

THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY  
SCHREYER HONORS COLLEGE

DEPARTMENTS OF ENGLISH AND COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

The Visibility of Indigenous American Culture in the United States

SPENCER HEYSTEK  
Spring 2023

A thesis  
submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements  
for baccalaureate degrees  
in English and Comparative Literature  
with honors in English

Reviewed and approved\* by the following:

Jonathan P. Eburne  
Professor of Comparative Literature, English, and French and Francophone Studies  
Director of Undergraduate Studies, Comparative Literature  
Thesis Supervisor

Carla J. Mulford  
Professor of English and Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies  
Co-Advisor, English Honors Program  
Honors Adviser

\* Electronic approvals are on file.

## ABSTRACT

This is a collection of short essays which seek to delve into some of the Indigenous American issues in the United States. More specifically, they're loosely connected to a universal struggle for visibility. Each essay seeks to deconstruct the apathetic culture U.S. citizens propagate—knowingly or unknowingly—and reconstruct as well as illuminate efforts to reconcile centuries of violence, oppression, and systemic racism towards Indigenous Americans. The first of these essays investigates the American obsession with guns and the culture's inseparable connection to Indigenous genocide. The second traces cultural appropriation and efforts to deconstruct the commodification of Indigenous Americans. Finally, the third essay is an exploration of a contemporary cultural product the 2022 film, *Prey*, which is an amalgamation of all sorts of labor that aim to renew social relationships with Indigenous Americans as well as provide much-needed representation within the space of popular culture. These essays are investigations into the oppressive apparatuses that are actively being resisted by Indigenous American nations, as well as some of the many efforts to reclaim cultural and sovereign agency in the modern world.

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iii
Introduction and Land Acknowledgement.....	1
Chapter 1 Bullets, Rangers, and the Constitution.....	3
Chapter 2.....	14
Mascots.....	15
Skulls.....	18
Icons.....	20
Chapter 3 Yautja as a Method of Visibility.....	25
Bibliography.....	33
Academic Vitae.....	37

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the support of Dr. Mulford, Schreyer Honors College, and the outstanding work of Penn State's libraries which have made research incredibly accessible for me and thousands of other students.

The idea for this thesis has come a long way since its inception and I would be remiss if I didn't thank my thesis supervisor Professor Eburne who helped me shape my ideas, these essays, and discover threads to investigate in order to produce more thorough and academically sound work.

## **Introduction and Land Acknowledgement**

When I say ‘Native American culture’ what comes to mind? Most people I imagine would reference what they’ve been shown in popular media or stereotypes. I’m fairly certain should I survey a wide variety of US citizens; they would have very few words to describe Indigenous American people that deter from the ‘Indian’ narrative. Very few would object, asking for a specific culture or stray beyond a brief whitewashed account of the first Thanksgiving, Sacagawea, or a Disneyfied version of Pocahontas. I’m even more confident that phrases like “they were” or “they used to” would be uttered as if the Native American story is over. The truth is, however, that Indigenous culture is not something that is gone. Indigenous Americans are alive. Their cultures are still alive. In many cases, their culture thrives. However, even after centuries of violence, Indigenous nations continue to struggle against colonial mechanisms. These cultures and the oppression they face have long since been made invisible by the United States. Indigenous struggle and resistance have long been overlooked by Americans, and the collection of essays hereafter seeks to rectify that or at least illuminate the issue in some way shape, or form. Researching and investigating this struggle needs to be prefaced with an acknowledgment of my position as well as the position of The Pennsylvania State University.

The Pennsylvania State University campuses are located on the original homelands of the Erie, Haudenosaunee (Seneca, Cayuga, Onondaga, Oneida, Mohawk, and Tuscarora), Lenape (Delaware Nation, Delaware Tribe, Stockbridge-Munsee), Monongahela, Shawnee (Absentee, Eastern, and Oklahoma), Susquehannock, and Wahzhazhe (Osage) Nations.

Visibility is the purpose of these investigations which is why it is imperative to continuously reference the fact that my ability to complete this research is the result of past and ongoing oppression towards Indigenous Americans.

## Chapter 1

### Bullets, Rangers, and the Constitution

“A well regulated militia, being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms, shall not be infringed” (U.S Const. amend. II)

For the past few decades, the latter half of the Second Amendment to the U.S Constitution has been under scrutiny in the political and popular media spheres of the United States; the former half of this constitutional amendment is often overlooked in its significance regarding the origins of American gun culture and the resulting gun violence. Each of the amendments listed on the Bill of Rights guarantees a right or rights of the American people and are generally considered as freedoms to protect constituents from their federal, state, and municipal governments. The second amendment’s guaranteed accessibility to “a well regulated militia” is often interpreted by legal scholars as the rights of the citizens to assemble a militia to protect a state from tyranny or from other forces seeking to disrupt the ‘American’ way of life. Proceeding the Revolutionary War, militias were outlawed by the British government, and famously during the battles of Lexington and Concord in Massachusetts before the war was officially declared and the Continental Army was created, citizens comprised military force by way of militia. Following the war, the right to create and maintain these militias was put into constitutional law and has not been touched since. However, the need for a militia to “protect” isn’t just against high taxation propagated by a king or corrupt federal government. The right to militia and subsequent right to bear arms has been used as a doctrine to practice oppression and genocide for hundreds of years, predating the United States’ conflict with England. Since its ratification in 1789, the second amendment of the U.S. Constitution has lawfully endorsed and propagated systemic genocide of Indigenous American nations for colonial land acquisition.

These investigations will loosely trace my research into the historical relationship between Americans and their guns as well as some of the work done by historian Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz. Her work helps illuminate the injustices of second amendment politics by examining its history with the goal of deconstructing the American gun obsession. Her research in *Loaded a Disarming History of the Second Amendment* functions as a praxis of addressing and unpacking the gun culture in the United States at its roots. Across the world, the citizens of The United States are known for being gun fanatics. The U.S. leads the world in personal gun ownership by a staggering amount. Even without considering military and police firearms, there are more guns in the United States than there are people. Personal gun ownership is a long-standing tradition within the United States that has always been protected by municipal, state, and federal law. The number one reason for gun ownership in America is ‘protection’. While the United States is dealing with staggering amounts of gun violence, this thread of investigation—working alongside Dunbar-Ortiz’s findings—is more focused on the origins of this cultural apparatus, and how the second amendment is rooted in genocide. More importantly, these findings may provide a way to address the American fascination with guns to provide restitution as well as solidarity to Indigenous communities.

