

NORTH CAROLINA

Native American Literature of North Carolina

Spotlighting North Carolina's Indigenous Voices

by Kirstin L. Squint, Guest Feature Editor

I was thrilled when *NCLR* Editor Margaret Bauer asked me to assume the role of the journal's first guest feature editor, and it is my great honor to introduce the 2023 special feature section on Native American literature of North Carolina. I conduct research and teach graduate and undergraduate classes in this area, particularly work by Southeastern Indigenous authors, so I knew that this was a topic I wanted to explore in *NCLR*, especially because North Carolina "has the largest American Indian population east of the Mississippi River."¹ Also, within the broad category of Native American literature, Southeastern Indigenous literatures have been less well-known to the general public and less studied by scholars, despite the long history of oral and written work by the people who have lived on this land for millennia.

We begin the feature section of this first 2023 issue with an interview I conducted in 2021 with Lumbee podcasters and storytellers, Brittany Hunt and Chelsea Locklear, whose *Red Justice Project* true crime podcast, now in its second season, highlights cases of missing and murdered Indigenous peoples in North Carolina and beyond. This is important work because so often these stories remain untold by mainstream media.

We are also excited to include Mary Leuna Christensen's powerful poem about the complexity of Indigenous identity, "In Which I am The Sum of Parts." Christensen, a citizen of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, is a 2022 Indigenous Nations

Poets fellow and attended the inaugural In-Na-Po retreat in Washington DC. We look forward to including another of her poems in our forthcoming print issue.

In addition to my interview with Hunt and Locklear and Christensen's poem, Lynne Norris Murray reviews the collection, *Upon Her Shoulders: Southeastern Native Women Share Their Stories of Justice, Spirit, and Community*, edited by Cherry Beasley, Mary Ann Jacobs, and Ulrike Wiethaus. In her review, Murray details how the North Carolina tribal women featured in the book tell their stories, illuminating service to their communities, Indigenous spiritual practices, and initiatives for justice. Also reviewed is *Bringing Back the Fire* by Cherokee-descended author Kimberly L. Becker. In her review of this poetry collection, Jennifer Peedin describes how Becker contrasts imagery of light and darkness and weaves Cherokee language through her work to emphasize themes of pain and solace, especially as they relate to her own Cherokee ancestry. These reviews, as well as the interview and poetry, are punctuated with stunning artwork by Raven Dial-Stanley (Lumbee) and Jody Bradley (Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians).

The winter online issue provides a taste of what is to come in the 2023 print issue,² which will include creative writing by Cherokee and Lumbee writers, including Annette Saunooke Clapsaddle, Mary Leuna Christensen, and Tanya Holy Elk Locklear. We will also feature literary criticism by

scholars of Indigenous and US Southern literatures about Cherokee, Lumbee, and Catawba texts, and an interview with Cherokee novelist Blake Hausman. And throughout the feature section, artwork by North Carolina Native artists from the Lumbee, Eastern Band of Cherokee, and Catawba tribes will complement the writing. Be sure to subscribe to *NCLR*, if you don't already, to receive this historic issue, the first to focus on North Carolina Native American literature.

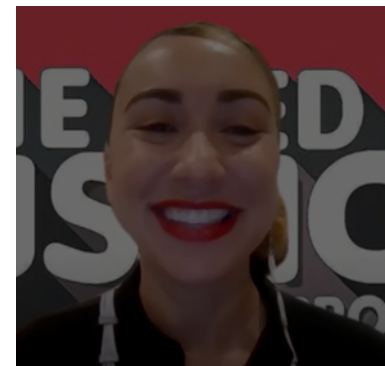
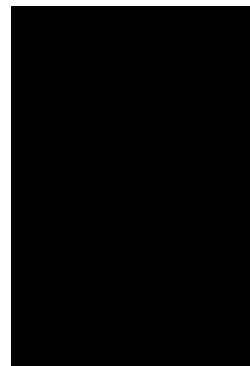
Finally, I want to share East Carolina University's land acknowledgment, a way that we recognize North Carolina's tribal communities at campus events: "We acknowledge the Tuscarora people, who are the traditional custodians of the land on which we work and live, and recognize their continuing connection to the land, water, and air that Greenville consumes. We pay respect to eight recognized tribes: Coharie, Eastern Band of Cherokee, Haliwa-Saponi, Lumbee, Meherrin, Occaneechi Band of Saponi, Sappony, and Waccamaw-Siouan, all Nations, and their elders past, present, and emerging."

Our 2023 *NCLR* feature theme is another way of acknowledging the importance of North Carolina's Indigenous peoples and their continuing contributions to North Carolina literature. ■

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¹ Quoted from Gregory A. Richardson, "American Indian Tribes in North Carolina," *NCpedia* [web](#).

² Find the table of contents of the 2023 issue [here](#).



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