

## Project Description: **MEDIATING INDIANNESS**

The title of this project has been chosen with care. The selection of such a potentially essentialist term as “Indianness” is deliberate and indeed points to the complex *construction* of ethnicity as filtered through media, despite frequent assertions of “authenticity.” From William ‘Buffalo Bill’ Cody’s claim, extravagantly advertised on both sides of the Atlantic, that he was staging “true-to-life” scenes from Indian life in his *Wild West Show* (1872-1908) to contemporary Native hip-hopper Queese IMC’s announcement with his youth arts organization Nvision that in their songs they are “telling their own history” and their “true origin,” media of all types has served to promote disparate agendas claiming legitimacy. In this panel we will present a deliberately broad range of media instruments – such as print, film, stage play, ritual dance performance, music, recorded interviews, comic books, orality/alphabetization, photography, courtroom rhetoric, and virtual networking – which have been used in exploitative, informative, educative, sustaining, protesting, and/or entertaining, and always creative ways to negotiate Native American identities and images. We will not shy away from the issue of evaluation and how it is only tangential to medial artificiality, in offering explanations of why, for instance, the multi-media blitz of Eric Gansworth’s 2010 experimental play *(Re)Creation Story* is perceived as conveying viable and valuable Indianness.

The project team (see below) is international and interdisciplinary with both senior and junior scholars. The initial findings were presented in a four-panel format at the relevant biennial MESEA (Multi-Ethnic Studies: Europe and the Americas) conference in Barcelona, 12-16 June 2012; the conference theme was “Media and Mediated Performances of Ethnicity.” The papers are being transformed into book articles for a volume titled *Mediating Indianness*. We are in a dialog with Michigan State University Press about publication (projected 2013) of the volume in the American Indians Studies series.

The project structure is reflected in the projected volume outline:

### **I. Mediating Indianness: Transethnicity/Transculturality and Protest in Historical Contexts**

**Sonja Georgi** (Johannes Gutenberg University, Mainz): “IndiVisible” Identities: Mediating Native American and African American Encounters and Inter-Ethnic Identity

**Cathy C. Waegner** (University of Siegen): “Buffalo Bill Takes a Scalp”: Mediated Transculturality on Both Sides of the Atlantic with William F. Cody’s *Wild West Show*, from Hollywood to YouTube

**Gordon Henry** (Michigan State University): Mediation and Representation related to the Cobell v Salazar settlement of lost funds held in trust by the federal government for American Indian people.

**A. Robert Lee** (Nihon University): Native Postmodern? Re-mediating History in the Fiction of Stephen Graham Jones and D.L. Birchfield

## II. Mediating Indianness: (Trans)Media Literacy, Youth Cultures, and Nation

**Ellen Cushman** (Michigan State University): Cherokee Writing: Mediating Traditions, Codifying Nation

**Chris LaLonde** (State University of New York, Oswego): “We can tell our own history, we can tell our own future”: Queese IMC, Culture Shock Camp, and an Indigenous Hip-Hop Movement

**Christine Plicht** (Johannes Gutenberg University, Mainz): *Dead Man* (1995) – Still thwarting all cultural and cinematic expectations

**Ludmila Martanovschi** (Ovidius University): Mediating the Native Gaze: the American Indian Youth’s Cinematic Presence in Chris Eyre’s Films

**Kimberly Blaeser** (University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee): Refraction and Helio-tropes: Native Photography and Visions of Light

## III. Mediating Indianness: Performance, Gender, and Cultural Capital

**Sally McBeth** (University of Northern Colorado): “The Bear is Our Protector”: Symbol and Metaphor in the Northern Ute [Nuche] Bear Dance

**John Purdy** (Western Washington University) and **Nicholle Dragone** (Black Hills State University): Eric Gansworth’s *(Re)Creation Story*: Mediation and Remediation

**Kerstin Schmidt** (University of Siegen): There is no “free land,” but there may be “frozen rivers”: Mobility, Capital, and Native American Women

## IV. Mediating Indianness: “Crow Commons” – Creative Correspondences and Virtual Affiliations

**Kimberly Blaeser, Jane Haladay** (University of North Carolina at Pembroke), **Gordon Henry, Molly McGlennen** (Vassar College), **Jesse Peters** (University of North Carolina at Pembroke) – *An exposition of virtual exchanges*

**Afterword:** Evelina Zuni Lucero, Institute of American Indian Arts/Sante Fe