The American gun culture goes back to the first days of imperialism where it is interwoven with the motivations of colonialism. The single greatest argument for colonialism was for material acquisitions that could be made in the Americas. The trans-Atlantic trade brought back many natural resources to Europe which are now culturally defining such as potatoes in Ireland and tomatoes in Italy; however, the biggest cash cow of the new world was the land itself. The word trade is simply the wrong term to describe the events that transpired and what was done to the Americas by colonization. European dominance was a crushing force that



pillaged and stole vast amounts of resources and lives. Thieving from entire nations is a dangerous business, however. Indigenous people defended themselves and resisted colonial encroachment. They would kill colonists, capture them, or destroy settlements to deter whites from pushing farther inland amongst other strategies. Just like any other group of people on this planet, Indigenous Americans fought against foreign invasion. With the imperial propaganda promising riches and better lives, more and more settlers arrived from Europe to enforce the imperial mission of acquiring more wealth. This while not the primary reason for westward expansion, lead to increased strain on food supplies as well as overcrowding. The settlers needed to push inland, which activated a model created by land speculators for compounding their wealth. This is where American gun culture begins and evolves on a national scale. This evolution has led to practices of violence that have continued throughout much of the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and continue to be highly problematic in the present day. We can identify the foundations of colonial genocide culture which still linger in the bedrock of American law; the U.S Constitution.

In the early years of expansion, colonists had a distinct technological advantage over the Indigenous people which—compiled with the exposure to European diseases—devastated the native populations. European colonists had access to gunpowder amongst many other technological innovations for hundreds of years before they reached the Americas. While some trading did commence amongst different Indigenous nations—one of the more influential cultural exchanges was horses between the Spanish to the Comanche people—for the most part, the native peoples had less advanced technology and weaponry at this point. With firearms, the colonial engine trampled Indigenous resistance and was brutally successful in pillaging and stealing native lands. It's important to recognize that this practice wasn't the effort of individual

colonizers threatening violence with a single gun. One gun in the hands of an invader seeking to steal land would make little difference against thousands of people actively resisting invasion; it required a formalized effort. The wealthy commissioned mercenaries to scout and clear native lands for the elite seeking to acquire them. “Those irregular forces, made up of landed settlers, sought to disrupt every aspect of resistance as well as to obtain intelligence through scouting and taking prisoners” (Dunbar-Ortiz, 42). Dunbar-Ortiz exposes the origins of U.S. rangers and of what became the U.S. militia. Militia is defined as a civilian force that is militarized and formalized during a crisis. However, the pressing crisis ‘threatening’ colonial invaders was claiming land before others could beat them to it. Wealthy land speculators assembled these informal armies and systematically began the process of violently removing natives amounting to a systemic genocide of thousands of Indigenous nations. These rangers and militias weren’t responding to a crisis as the definition may suggest; these militias were created with the intent to carry out genocidal invading processes on behalf of land speculators and later landowners for financial gain.

As a method of propaganda, the right to militia was introduced as a practice of securing peace to “American” states. This indoctrinated present and future generations of colonizing forces while instigating genocide against Indigenous nations. This shifts the narrative away from genocide and vilifies Indigenous people who are not waging war but resisting invasion and fighting for sovereignty. These militias would scout lands and take Native Americans as captives to interrogate. “These voluntary fighting crews made of individual civilians—“rangers”—are the groups referenced as militias, as they came to be called, in the Second Amendment” (Dunbar-Ortiz, 43). Once these rangers identified the best land for farming, mining, fishing, hunting, logging, or living a more formalized invasion would ensue where the militia members and their

benefactors would claim enormous portions of native land. Wealthy land speculators were violently stealing this land and becoming incredibly powerful; their actions provoked resistance by the rightful owners of American soil. In the United States, these conflicts are now commonly referred to as war but in reality, this was an invasion.

The narrative of securing peace demanded genocidal attacks on behalf of the government which at the time was the British. This systematic approach to stealing land eventually merged with the French and British conflict as both parties were vying for dominance on the North American continent. Indigenous Americans primarily fought with the French in the American theater of the French and Indian War after being promised the lands stolen by the British would be returned as well as hoping to mitigate British colonial encroachment. This war cost the English an inordinate amount of money for land that was privately owned by land speculators. Seeing that all of these conflicts created by Indigenous resistance came at a great cost to the English government, the British drew a line in the sand with the elite propagating these invasions. The English government declared in 1763 that there was a firm border to stop land speculators from instigating more genocide. Additionally, the British banned the assembly of militia to make it more difficult for land speculators to break the *Proclamation of 1763* and cross the Appalachian Mountains to further encroach on sovereign native lands.

The history of militia violence wasn't just propagated by one generation of indoctrinated racism; imperialism manufactured and reproduced racism by incentivizing it, making genocide a systemic issue that lasted well into the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Taking a step back from the Revolutionary period, we can trace the mechanisms of white supremacy back to the early colonization of the Americas. Following initial acts of Indigenous resistance to invasion such as the Pequot War and King Phillip's War, white colonists adapted the European practice of

beheading into Indigenous scalping. Placing bounties on Indigenous heads and scalps begins to appear in colonial law as early as the 1630's though it most likely began years earlier. Offering large sums of money for Indigenous scalps was a direct incentive for native removal. This act of terrorism not only lawfully enabled militia but encouraged genocide to accomplish the goal of complete land appropriation. More and more colonists would enlist in militias to claim bounties for scalps. Those seeking to own land had created a system of weaponizing the labor of the lower classes. Their labor was utilized for systematic extermination with the express purpose of progressing land acquisition for their wealthier counterparts. The practice of claiming bounties on Indigenous scalps was not limited to men, but also applied to Indigenous women and children as an effort to eradicate all forms of resistance. As a method of counterinsurgency, many Indigenous nations adopted the practice of scalping, but there's undeniable proof that colonial powers started the practices of beheading and scalping for bounties first.

So, there's the question as to why and when the narrative of scalping was twisted to seem as if it was originally—and solely—a native practice? Most Hollywood Western films of the 20<sup>th</sup> century depict Indigenous Americans scalping white settlers. It's treated as a villainous ritual done by natives to inspire fear and terror over white colonists. Over the past century, it has become a negative stereotype of Indigenous Americans and is treated as an act of barbarianism. We can interpret the shift in this paradigm of the scalping narrative as a practice of shifting fault away from imperialism and villainizing Indigenous peoples. This is a practice performed by the American exceptionalism narrative to embed colonial propaganda in U.S. culture. As a defense mechanism of imperialism, the shifted narrative deflects accountability and further indoctrinates U.S. citizens into practices of systemic racism. The violence is blamed on people operating defensively as opposed to the instigators. What's most paramount to keeping the ideologies of

white and colonial supremacy is the renewal of justification for genocide. Scalping becomes a symbol of violence towards ‘vulnerable’ whites who must retaliate defensively too—quoting the foundations of U.S philosophy again—“bring security to a free state”. The practice of indoctrination and endorsement of the colonial engine remains at the heart of U.S. law and culture. It lingers in the American value system and has been used to justify acts of violence and oppression around the globe.

