and Robert O. Self. *America's History*. Boston: Bedford / St. Martin's, 2014.

provided in survey style textbooks, the information provided on Native Americans is more generalized than other topics. The major difference is in *America Through the Lens*, the newest of the four books. This book's style is generalized throughout all topics and not Native American histories. The difference comes in how the book is designed. The new trend in high school textbooks is to design them to be secondary tools to be used alongside core instruction instead of being designed to be the main mode of instruction. As Ross notes "for more than seventy years teachers have relied on textbooks as a primary instructional tool."¹³³ Textbooks were thus written to be the primary mode of instruction, but with the new technological era what is seen is a movement in the publishing organizations to provide more than just a textbook. The 2020 editions of many books provide not only the textbook, but also primary and secondary documents for student activities, access to online videos and interviews where possible, and teachers now have more access to virtual field trips to allow students to experience the history away from the textbook. This means the actual text (either printed or electronic) no longer has the more traditional supplemental activities, such as review questions, activities, and writing prompts within the book, and both teachers and publishers are making a move to other modes of supplemental instruction. *American Through the Lens* still contains some of the secondary materials like primary and secondary sources and side activities, but the book has moved away from the model of being the core instructional tool, so all of the sections in the book are short and to the point, the assumption being that the instructor will provide other means of accessing the information and the text should be a brief guide to the event being taught. By doing this, the authors have managed to remove much of the biased language and Euro-American slant that is seen in the other books.

¹³³ E. Wayne Ross, ed. *Social Studies Curriculum: Purposes, Problems, and Possibilities*, (Ithaca: State University of New York Press, 2006), 27.

Conclusion

At the end of this analysis of school textbooks, it is evident that there are gaps in the books when it comes to Native American perspectives and histories in the wider discussion. On average, Native American perspectives are given 3 – 5% of total space in American History textbooks, which is 80% less space than in Oklahoma History textbooks. While it is not possible to cover every aspect of the history of North America in a high school survey class, it is possible to try to be more inclusive towards other perspectives. The data shows that there is a lack of Native American representation in the textbooks, and upon a closer look at the information provided there is an underlying Euro-American bias throughout the material.

AP books do a better job of laying out the larger picture of the formation of the United States, which allows students an opportunity to see the connections to events over time, while the on-level books are only presenting a partial view of the history. Part of the difference comes from different standards for each type of class. Since College Board dictates the course to mimic a college-level survey course, there are higher standards and more material that is covered. State-level standards differ from state to state but follow the same general structure. Some states, like Oklahoma, divide the history into two parts; roughly 1400 – 1865, and 1865 – Present. The division in the history is part of what causes the most harm since most of the ‘story’ of the Native American move to Oklahoma and the fall out of the Indian Removal Act all happened before 1865, which means that high school students in Oklahoma will not learn about these events in high school. Since the last time students learned about the Trail of Tears in terms of American History typically was in the 8th grade, students are less likely to be able to recall all the facts about that period and how

those events would tie into the second half of the American History survey course. This means that the average student is less likely to fully understand the contemporary ramifications of the Trail of Tears to Oklahoma, since they have not been shown the full narrative. The instruction on the Trail of Tears and the settlement of the American West has a two-year instructional gap between them.

AP books also do a better job of removing the biased language throughout the books, whereas the on-level books are more prone to use biased language and to focus on a Euro-American perspective of events and there have been some improvements in AP books over the last twenty years. The newest books have started the move away from biased language by trying to be more straight forward in how they represent events. While the length of the sections has not substantially increased in the last twenty years, the language has begun be more inclusive. This would lead one to believe that the representation will start to increase through future editions of both AP and on-level books. Unfortunately, this has yet to be seen. Overall, textbooks and museums still fail to provide a fully contextualized narrative of Oklahoma history. Both are hesitant to venture past Euro-American perspectives and refuse to include Native American perspectives in meaningful ways. As seen through the analysis and scholarly reviews, this is a problem in American education that must be corrected but has yet to be fulfilled. If Native American perspectives are not more fully integrated into American historical narratives, beginning in Oklahoma, it would stand to reason that high school dropout rates will continue to rise in Native American communities and that the cultural genocide that began over four hundred years ago will not end.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Oklahoma does not have two separate histories; Euro-American and Native American histories are Oklahoma history. What this research has sought to show is the lack of Native American representation in major Oklahoman educational institutions – schools and museums – and the importance of working towards a cohesive, inclusive, and diverse presentation of Oklahoma history. The changes in educational and historical scholarship in reference to Native American histories over the last fifty years supports the need to provide a more inclusive narrative in education, but Oklahoma’s education system shows a lack of this inclusion. Historians such as Susan Sleeper-Smith and Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz have shown the need to incorporate Native American histories into the wider U.S. historical narrative. *Why You Can’t Teach United States History without Native Americans* takes a close look at various key events in U.S. history that are often presented without Native Americans included. The essays in the book do not focus on Oklahoma specifically, but the problem presented throughout the essays demonstrate that without including Native Americans in the historical narrative, it is not a complete historical narrative. It is the goal of this research to build on arguments set forth by Dunbar-Ortiz, Sleeper-Smith and others scholars, but with a focus on Oklahoma. Since Oklahoma has such a rich and diverse narrative to tell due to the impacts of the Indian Removal Act, a change in the dominant historical narrative is sorely needed here.

