



Library podcast

Elissa Washuta and Theresa Warburton: Shapes of Native Nonfiction

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[00:00:36] So tonight's program is going to include brief readings by Elissa, Theresa and Laura and then audience Q and A. So without further ado, I'm delighted to introduce tonight's program. So Elissa Washuta is a member of the Cowlitz Indian tribe and a non-fiction writer. She is the author of *Starvation Mode* and *My Body is a Book of Rules*, named a finalist for the Washington State Book Award. She's received fellowships and awards for the National Endowment for the Arts, Creative Capital, ArtistTrust, 4Culture and Potlatch Fund. Elissa is currently an assistant professor of creative writing at the Ohio State University. And we're super grateful to her here in Seattle because she was a big part of our bid to become a UNESCO city of literature. Back in 2015. So we we're very grateful to everything that Elissa has done for Seattle, even though she has left us temporarily. Theresa Warburton lives on Lummi/Nooksack/Coast Salish Territory in Bellingham. And she just completed a Mellon Postdoctoral Fellowship in Native and Indigenous Literatures at Brown University and in the fall will return to Western Washington University as an Associate Professor of English and Affiliate Faculty in Canadian Studies and Women's Gender and Sexuality Studies. Her book, *Other Worlds Here: Answering Native Women's Writing in Contemporary Anarchist Movements*, will be published by Northwestern University Press in 2020. Her writing has appeared in *Cultural Studies/Critical Methodologies*, *Perspectives on Anarchist Theory* and *Upping the Anti*. Theresa Warburton. Elissa Washuta is the co-editor of the anthology *Shapes of Native Nonfiction Collected Essays by Contemporary Writers*, which will include an essay which also includes an essay by our third speaker, Laura Da'.

[00:02:19] Laura is a poet and teacher, a lifetime resident of the Pacific Northwest. Laura studied creative writing at the University of Washington and the Institute of American Indian Arts. She is Eastern Shawnee and Laura is a recipient of the Native American Arts and Cultures Fellowship, an Artist Trust Fellowship, and Fellowships from Hugo House and the Jack Straw Writers Program. Her first book, *Tributaries*, won the 2016 American Book Award, and her newest book, *Instruments of the True Measure*, is a finalist for this year's Washington

State Book Award in Poetry. They are all here tonight to read from and discuss *Shapes of Native Nonfiction*, collected essays by contemporary writers, editors Elissa Washuta and Theresa Warburton grounded this anthology of essays by Native writers in the formal art of basket weaving and using weaving techniques such as coiling and plaiting as organizing themes. They have put together a collection of lyric essays by 27 contemporary Native writers from tribal nations across Turtle Island. The book features both established and newer Native writers, Stephen Graham Jones, Deborah Miranda, Terese Marie Mailhot, Billy-Ray Belcourt, Eden Robinson, and Kim TallBear. Their ambitious, creative and visionary work with genre and form demonstrates the slippery, shape changing possibilities of Native stories. So without further ado, please help me welcome Elissa Washuta, Theresa Warburton and Laura Da'.

[00:03:47 [Speaking an Indigenous Language] Welcome, everyone. Thank you for joining us. Indoors on this perfect day in Coast Salish Territory. Theresa and I are so excited to share this book with you today. Our intention is to compliment the material object of the book and the exquisite vessels of the essays within it by reading excerpts and speaking to you about what this book means to us and about the contexts we were situated within when we built it. Then Laura Da' and I will read our work and we'll have time for audience questions. This is our opportunity to publicly acknowledge the people who have helped make this book possible. Huge thanks. Go to University of Washington Press a fantastic partner in this work in the past and present staff there who worked on this book, Larin McLaughlin, M'Bilia Meekers, Lydia Marie Heberling, Rebecca Brinbury. Regan Huff, Nicole Mitchell, Mike Campbell, Julie Van Pelt, Katrina Noble, Joe F. Zucco, Caitlin Tyler-Richards and everyone else who helped with the publication of this book, including the Tulalip Tribes Charitable Funds. Thank you so much to our hosts Seattle Public Library and especially to Stesha Brandon for her ongoing commitment to Indigenous literary futures. And huge thanks to all of you for showing up today and other days to support us in this work. I have learned so much about commitment, care, humility and love for my friends. Those who are in the room today and those who are elsewhere. And I'd like to especially acknowledge my family. You have taught me to be Cowlitz and you have shaped my responsibilities and my work. And it's only with your support that I've been able to extend its depth and reach.

