It is with mixed emotions that I introduce the 2023 fall online special feature section on literary pro-
duction by the state’s Indigenous peoples, the final
one in my term as the journal’s guest feature edi-
tor. The most prominent emotion I feel is pride at
what the editorial team has accomplished and how
we have been able to spotlight so much incredible
writing and artwork by Native American citizens
from North Carolina’s tribes.

The fall online feature begins with Jane Haladay’s
important essay on the way she uses Lumbee-
authored children’s books (Whoz Ya People?), and
It’s Lumbee Homecoming Y’all: Nakoma’s Greatest
Tradition, both published in 2020 in her service
learning classes at UNC Pembroke to engage with
local elementary schools. Haladay’s essay demon-
strates the importance of representation and
how meaningful it is for both Lumbee college and
elementary students to see themselves in the pages
of books authored by Lumbee tribal citizens, Brit-
tany Hunt, Christina Pacheco, and Leslie Locklear.
Haladay’s essay is the winner of the 2023 Kenan
Prize for best essay on a new North Carolina writer,
and though it is also included in the 2023 print is-
sue, sharing the full essay here broadens the access
to and impact of this important work. Haladay’s
teaching materials are available through NCLR’s
Teaching North Carolina Literature initiative, fund-
ed by a Community Research Grant through North
Carolina Humanities. Complementing Haladay’s
essay is a reflection by Brittany Hunt, author of
Whoz Ya People?. Hunt poignantly details how she
came to write her story, which was a response to
a professor who assigned a blatantly misrepresen-
tational children’s book about Native peoples in a
graduate-level course she took. Hunt articulates
the love she poured into Whoz Ya People?, a nu-
anced tale of a Lumbee boy from Baltimore finding
his community in Robeson County, explaining her
purpose powerfully: “I grew up without any Lum-
bee children’s books. But now no Lumbee child will
ever have to do that again.” Hunt is also the co-host
of The Red Justice Project, a podcast dedicated
to illuminating the stories of Missing and Murdered
Indigenous Peoples; my interview with her and
her co-host, Chelsea Locklear, was included in the
Winter 2023 online issue.

Following Hunt’s essay, Lumbee citizen Synora
Cummings reflects on her experience watch-
ing the new version of Paul Green’s well-known
outdoor drama, The Lost Colony, which has been
staged in Manteo since 1937, depicting the events
surrounding the first short-lived English colony in
North America. The production was changed sig-
nificantly in 2021 when all of the Native American
roles were played by Native peoples, rather than
white actors in redface, for the first time, and Cum-
mings tells about seeing her people finally repre-
sented on the stage. She also reminds us that the
play’s memoir and autoethnographical
elements.

Our guest feature section ends with a poem by
Tonya Holy Elk, who has another poem in the print
issue. “Women of the Red Earth” celebrates the
strength of Indigenous women and their sacred role
in relation to the natural world. The poem under-
scores these ideas through its use of quatrains that
emphasize “the four corners, the four directions.”
Alisha Locklear Monroe’s painting Symbolic ac-
companies Holy Elk’s poem, and the artist featured
with Holy Elk’s print issue poem, Joan C. Blackwell,
shares another Moon Dancer painting for this issue’s
cover. You will find other Native artists’ works with
the other content in this section (and throughout the
other 2023 issues’ feature sections).

I am thankful to Margaret Bauer for asking me to
be NCLR’s first guest feature editor. This has been a
triumphant journey, and it is my hope that NCLR will
continue to receive work by and about North Caro-
olina’s Indigenous peoples beyond the 2023 issues.

Though this issue highlights work by Lumbee writers
and artists, NCLR always welcomes submissions from
all of North Carolina’s tribal nations.

We are honored to include here, too, an excerpt of
the play, LumbeeES. Women of the Dark Water, which
was staged in 2019 at Fayetteville’s Cape Fear Re-
gional Theater. NCLR’s digital editor, Devra Thomas,
took one of the six sold-out performances, not-
ing in her introduction that the play was remounted
in 2022 at UNC Pembroke. Our excerpt here attempts
to capture the play’s memoir and autoethnographical
elements.

Our guest feature section ends with a poem by
Tonya Holy Elk, who has another poem in the print
issue. “Women of the Red Earth” celebrates the
strength of Indigenous women and their sacred role
in relation to the natural world. The poem under-
scores these ideas through its use of quatrains that
emphasize “the four corners, the four directions.”
Alisha Locklear Monroe’s painting Symbolic ac-
companies Holy Elk’s poem, and the artist featured
with Holy Elk’s print issue poem, Joan C. Blackwell,
shares another Moon Dancer painting for this issue’s
cover. You will find other Native artists’ works with
the other content in this section (and throughout the
other 2023 issues’ feature sections).

I am thankful to Margaret Bauer for asking me to
be NCLR’s first guest feature editor. This has been a
triumphant journey, and it is my hope that NCLR will
continue to receive work by and about North Caro-
olina’s Indigenous peoples beyond the 2023 issues.

Though this issue highlights work by Lumbee writers
and artists, NCLR always welcomes submissions from
all of North Carolina’s tribal nations.