The three museums studied in the thesis provide a small snapshot of what Oklahoma museum networks provide in their public presentation of Oklahoma history. These museums have limited space allocated to the discussion of Native American experiences in Oklahoma, and claim that the reason for this is either lack of space or a belief that it is not their responsibility to focus on these histories. When comparing the three study museums to the Chickasaw Cultural Center it is evident that it is possible to discuss both Native American and Euro-American perspectives in a single museum. The high school textbooks examined in this thesis demonstrate the extension of the exclusion of Native American experiences to classrooms. Newer textbooks have started to incorporate more Native American perspectives into the teaching of U.S. history, but this is still a slow process that continues to limit the importance of Native American actions in Oklahoma to the formation of the state.

Chapter two of this research shows the importance of incorporating Native American histories into the wider U.S. historical narrative. This is not just important because of minority representation, but to reflect the fact that the latest historical research has begun to address the historical significance of Native American histories in U.S. history. The academic discussion has started to move towards an integrated discussion of U.S. history that recognizes that Native American perspectives are critical to a comprehensive understanding of this nation's past. My research shows the current lack of significant engagement with Native American histories in Oklahoma, and argues for the importance of addressing this gap in the historical narrative, specifically in Oklahoman education, so the long-term cultural effects of the lack of representation can be mitigated.

Chapters three and four of the research have shown how this problem of erasure is pervasive in Oklahoma museums and textbooks. The museums in Oklahoma lack a

comprehensive presentation of Oklahoma history that is necessary for an accurate understanding of the state's history and formation. Oklahoma U.S. History textbooks also fail to provide a comprehensive presentation of U.S. history that includes Native American experiences and perspectives. With two educational institutions not providing a comprehensive look at historical events in which Native peoples were centrally important, or even acknowledging that Native perspectives on key historical events matter, the “cultural genocide” and ongoing problems of “erasure” described by so many scholars of Native American history continues for the Oklahoma tribal nations. This cultural genocide began in earnest in the early 19th century with the Indian Removal Act both in the East and the Great Plains. The eastern tribes had their lands stripped away and were forced to move nearly a thousand miles to new lands that were already populated with the tribes of the Great Plains.

The genocide continued through the various massacres and the Indian Boarding Schools where young children were forbidden from practicing any part of their heritage – including wearing traditional clothing or hairstyles and speaking their native languages. Tribes try to combat this in the 21st century by providing interactive cultural centers, like the Chickasaw Cultural Center, to promote, preserve, and present their own history and culture to the public, but these histories are not being presented in other education venues. The other museum networks claim that it is not their responsibility to present or protect Native histories, thereby continuing a process of erasure that Indigenous Studies scholars such as Patrick Wolfe, Jean M. O'Brien, Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, and others have critiqued as a continuation of settler colonialism in the present. Their arguments are based in the idea that colonialism has not ended in the 20th and 21st centuries. Even though the physical colonization of North America has ended, the cultural colonization continues, in part,

through erasing Native Americans from the historical narrative. In the Oklahoma educational landscape, cultural colonization continues by not presenting Native American histories or perspectives in the various educational avenues available. This erasure demonstrates that the vital role that Native Americans played in U.S. history is still, in the 21st century, being “washed away” from the historical narrative that American children are taught.

The end result of this research is to encourage U.S. public historians and educators alike not just to promote Euro-American history but to present the full historical narrative that encompasses the perspectives of people who have long been marginalized from the history. This is vital not only for the education of the next generation of American citizens, but also to end the centuries long cultural genocide against Native peoples that has occurred in this country, and to help promote more cultural understanding throughout the nation. Only through changes in early education can the citizens of the 21st century start to rectify the atrocities of the past.

APPENDIX A

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APPENDIX B

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