This brings us back to land acquisition, the origins of the United States as a colonial power, and the Second Amendment of the Constitution. The British colonies were fed up with the restrictions on their violent expansion, so they broke free and declared themselves independent. The United States was created with the simple goal of wanting to expand westward without being infringed upon in order to profit off of genocide and land acquisition. The British government was hindering land speculators in their ability to generate wealth by stealing more land. So, while the American War for Independence was partially due to heavy taxation as most U.S. public schools teach, the more pressing reason for leaving the English empire was to secure freedom of land acquisition, not for individual citizens, but for the wealthy elite. Many of the chief architects of the Revolutionary War—and later the creation of the U.S. federal government—were heavily invested in land acquisition, and by proxy the removal of the previous occupants through genocide. The rights of the wealthy minority are stressed repeatedly in U.S. law as a method of securing a future of elitist dominance over wealth.

After securing freedom for genocidal expansion from England, the newly created United States needed to establish its government and secure the rights of the wealthy to continue the process of extermination and thieving of Indigenous lands. Immediately after solidifying the right of individual citizens to challenge governmental oversight in the first amendment, it was

decreed that the right to assemble militia and subsequently possess weaponry was not to be infringed upon by the new federal government. By allowing 'well regulated' militia in the new United States, land speculators had the freedom to organize and secure freedom for their enterprises with military force. Under the protection of constitutional law, the stealing of land and the genocide of Indigenous cultures was completely legal and enforceable. The indoctrination of colonists securing freedom for themselves evolved into securing more and more territory as the United States expanded westward. The propaganda of genocide was coined manifest destiny; the God-given right to spread capitalism and 'freedom' across North America. This sanctioned violence pushed westward until the entire continent was absconded and stolen from its rightful owners.

Returning to Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz's investigations, her exploration of the militia's effect on U.S. history is directly aligned with the construction of American exceptionalism and has directly evolved into what is now considered the American gun culture. Her contribution to the gun discussion in U.S. politics is that firearms are inextricably linked with perpetuating violence and not for protection. "Any assessment of gun violence and the Second Amendment in the United States is incomplete or skewed without dealing with what the guns were for, and, given what they were for, what that means about their popularity and proliferation today" (Dunbar-Ortiz, 193). What she's articulated here is that guns are a tool for one purpose; to kill. Firearms are used for the same purpose today that they've been used for since their creation. The issue goes beyond the gun violence issues amongst white Americans, but rather that these weapons and their proliferation are inextricably linked to mass genocide within the United States. The argument that the United State's gun culture originates in the pursuit of self-defense is an act of willful ignorance that dismisses centuries of violence against minorities. As

previously articulated, this sentiment conflicts with the origin of gun culture. Nearly every person in the world has some idea of self-defense either of themselves or their homes, families, finances, etc. However, not every country has the same gun issues that the U.S. has. Locks on doors or phone passwords are forms of self-defense, so to dismiss what the second amendment provides and enables as a form of self-protection would be to ignore the power that firearms hold and the genocidal history that is inseparable from American gun ownership.

“Seventy-four percent of gun owners in the United States are male, and 82 percent of gun owners are white, which means that 61 percent of all adults who own guns are white men... The top reason U.S. Americans give for owning a gun is for protection” (Dunbar-Ortiz, 93). She then asks rhetorically, ‘What are white men afraid of?’ the knee-jerk response might be a home invasion or violent crime but white men are such a minority of those disenfranchised by violent crime in the United States. Protection isn’t too far off from an honest answer however it’s an incomplete statement based on protecting systemic apparatuses of oppression. Protection of interests is much closer to a complete explanation for gun culture in the United States. It’s a remnant of imperialism that remains a looming and active repressive machine. The gun culture of today is indicative of the desire to protect white supremacist goals at the expense of those who are non-whites. “The Constitution is the sacred text of the civic religion that is U.S. nationalism, and that nationalism is inexorably tied to white supremacy” (Dunbar-Ortiz, 126). Nationalism and the right to bear arms are what fuel and renew the American passion for guns. The indoctrinated sentiment is that Americans are free to protect themselves from the government. However, this is overlooked by design. The core of American exceptionalism—the land of the free and home of the brave—is derived from racism and greed that began with the systematic extermination of Indigenous nations.

Now we come to the exigence of these investigations. Why is recognizing the origins and history of American gun culture important now? Gun violence continues to haunt the United States. There is a disproportionate amount of gun violence within this country that is directed toward racial and ethnic minorities. The majority of Americans affected by gun violence are black however, Indigenous nations and their people are affected by the same types of violence indicative of similar systemic issues that are derived from the United States' genocidal history. Following gun violence appearing in schools a majority of U.S citizens agree that something needs to be done about gun owning legislature. While these atrocities are cause for alarm, as expressed in this essay, guns have been problematic long before the creation of the United States or violence towards schoolchildren. Compounding on pressing issues such as preventing mass shootings offers us the chance to begin the process of rectifying centuries of violence in addition to providing restitutions to Indigenous nations across the United States. This is a pivotal moment in U.S. history in which there is a chance to shape a safer future in addition to addressing our problematic past.

The only question that remains is how our nation can deconstruct and de-colonialize an integral part of its culture to start the process of restitution. There is no perfect recipe for solving gun violence, but part of the solution is what a majority of the preceding essay seeks to accomplish, which is to make the indoctrination visible. Awareness is hugely important, but self-awareness is paramount for change. Issues of systemic racism are casually perpetuated by millions of gun-owning Americans who are willfully or otherwise ignorant of the connotations surrounding the origins of the second amendment. For gun-owning advocate groups such as the National Rifle Association to claim firearms are synonymous with being American, they



continue to endorse the values of imperialism. Guns and what they're used for are inextricably linked to a violent past that the U.S. needs to phase out of its culture.

The Bill of Rights is defined as a list of freedoms to protect citizens from the government, yet the origin of protecting oneself from a government was to ensure that mass murder could continue without bureaucratic intervention. Securing freedom is code for securing the freedom of land acquisition and the right to militarize an indoctrinated civilian population. This is the security guaranteed by the former half of the second amendment and carried out by the latter. The security of white supremacist ideals to militarize and arm civilians to claim land for a minority of wealthy elites profiting off reproductive systemic violence. There needs to be a reflection by all those who practice their constitutional right to bear arms and accountability placed on the federal government for continuing to stand by legislature created to sustain genocide.

Penn State is located on the ancestral lands of the Erie, Haudenosaunee, Lenape, Shawnee, Susquehannock, and Wahzhazhe Nations. Penn State's land grant was funded by the sale of land expropriated from 112 tribal nations in 50 land cessions across 16 states.