[00:05:39] Mom, I love you with all my heart. And thank you for braving travel hell and terrible delays to be with us today.

[00:05:47] Seriously, it was really bad. She's been traveling for like probably half my life to get here just for this event. Your love is everything to me and you have given me so much of it. You were one of my biggest inspirations, the model of the Cowlitz person I am forever working to be. To everyone who has given this book shape, I raise my hands to you.

[00:06:10] Clap. So one of the things we also wanted to do here at the beginning was just to locate ourselves in place. We had that wonderful land acknowledgement from Stesha and we wanted to go a little bit deeper because this book was conceptualized in this place. Even though Elissa only lives here, it was a part time now and I've been living away for a couple of years. But we just wanted to read. I'm going to read the first paragraph of the introduction to the book, which situates the book in this place and talks a little bit about the basket of framing that Stesha mentioned.

[00:06:43] The basket, the body, the canoe, the page, each of these vessels has a form, shape to which its purpose is intimately related.

[00:06:53] Each carries, each holds and each transports. However, none of these vessels can be defined solely by their contents. Neither can their purpose be understood as strictly utilitarian. Rather, the craft involved in creating such a vessel, the care and knowledge that it takes to create the structure and shape necessary to convey is inseparable from the contents that the vessel holds. To pay attention only to the contents would be to ignore the very relationships that such vessels sustain. Yes, the basket may carry elder berries or trap salmon. But what of the cedar used to weave it? What of the weaver whose skills connect long genealogies of craft and kin. And what of the cosmological significance of the elder berries and the salmon? Some weavers know how to weave baskets so tightly that water can be boiled in them. How can we think about that water, about the running of rivers and the running of salmon without thinking of the craft that must go in to a vessel that can hold water, whether basket or riverbed to speak only about the contents of these vessels would be to ignore how their significance is shaped by the vessels that hold them. So it's really beyond a pleasure to be speaking about this book in this place, and especially because when we first started talking about creating this book, it was I think the spring of 2017 and it was here on the Salish Sea Lummi Territory in Washington.

[00:08:16] And in just a couple days, the tribal canoe journeys will get to get to Washington or get to Lummi territory. And so, Elissa and I've been talking about canoes and baskets and the forms, so it feels like a good time to be doing this event. And from the outset, then this collection has been indelibly tied to this place. As we wrote in the introduction, we work to honor this connection, not just in word, but in deed, so not just by mentioning this as part of the creation, but by building it into the very structure of the collection itself. And Stesha mentioned a little bit how that looks. We sought to create a collection that traveled across vast swaths of time and space, but was still firmly rooted here in this place. And so the basket, the body, the canoe, the page, the elderberry, the salmon, the cedar. This collection and its contours are rooted in the contours of this place. And this is how we made sense of what we wanted to convey to readers. That's hopefully you. What we'd like to do tonight is just to take some time to talk about what exactly that is that we want to convey to you and then to give you a chance

to hear some of the beautiful work from Elissa and Laura, and then we'll do a question and answer. I'm gonna turn it over to Elissa.

