

## NCLR's First Guest Editor Signing Off

by Kirstin L. Squint, Guest Feature Editor

It is with mixed emotions that I introduce the 2023 fall online special feature section on literary production by the state's Indigenous peoples, the final one in my term as the journal's guest feature editor. 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 demonstrates 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, Brittany 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 issue, 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, funded 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 misrepresentational children's book about Native peoples in a graduate-level course she took. Hunt articulates the love she poured into *Whoz Ya People?*, a nuanced tale of a Lumbee boy from Baltimore finding his community in Robeson County, explaining her purpose powerfully: "I grew up without any Lumbee 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 Hunt Cummings reflects on her experience watching 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 significantly 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 Cummings tells about seeing her people finally represented on the stage. She also reminds us that the story is not one "of a colony lost in history"; rather, it is one of "Natives and settlers forging rapport and interrelation."

We are honored to include here, too, an excerpt of the play, *lumBEES, Women of the Dark Water*, which was staged in 2019 at Fayetteville's Cape Fear Regional Theater. NCLR's digital editor, Devra Thomas, attended one of the six sold-out performances, noting 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 underscores these ideas through its use of quatrains that emphasize "the four corners, the four directions."

Alisha Locklear Monroe's painting *Symbolic* accompanies 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 tremendous journey, and it is my hope that NCLR will continue to receive work by and about North Carolina'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. ■

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