## Chapter 2

### **Skulls, Icons, and Mascots: Fetishism of Indigenous America**

Indigenous Americans have long been victimized by an intrusive fetishism that has commodified and extorted Native Americans as cultural products rather than as people. This is to say for a long time Indigenous culture has not been represented properly or in appropriate ways. In the United States, there is a long history of extrapolating and commodifying Indigenous culture by removing any cultural sensitivity for the purposes of sensationalism or exoticism. When the United States—or other nations—use incorrect or appropriated interpretations of Indigenous people, their culture, their traditions, etc. it renews poor relationships built on racism that were created to oppress and restrict Indigenous Americans. By contextualizing and understanding the consequences of this commodifying force, we can recognize where this happens and join efforts to undermine and dismantle systemic racism that has long been rendered casual or invisible.

For the purpose of this argumentation, the ideas of exoticism and the extortion of people as forms of product are derived from the Marxist theory of commodity fetishism. The concept of the commodity fetish according to Marx is the relationship between workers and the products of their labor. In our economic system of capitalism, the labor of a worker becomes monetized and commodified to create products and therefore wealth. The ways in which this labor is exploited are directly linked with the social relationships between people. How we value a product is closely aligned with how we value the labor and the producer of that labor. The process of commodification has the ability to create or renew established social relations. Using Marx's understanding of a commodity fetish, this theory is applicable to seeing the ways in which the

treatment of Indigenous culture and people have developed and where they stand now.

Indigenous Americans have always been directly oppressed by the United States, but cultural appropriation is a much more removed form of oppression that needs to be addressed.

Differentiating itself from outright violence such as the genocide of Indigenous nations, cultural appropriation, and the commodification of Indigenous cultures have trivialized Indigenous people; treating them as if they were products to be marketed and sold as opposed to actual people.

The theory of commodity fetishism is a praxis in which we can address the construction and perpetuation of negative social relations between Indigenous Americans and the United States. The Marxist investigations of consumer and producer relations intend to make forms of economic oppression visible just as they can be used to expose social relations between Indigenous American cultures with racism as the commodifying force. When people who aren't tied to the culture—the commodifier—reduce and extort Indigenous people as products, they're actively renewing a social order that was established in the colonial era. These relationships are inseparable from the values associated with imperialism. The result of this process manifests as systemic fetishism that continues to harm Indigenous nations, propagate the oppressive functions of colonialism and damage any prospects of healing and solidarity.

### **Mascots**

Firstly, I want to utilize this lens to address the image of the Native figure in popular culture as a mascot. This is perhaps the most obvious form of cultural extortion and appropriation. White Americans fetishize the native figure as a marketable product; team names, brand logos, etc. On

the surface level, a mascot is a simple abstraction to identify groups and organizations. These symbols are intended to unify groups of people under one banner for focused support or to distinguish them from other groups. These symbols emerge as mascots, slogans, images, names, etc. but what's more important to recognize is that these abstractions are indicative of the people they represent. A harmless symbol could be an alligator mascot which is used all over the state of Florida, they're indicative of the many reptiles that inhabit the area. In Marxist philosophy, this is an example of the commodification of the area via borrowing natural imagery. However, when these all-encapsulating symbols depict types of people or aspects of their culture—in many cases minorities—they fetishize and marginalize them to whatever standards chosen by the commodifier. The native mascot is an amalgamation of vastly diverse and unique Indigenous nations which are reduced to appropriated symbols based on negative relationships. Furthermore, these mascots are not representing Indigenous people but their oppressors. From an objective standpoint, the U.S. invaded, committed mass genocides, and relegated different Indigenous nations to small tracks of land then decided to parade around caricatures of the people they oppress. When these icons were created, they were done so with racial stereotypes which affirm settler culture at the expense of the people who are being fetishized. Simply put, the mascot epitomizes how the United States continues to ostracize Indigenous people. It's incredibly disrespectful of the United States to appropriate cultural products from people they systematically exterminated.

The mascot as a caricature has recently been at the center of discussion around the United States. Many towns, teams, and companies are taking steps in the right direction by changing the relationship between Indigenous culture and their business. Simply by removing the commodified Indigenous imagery or cultural artifact, colonial dominance is undermined. It's an

act of deconstructing the fetishized version of Indigenous culture. However, many people in the United States are resisting this change. What's most disheartening about mascot discussions is the rhetoric from those—people who are fighting to maintain a hierarchal superiority—who are opposing native imagery being removed. Around the country, there are astounding amounts of backlash against small acts of restitution. Some of the more publicized mascot commodification controversies are for sports teams. The former Washington Redskins, former Cleveland Indians, Kansas City Chiefs, the Atlanta Braves, etc. are all mascots that renew—or renewed—negative relations between Indigenous nations and the United States. These mascots commodify Indigenous culture and present racial stereotypes that were constructed in the colonial era to oppress these people. Many of these organizations with native imagery have issued formal apologies for appropriating Indigenous figures and cultures but thousands of Americans cling to the indoctrinated belief that cultural appropriation is not harmful.

What's most troubling about this form of oppression is how widespread and casual it is. There are hundreds of towns in the United States that continue to use native figures as mascots. These examples of casual racism are not as widely publicized but are just as important when it comes to resisting and deconstructing imperialism. Adjacent to the Pennsylvania State University is the town of Bellefonte PA. Bellefonte like hundreds of other towns in the United States use native imagery for its mascot, and in 2021 the town executive board voted to remove the 'Red Raiders' as their mascot to be replaced with a less racially insensitive one. This decision is the direction that the U.S. should be headed towards. By removing casual racism from public display Bellefonte decided to not renew the values of colonialism and take a step in the direction of healing relationships with the Indigenous nations of Pennsylvania. However, Bellefonte backslid a year later; this decision was overturned in part due to stark opposition from members of the

town claiming the mascot change was disrupting tradition. 'Red Raiders' as a representation of Indigenous American people renews the colonial propaganda that Indigenous nations were comprised of pillagers and raiders rather than groups of people resisting invasion and their genocide. The resistance to change by many of Bellefonte's citizens is an alarming sign that systemic racism is fighting to maintain control even on the municipal level. The tradition that many citizens of Bellefonte were afraid of being disrupted is a history of cultural appropriation and racism.

### **Skulls**

Another highly problematic form of commodity fetishism Indigenous Americans face is the commodification of their bodies. Indigenous people experience different forms of oppression geared towards commodifying their physical identity. This commodification leads to the denial of bodily and national autonomy and details a long pattern of lacking respect toward Indigenous sovereignty.

Geronimo is a name that is well-known all over the world. The Apache Indigenous American was a guerrilla who fiercely defended the Apache tribal lands in the American southwest. After surrendering in 1886, Geronimo lived the rest of his life as a prisoner of war. Nine years after he died in 1909, his grave located in Fort Still Oklahoma was allegedly desecrated. This was discovered in 1986 when a letter was mailed anonymously to the current Apache chairman Ned Anderson. The letter claimed that the Skull and Bones secret society of Yale University possessed Geronimo's skull. In 2006 a letter from Skull and Bones member Winter Mead was discovered corroborating this allegation. In 2009 a lawsuit was brought against the Skull and

Bones Society to try and reclaim Geronimo's remains. Additionally, Harlyn Geronimo requested that his great-grandfather's remains at Fort Still be released by the federal government so that he may be re-buried on Apache land. The lawsuit as of now has not been successful and whether or not Yale's Skull and Bones society possess Geronimo's bones is still subject to debate. However, the grave located in Fort Still has yet to be touched. While there is speculation about whether Geronimo's body was the victim of exoticism, this is not a unique story amongst Indigenous nations around the United States.