[00:09:29] All right. So Theresa and I are each going to read passages to you from the introduction we created together, which I hope you will appreciate as an entry way to the book and a framing of the significance of these writer's work. Here is my favorite of all of my many favorite paragraphs of this introduction. We conceive of the essay as an exquisite vessel, one that evidences the delicate balance of beauty and pain. The exquisite character of this vessel invokes simultaneously an exquisite work of art and the exquisite ache of an intense sensation by bringing to the fore a focus on form in both the structure and the concept of the collection. We use the term exquisite vessel, not just to name the work done here in, but to draw attention to form as a creative and literary practice of reverence for the exquisite in its most literal sense as something carefully sought out. To essay is to try, test and practice the form of the essay, then is a fitting site for the experiential and sometimes painful work of seeking answers. Many of the essays contained here and linger in these painful places exploring the legacies of trauma and violence extending from personal to collective inheritance. Many are haunting and few offer easy answers, such as the possibility of form conscious nonfiction. Now to write non-fiction is to render experiences, memories, observations and interpretations through prose, a process necessitating writer agency and allowing for emotional depth and transformation not only of the narrator figure, but of the writer who essays.

[00:11:18] My introduction to the craft of nonfiction was really an introduction to form. I learned that I had been working with form and my previous work in short fiction, even though I didn't totally know what form was or that it was everywhere in everything. In writing essays that asks readers to consider form as an actual primary concern of the essay, an actual thing that the essay is about a subject in and of itself. I quickly learned that I was both doing something non-Native readers didn't expect and doing something Native writers and other artists had been doing forever. What I once thought of as formal innovation is really not exactly because innovation suggests newness. While fragmentation gaps braiding an emphasis on the visual presentation of the text layout have recently been considered innovative or experimental by the literary mainstream. These qualities have been Coast Salish methods for a long, long time and this is evident in the construction of baskets. Each an exquisite vessel whose shape and construction are chosen with a mind toward the contents that will be carried, as we talked about in the excerpt Theresa just read.

[00:12:36] I've seen baskets in Seattle in non-Native art collections divorced from their people, contexts and purposes, baskets are made to be used for clamming, berry picking, water boiling, root gathering and other sustaining practices. They are beautiful. They are exquisite. And the processes they make possible are foundational to Native life. I see essays doing this, too. For me at least, and for possibly most or all the essays, I know they aren't just art objects.

They're life sustaining and the ways they allow us to come to new ways of knowing through our work and forming the essays, I say forming the essays instead of writing them, because of course we are writing, but we're also giving textual form to to our understanding as we are coming to that understanding. Form is the visual arrangement of the text. The paragraphs, the stanzas, the space, non-Native narrative theorist Caroline Levine writes. Every literary form generates its own separate logic.

[00:13:44] This work of coming into understanding through form cannot be uncoupled from that which the essayist is seeking to understand, but in so many representations of Native lives and histories that uncoupling has happened as relationships between stories and people have been broken by opportunistic ethnographers, appropriative artists and exploitative documentarians, all of whom might have their audiences thinking Native peoples are nothing but our pain. In creating this collection, we wanted to honor Native writers' work of transformation accomplished through craft and visible through the results of formal decisions in shaping essays. To return to the Levine's work on form, the generation of logic through essaying can actually facilitate transformation.

[00:14:34] As the essayist creates and works within a system of reasoning, connecting, selecting, refusing and ultimately understanding through movement, along a process of answering a question. The weaving of baskets is an act that, while performed individually, draws from community tradition and in doing so contributes to the continuance of indigenous knowledges, the finished basket doesn't only serve the maker. It might be used for generations. The food and the food it might be used to gather will feed relatives. The finished essay gives life to those who read it and recognize something they need to see. In her phenomenal book, *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom Through Radical Resurgence*, Leanne Betasamosake Simpson writes. Reciprocal recognition. The act of making it a practice to see another's, to see another's light and to reflect that light back to them forms the basis of positive identity, self-worth and dignity in the other being. Those of us who form essays recognize our readers and through language allow them to see our light, too. It is a, Simpson says, the work of acknowledging one another's dignity. Theresa, we'll talk more about approaches to the study of Native literatures that we are working against, approaches built upon non-Native obsessions with Native authenticity. Those who focus on trying to figure out whether or not we're even real and use colonial metrics and markers of identity to do so are not seeing our light. They're not recognizing our dignity. They're not honoring our self-worth. By honoring these essays, not for what they can do to illuminate so-called Native experience, but for all they are in process, object and impact. We see their light. We don't approach their work and specifically their recounting of experiences to consume it. We know that we are lucky to be invited to witness the work of discovery and transformation. We see their work. We see their craft. We see their light.