Recently the sovereignty of the Sioux's Standing Rock reservation in North Dakota was violated for the sake of eminent domain. In 2017 the Trump Administration reversed the previous decision made by the Obama Administration to not drill under Lake Oahe for an oil pipeline. The Standing Rock Sioux and Cheyenne River Sioux tribes sued the U.S. government claiming that this would destroy Sioux burial sites and disrupt their nation's sovereignty. In this instance, we see the same commodity fetishism at work. The relationship between the product—in this case an oil pipeline—is more important than the people closely associated with it. The labor necessary to construct this pipeline isn't what's being commodified, it's the years of effort performed by the Standing Rock Sioux tribe to maintain their sovereignty from the U.S. government that is being completely disregarded. Eminent domain is the right of the government to use privately held land for public use. However, the Standing Rock reservation is not U.S. land. As of 1868, the Standing Rock reservation was officially declared native land. In 2017 all motions to halt the pipeline's construction were dismissed and the Sioux nations were deprived of their agency and sovereignty.

Both instances are a fraction of the injustices that Indigenous Americans face. With white bodies, there are strict laws that detail respect towards burial sites and remains. The

relationship between Indigenous Americans and their culture, land, bodies, etc. has been extrapolated and separated from the actual people leaving only commodified products that are treated without dignity or respect.

### Icons

While I could spend eons dissecting and tracing perpetuated commodity fetishes in the United States, it's not enough to just acknowledge the issue, it's much more productive to investigate different methods used to deconstruct these oppressive abstractions. Indigenous Americans do not sit idly while being oppressed and have a plethora of ways to undermine and combat cultural appropriation. There is a long history of resistance to systemic racism. One of the most prolific—and recent—ways in which Indigenous Americans have resisted appropriation and reclaimed their imagery was in 2013 with the release of Disney's *The Lone Ranger*.

Controversially, Johnny Depp was cast in the 2013 reboot of *The Lone Ranger* as the Indigenous character Tonto. Depp's predecessor from the 1949 television show *Jay Silverheels* was a Canadian Indigenous actor presenting an issue of backsliding in this new adaptation to a form of redface. Similar to blackface, redface is the racist practice of portraying or appropriating Indigenous culture by a non-Indigenous person. Tonto himself has also been a character surrounded by ambiguity. The first iteration of this character while played by an Indigenous actor fell victim to many of the harmful stereotypes propagated by white supremacy. He was always in the shadow of his white counterpart making him a form of minstrel character. Minstrelism in Hollywood developed in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and predominately targeted black Americans which was comprised of racial stereotypes and degrading insults. Disney had



promised that despite Depp's casting there would be huge changes for the revival that would dignify Indigenous characters and culture. Both the Lone Ranger and Tonto would be equals as opposed to a hero and sidekick dynamic. Even with equality in this respect, Johnny Depp was a predominately white actor playing a Comanche which presents a huge problem when the film was trying to preach messages of equality. Depp has always identified as an Indigenous descendant, but it wasn't enough to sway many people of the Comanche nation until controversially, Ladonna Harris an elder of the Comanche nation legally adopted Johnny Depp making him an honorary Comanche.

Many members of the Comanche nation are against this act, while others remain ambivalent or completely in support of it. To navigate this situation, University of Oklahoma professor—and Comanche citizen—Dustin Tahmahkera published his research on Comanche representation in *Cinematic Comanches: The Lone Ranger in the Media Borderlands*. In his book, he explores the long history of the Comanche nation performing similar acts of cultural reclamation and assimilation. What Harris did by adopting Johnny Depp was an act of reclaiming the Comanche narrative, a method of resisting cultural appropriation. There is a long tradition of the Comanche nation capturing people and integrating them into their culture. Ladonna Harris performs a similar form of capturing Depp as a practice of resisting cultural appropriation. “Harris recreated a traditional mode of kinship in the twenty-first century. She took Depp in as a son to honor his on-screen efforts, to build and develop relationships, to express Comanche view of familial capital” (Tahmahkera, 81). By adopting Depp, Harris captures the figure of Tonto and reclaims the character for the Comanche people. Her actions undo the fetishization of on-screen Comanche representation by making Tonto a real Comanche as opposed to a form of redface. As Tahmahkera states, this develops new relationships between

Indigenous Americans and Hollywood. It sets a precedent of cultural sensitivity while Comanche culture is reclaimed and deconstructing the process of commodifying racist appropriation.

Reclaiming control over the Comanche image in film is a practice of Indigenous sovereignty and agency. Tonto and his narrative are taken back by the Comanche people. Harris's actions exemplify the nation's agency and efforts to reclaim its culture despite the controversial method of doing so.

Many who were or continue to be opposed to Depp's adoption questioned the purpose of the whole process. In interviews about her decision, Harris responded "Why not" as opposed to providing an exact reasoning for this method of deconstructing appropriation. At this moment she takes control of the controversy's narrative. "Replacing the 'why' with 'why not,' Harris performs agency by asking listeners to understand the adoption as a continuance of Comanche tradition, foreclosing their desire to unfairly question the sovereign right of Comanche self-determination over who can be accepted into one's family" (Tahmahkera, 98). In addition to reclaiming a product of Comanche culture, Harris' actions exposed the mechanisms of white supremacy intent on maintaining systems of oppression. Why shouldn't Ladonna Harris adopt Johnny Depp as an endorsement of his casting? The answer is that it upsets the established order of white supremacy. By generating this controversy, Ladonna Harris removes a pair of rose-tinted glasses from all situations dealing with Indigenous culture. Tahmahkera's analysis alludes to this point. Harris' controversy is a method of exploring the reclamation of Indigenous identity. "This chapter analyzes contemporary Comanches' contributions to the Indigenous identity controversy resulting from Disney's decision to assign the role of the Indian character Tonto not to an actor unquestionably Native but to Johnny Depp'. Adopting a storytelling approach grounded in tribal traditions and values, I recognize 'cinematic Comanches' like Depp's Tonto

not only as on-screen performers and characters but also as off-screen cultural critics and social actors who, like Harris, maneuver through thorny layers of representing the Indigenous.

(Tahmahkera, 79). Tonto is more than just an abstraction of Indigenous culture on screen. His representation translates to a much wider audience and is indicative of social structures connected to Indigenous representation. For Harris to reclaim Tonto, she redefines the relationships between Hollywood and the Comanche nation. It begins a process of reclaiming other Indigenous on-screen characters as a practice of deconstructing the commodifying processes of cultural appropriation.

The effects of reshaping these social relationships have started to yield positive changes in the years following *The Lone Ranger*. Hollywood has sought to bring some restitution to Indigenous Americans by creating more accessible films with characters that aren't caricatures or minstrels of the cultures they represent. One of the more successful endeavors was *Wind River* released in 2017 which exposed the ongoing crisis of sexual and physical violence that nearly half of all Indigenous women face in their lifetimes.

The process of de-commodification radically changes the relationship between Indigenous Americans and the United States. It's nowhere near achieving complete solidarity with Indigenous nations, but the actions of Ladonna Harris are a leap in the right direction that can inform ways in which others can help this process. Practices of reclaiming sovereignty over Indigenous culture help to de-fetishize and resist appropriation while making Indigenous struggle visible to a wider audience.

Penn State is located on the ancestral lands of the Erie, Haudenosaunee, Lenape, Shawnee, Susquehannock, and Wahzhazhe Nations. Penn State's land grant was funded by the sale of land expropriated from 112 tribal nations in 50 land cessions across 16 states.

## Chapter 3

### Yautja as a Method of Visibility

What generic American public education fails to teach its students is that following the discovery of the Americas and the first settlements, Indigenous peoples of the American continents didn't immediately vanish from the world. Even in rare instances where historical events such as the Indian removal act, or the Trail of Tears are properly taught, the Indigenous history of the United States is incredibly overlooked. The reality of our world is that Native Americans still exist, they're not a footnote in a history textbook; they're still present and more importantly active in the present. As other minority groups have gained traction against oppression in the past few decades, Indigenous cultures have been fighting a secondary battle for restitution. There is an evident lack of acknowledgment and awareness of Indigenous struggle. That being said, there have been efforts to rectify issues of visibility. In 2022 the most recent installment of the *Predator* franchise, *Prey*, took a different approach to their alien hunter narrative and shined a light on American Indigenous characters and culture. More specifically the film aimed to prominently feature the culture and people of the Comanche nation. The film's native characters were comprised entirely of Indigenous actors, it had support systems to accurately guide the film in a culturally accurate and sensitive direction via the efforts of cultural advisor Jhane Myers. Perhaps most triumphantly, there is a dubbed version of the film in the Comanche language that was made available at the film's initial release. *Prey* exists as an artifact indicative of a paradigm shift in the U.S. media sphere. The film succeeds in not only depicting Indigenous culture and characters but in deconstructing the old Hollywood characterizations and vilifications of Indigenous Americans.

Until very recently, Native representation in cinema has been either nonexistent or highly problematic. A quick Google search of Comanche films—or other native films—will show you exactly how Indigenous Americans were treated in popular American media. It has little to do with representation and embellishes systemic racism and U.S. superiority propaganda. Aside from *Prey*'s recent release, most titles tagged with Comanche are Westerns from the mid-20th century, nearly all of which are underscored with racist ideology. Most of these older films have white actors playing Indigenous peoples, rarely care about facts or truth, and ostracize Indigenous Americans further by using them as villains or scapegoats. Without cultural advisors on set and a blatant lack of empathy towards Indigenous cultures many of these films do whatever they want, basing scenes on stereotypes as well as making stuff up as they go along. As Jhane Myers recounts in many interviews, these people are treated like nameless entities. Often, these characters are portrayed as 'static villains' that adhere to racist assumptions. Even when native characters are protagonists in films, they consistently push stereotypes making Indigenous peoples fit cartoonish bills; rarely do these films portray them as just people.

*Prey* drastically shifts the prominent narrative of invisibility and caricatures allowing not only for these people to be seen, but heard. One of the primary reasons that *Prey* is different in the Hollywood scene is the film's cultural advisor Jhane Myers. Myers oversaw the film's language efforts, working with director Daniel Trachtenberg and writer Patrick Aison on the Comanche dialogue heard in the film's English-language version. Myers was also able to guide the film to a level of representation that enhances the narrative by spearheading a Comanche film dub that was released alongside the English version.

The film was originally pitched as one that would be entirely produced in Comanche. A process that is not only revolutionary for its time, but it illuminates a praxis that has taken place

over centuries because the language of the Comanche people is not gone. There was never a point in time when it was considered a dead language. The language has been preserved through over five centuries of oppression, extermination, and cultural erasure. *Prey* reveals a methodology and history of keeping the language of the Comanche nation alive. It is a longstanding practice of resisting cultural erasure that is made more accessible by the film. Seeing that many members of the younger Comanche generations were not fluent in the language more formalized efforts of linguistic preservation began in 1993 with the creation of the CLCPC (Comanche Language Culture and Preservation Committee). This only builds upon the efforts of resistance that have been happening for centuries. Beginning in the late 18th century there were attempts on behalf of white settlers to force assimilation, this process began with the re-education of the Indigenous youth. A common practice across the Americas and much of Oceania involved separating the youth and re-educating them to assimilate into European culture. These schools were nothing short of attempting cultural genocide; every facet of Indigenous identity was broken down and reconstructed more suited to Western beliefs. However, the Comanche nation survived, as well as the language of the Comanche people. The CLCPC is documented proof of resistance efforts that continue to reconstruct and recover the Comanche nation as fluency rates increase yearly amongst its citizens.

Returning to Jhane Myers, there is a clear traceable methodology of cultural sensitivity through her work as the film's cultural advisor. She ensured that all things pre-production, during the filming process, and post-production were faithful and accurate to Comanche culture. Facets of the film such as costume design, character interactions, plot, script, and language all passed by her amongst other accuracy advisors. The work accomplished by the Comanche nation and the CLCPC was given the chance to be made visible by *Prey*. The film's paramount achievement is

its use of Comanche language which is made possible by centuries of resistance. Regardless of which language audiences watch the film, *Prey* always begins in Comanche. There are additional scenes in which the actors speak Comanche which require subtitles. So even if audiences wish to bypass subtitles and watch the film in a language they're fluent in, the film still renders the Comanche language visible to everyone. Not all of the Indigenous cast are members of the Comanche nation, so naturally, they weren't fluent in the language. With Myers' help among others, each actor took the time and care to properly speak the language for their lines. The language is spoken correctly and with reverence, which is something lots of American films overlook, especially concerning minority cultures. One member of the cast, Julian Antelope Black recounted the attention to detail that *Prey* took to depict the Comanche people faithfully and respectfully. "It's been actually such a breath of well-needed fresh air in the last while to see the industry actually taking painstaking lengths to make sure things are told accurately and making sure to get the right people to advise, making sure they are going to use the language, making sure that it's spoken right, having language and cultural advisors on set." (qt. Black). Regardless of how any audience experiences *Prey*, the Comanche language and culture are given a platform for recognition and celebration. The film is a culmination of different efforts both historical and contemporary to keep Comanche culture alive and prospering. *Prey* is the first film to ever be released with an initial Indigenous American language dub. All of this work functions as a practice of visibility and inclusivity for the Comanche nation but also for all Indigenous Americans hoping to see more equality in the popular culture spheres.

Within the actual film itself, *Prey*'s aesthetic elements are other facets that help represent Indigenous people and make Indigenous struggle visible to a wider audience. *Prey*'s story, themes, and the Predator franchise as a frame narrative enhance what the film can achieve. While



on the surface the Predator films are science fiction action genre romps, at its core these films are about an outsider with superior technology engaging with the local population. In the context of Indigenous American history, the Yautja (predators) and their invasion of Earth is a perfect allegory for colonial invasion. The original 1987 film *Predator* plays with the idea of invading parties as the setting is in Vietnam. While not as technologically advanced in comparison to the Predator, the US troops are better supplied than the Vietnamese guerillas. This use of irony begs the audience to question the function and position of the invader figure. While not overtly philosophical and more interested in other things, the original film winks at the audience in this respect. Twenty-five years later after many films that play down this theme in favor of action thrills and gory kills, *Prey* returns to the invader figure motif again and plays with it from a completely different angle. The film's antagonist is allegorical for the menacing violent force of colonial invasion. The Predator franchise is the perfect stage to allude to and deconstruct the colonial history of the Americas. Instead of the tables being turned on a highly trained tactical team, this time the audience is oriented to view invasion from the perspective of those being invaded. The film takes the position that Earth and more specifically North America are not stomping grounds that can have their sovereignty infringed upon without resistance.

The predator is a personification of the colonial ideology which breaches the autonomy of a people. While the creature is not searching to colonize Earth per se, he's taking resources and killing people without remorse or a sense of consequence. The journey to colonize the Americas was originally done in search of wealth, natural resources, and exotic goods at the expense of the Indigenous habitants. In this respect, the predator is just as guilty of absconding natural resources as the French fur trappers or their real-world colonial counterparts. The Yautja's technology is superior which gives him—in his mind—the right to claim what does not

belong to him. *Prey*'s secondary antagonists mirror this narrative as the French are participating in the same oppressive colonial ideology. Because of their superior technology and "more refined" culture they feel free to infringe upon the Comanche territory and steal the bison skins. This comparison is at its height in the scene in which Naru discovers the French steel bear trap. She stares at the metal contraption for a moment the exact same way she examines the predator's technology later in the film. This technology is unfamiliar and indicative of a technologically advanced entity. Throughout the film, there are a few of these not-so-subtle nods comparing the French fur trappers and the Predator. They're used to reach the audience and liken the two invading parties. The French slaughter the bison herd for pelts depriving the landscape of its natural state just as the predator takes the skulls of the wolf, snake and bear as trophies after brutally exterminating them. Moreso, the Predator wears the bear skull as a trophy just as colonizers would—and humans continue to—wear exotic trophies emblematic of their experience in foreign lands.

It's also worth examining the types of technology that are brought by the French trappers, and the Yautja, as well as the weapons used in all of the subsequent Predator franchise films. One of the great myths of the imperial forces was that of "civilizing" the lands and people that would be colonized. That would be done via infrastructure, religion, education, technology, science, etc. However, all of the superior technology brought by any of the invading parties can be classified as a weapon. *Prey*'s fur trappers use bear traps and muskets while the predator brings acid nets, disarming shuriken-style blades, and target-seeking arrows. Even the predator's shield, a tool traditionally used for protection, is razor sharp and primarily used as a force of destruction rather than preservation. Alongside these figures which have applied violence into every aspect of their screen time, we have Naru who desires to be a hunter but is primarily a

healer. Her abilities as a healer are primarily the reason she survives. Naturalist knowledge triumphs over the industrializing force by protecting rather than destroying. The Comanche tribe's struggle against the Predator can be read as a parallel to the Indigenous struggle for survival amidst a violent, oppressive, and destructive force. The film is hopeful however, rather than Naru being granted a deus ex machina to defeat the Yautja, the predator is stopped by his own mechanized weaponry. The sovereignty of her Comanche tribe is restored by resisting violence rather than combating it with even more destructive force.

Naru is emblematic of a people resisting violent oppression. She's not just fighting a predator who seeks to kill for sport, but one that hunts for trophies. Just as the French trappers strip the bison for their own trophies the Yautja does something similar. Once killing the wolf and bear, the predator sprays some sort of acidic agent onto the heads, stripping everything away except for the skull. This removes any and all individuality of the animal. Reducing the animal to the skull is to remove its identity which is exactly what colonizing forces attempted to do to Indigenous peoples around the world. In a sense, Naru is not just fighting for survival physically, but culturally as well. *Prey* serves as a reminder to its audience that imperialism has its fair share of trophy collecting that continues to function as repressive, culturally appropriating, racist mechanisms today.

What the film accomplishes is producing a compelling action plot that is compounded and given a depth that many other action films don't have. While the audience can sit back and enjoy a well-written action film, they're also exposed to this repeating subtext of struggle against violent exterminating oppression. What does this do exactly? All of this subliminal messaging humanizes the Comanche people. It grounds the conflict of the film by connecting it to mirrored real-world events. The Comanches are not puppets on screen that flail about when the monster

comes to hunt them like the characters in early slasher genre films. They're people with names, personalities, flaws, etc. There is a complexity and realism that depicts the struggle against very real oppressing violence in the allegorical form of the Yautja. These small details create an inclusive complex portrayal of Indigenous American people and by doing so culminates in a product that is a far cry from stereotype-based American Indian portrayals in previous films. Ultimately what *Prey* accomplishes is simplistic yet incredibly significant. The culture, people, language, and struggle are made visible which makes real-world Indigenous Americans easier to empathize with. Audiences are made aware of a continuous fight against oppression presented by a highly accessible form of media that encourages solidarity with a culture that continues to be disenfranchised. Comanche struggle and resistance against colonial values are rendered visible for all to see.

Penn State is located on the ancestral lands of the Erie, Haudenosaunee, Lenape, Shawnee, Susquehannock, and Wahzhazhe Nations. Penn State's land grant was funded by the sale of land expropriated from 112 tribal nations in 50 land cessions across 16 states.

## Bibliography

Adler, Jerry. "Is the New Tonto Any Better than the Old Tonto?" *Smithsonian.com*, Smithsonian Institution, 1 July 2013, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/is-the-new-tonto-any-better-than-the-old-tonto-4833743/>.

"American Indian Culture and Research Journal." *American Indian Culture and Research Journal*, vol. 38, no. 4, 2014, pp. i-viii., <https://doi.org/10.17953/aicr.38.4.5t2213151383k751>.

"The Comanche Language: Comanche Language & Cultural Preservation: Elgin, Oklahoma." *Comanche Language & Cultural Preservation*, <http://www.comanchelanguage.org/>.

*The Constitution of the United States: A Transcription*. National Archives, U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, 11 November 2022, [www.archives.gov/founding-docs/constitution-transcript](http://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/constitution-transcript).

Dunbar-Ortiz, Roxanne. *Loaded a Disarming History of the Second Amendment*. City Lights Books, 2017.

Hadadi, Roxana. "The Historic Power of Prey Is in Your Ears." *Vulture*, 11 Aug. 2022, <https://www.vulture.com/article/prey-hulu-comanche-dub.html>.

Hersher, Rebecca. "Key Moments in the Dakota Access Pipeline Fight." *NPR*, NPR, 22 Feb. 2017, <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2017/02/22/514988040/key-moments-in-the-dakota-access-pipeline-fight>.

“History.” *Standing Rock*, 23 Sept. 2021, <https://standingrock.org/about/history/>.

Hoad, Phil. “How the Predator Franchise Is Breaking New Ground for Native Americans on Screen.” *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, 29 July 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2022/jul/29/prey-predator-native-american-Indigenous-characters>.

Hufford, Deborah. “The Tragic Mystery of Geronimo's Skull.” *Notes from the Frontier*, Frontier, 28 May 2022, <https://www.notesfromthefrontier.com/post/the-tragic-mystery-of-geronimo-s-skull>.

“The Living Presence of Our History I-VII.” *HowlRound Theatre Commons*, 2 Aug. 2020, <https://howlround.com/series/living-presence-our-history>.

“Ma Indigenous Legislative Agenda.” *MA Indigenous Legislative Agenda*, <http://maIndigenousagenda.org/>.

Magazine, Smithsonian. “Probing the Paradoxes of Native Americans in Pop Culture.” *Smithsonian.com*, Smithsonian Institution, 22 Jan. 2018, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smithsonian-institution/probing-paradoxes-native-americans-pop-culture-180967906/>.

“Native American Influences on Modern American Culture.” *PradanaNusantara*, 19 Oct. 2011, <https://pradananusantara.com/2011/10/19/native-american-influences-on-modern-american-culture/>.

*Native Womens Wilderness*, <https://www.nativewomenswilderness.org/>.

Nguyen, Alex, et al. “Gun Violence in American Indian and Alaska Native Communities.”

*Giffords*, 7 Oct. 2022, <https://giffords.org/lawcenter/memo/gun-violence-in-american-indian-and-alaska-native-communities/>.

Park, Sunmin, et al. “Native American Foods: History, Culture, and Influence on Modern Diets.”

*Journal of Ethnic Foods*, No Longer Published by Elsevier, 12 Aug. 2016, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2352618116300750>.

Pedigo, Alec. “How the Ignorance Surrounding Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women Has

Sparked a Movement - Insight: By Balance Now.” *Insight*, 9 Sept. 2022,

[https://insight.balancenow.co/how-the-ignorance-surrounding-murdered-and-missing-Indigenous-women-has-sparked-a-movement/?gclid=Cj0KCQjwIPWgBhDHARIsAH2xdNf\\_O38nEJ2s-oqYFpcGZGKAVaCVTPO4u\\_WNZuMk5bkcqHQ9F7FIaD8aAppTEALw\\_wcB](https://insight.balancenow.co/how-the-ignorance-surrounding-murdered-and-missing-Indigenous-women-has-sparked-a-movement/?gclid=Cj0KCQjwIPWgBhDHARIsAH2xdNf_O38nEJ2s-oqYFpcGZGKAVaCVTPO4u_WNZuMk5bkcqHQ9F7FIaD8aAppTEALw_wcB).

*Prey*. Directed by Dan Trachtenberg, performances by Amber Midthunder, Dakota Beavers, Hulu 2022.

Reddy, Emily. “Bellefonte School Board Returns to Native American Logo and 'Red Raiders'

Nickname.” *WITF*, 13 Jan. 2022, <https://www.witf.org/2022/01/13/bellefonte-school-board-returns-to-native-american-logo-and-red-raiders-nickname/>.

- Reitz, Stephanie. "Geronimo's Kin Sue Skull and Bones over Remains." *The Hour*, Norwalk Hour, 16 June 2016, <https://www.thehour.com/norwalk/article/Geronimo-s-kin-sue-Skull-and-Bones-over-remains-8264827.php>.
- Rubright, Kathryne. "Ramapough Lenape Chief: National Park Would Be among 'Most Destructive Things' since Colonization." *Pocono Record*, Pocono Record, 28 Sept. 2022, <https://www.poconorecord.com/story/news/environment/2022/09/28/nj-indian-tribe-chief-opposes-delaware-national-park/69502828007/>.
- Smith, Paul Chaat, et al. *Strong Hearts Native American Visions and Voices*. Aperture, 1995.
- Smith, Paul Chaat. *Everything You Know about Indians Is Wrong*. University of Minnesota Press, 2009.
- Tahmahkera, Dustin. "American Indians in Popular Culture." *Oxford Handbooks Online*, 2016, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199858897.013.16>.
- Tahmahkera, Dustin. *Cinematic Comanches: The Lone Ranger in the Media Borderlands*. University of Nebraska Press, 2022.
- Tahmahkera, Dustin. "Prey: Behind the Scenes with Cinematic Comanches, by Dustin Tahmahkera." *World Literature Today*, 2 Sept. 2022, <https://www.worldliteraturetoday.org/blog/culture/prey-behind-scenes-cinematic-comanches-dustin-tahmahkera>.



## Academic Vitae

Spencer Heystek

### Work Experience:

Intern, Neuberger Berman Group; Online – 2019-2020

As an intern, I engaged with the client relations department with all of their needs. I facilitated discussions amongst past and potential future clients in order to strengthen relationships between them and the company. Additionally, I participated in guided classes and lectures in order to further my understanding of equitable, sustainable, and humanitarian business practices and investments.

Teaching Assistant, The Pennsylvania State University – 2022-2022

During the fall semester of 2022, I assisted Professor Bérubé in grading student essays while attending each lecture and keeping up with the course material on my own. Grading essays helped me better understand the writing process and allowed me to provide useful feedback to students wishing to improve their work.

### Education:

The Pennsylvania State University 2019-2023

B.A English, B.A Comparative Literature, UDMR Film Studies

Schreyers Honors College 2021-2023

Paterno Fellows Honors Liberal Arts Program 2021-2023

Study Abroad Dublin Spring 2022 Semester

### Awards/Scholarships:

Dean's List College of the Liberal Arts

Behnke Open Doors Scholarship

McKeon Trustee Scholarship

Eagle Scout

Skills:

Proficient in Microsoft Applications: Word, PowerPoint, Excel

Proficient in Google Applications: Drive, Slides, Sheets

Proficient in French (Speaking, Reading, and Writing).