[00:16:57] Ok, so the passage that I want to read here for you deals with the question of how this book intervenes in sort of broader discussions about Native literatures. And I can say that when I've when we first started, I think that that was sort of the dynamic we were thinking about, like creative writer and scholar. But as we were going, we were like, well, we're not always sure who's who in that. So this is sort of a more scholarly dimension. But, you know, we're both the scholars and the writers in this in this piece.

[00:17:26] So here's the passage. By bringing together contemporary Native nonfiction or contemporary nonfiction writing by Native authors. We aim to extend the prominent focus on early Native nonfiction writing to solidify both the genealogy and its transformation over time, while also better documenting the breadth of Native nonfiction writing beyond the autobiographical form.

[00:17:49] As the authors in this collection embark on the process of carefully crafting interventions that both challenge and expand genre conventions, they also confront the prolific undercurrent of the interpretation and discussion of Native nonfiction writing. The expectation that Native peoples remain a subject spoken about rather than a subject speaking. Our approach then moves beyond attempting to create a chronological lineage of Native first person narratives in order to offer a glimpse into how contemporary Native authors use nonfiction to challenge conventional knowledge about form, about structure and the production of history. We present this collection of form conscious Native nonfiction as an illuminating example of how contemporary Native authors use form to offer incisive observation, critique and commentary on our political, social and cultural worlds rather than only relegating their contributions to descriptive narratives of Native life. So here you can tell that two of the primary concerns for us in framing the book and in creating the book we're bringing into into the discussion contemporary writers in the first place and then emphasizing form conscious nonfiction. And so I'll just talk a little bit about each of those things. So our ethical commitment to centering nonfiction was supported.

[00:19:10] I mean, we both have an ethical commitment to nonfiction for different reasons. But that commitment was centered by or supported by work by people like Osage scholar Robert Warrior. He has a great book called *The People and the Word* and Abenaki scholar Lisa Brooks, who writes mostly about the Native northeast. And both of them show us how even though most of the scholarship that exist is about fiction and poetry, most of the scholarship about Native literature is the actually nonfiction is foundational to that to that field. And that really isn't reflected in the scholarly literature, even in courses like really sort of basic canonical looks at Native writing. Broadly, that usually starts with Native non-fiction. So if you took a class or looked at a book, I didn't I should have looked at the Wikipedia page to see what they said. I bet it starts with this. I'm going to check myself later and be real sorry if it doesn't. So, for instance, in that sort of genealogy, you might see the first person is usually Sampson

Occom so Sampson Occom, he's often said to be the first Native author to publish work in English, and he was a Mohegan reverence scholar and teacher. He famously studied with Eleazar Wheelock in the 18th century, and Wheelock was a man who would later take money that Occom raised for his own education and use it to found Dartmouth College, which you may have heard of.

[00:20:33] Still going strong today.

[00:20:35] Not a Native institution, or you might learn about William Apess, who is a Pequot writer, a minister and activist who wrote in the 19th century. You might have heard of his Eulogy on King Philip written for Metacom who is the Wampanoag sachem and son of Massasoit, after whom the 17th century conflict called King Philip's war is named. You might have also read his autobiography, *A Son of the Forest*. Or you could come across Sarah Winnemucca, who is in Northern Paiute advocate, writer, interpreter and diplomat whose book *Life Among the Piutes* was published in 1883 and Sarah Winnemucca was also actually. She traveled all over the world and gave more than three hundred talks about politics. And she's actually the person who holds the first U.S. copyright that's granted to a Native woman. So the last person I want to mention is you might also get to know Zitkala-Sa, who is also known as Gertrude Simmons Bonnin. She was a Yankton Dakota Sioux writer who published all kinds of things in the early 20th century, including articles in *Atlantic* and *Harper's Monthly*, as well as the first Native opera. She was also an activist and advocate throughout the 1920s, and she was also a skilled violin player. She studied the Boston Conservatory. And lastly, you might also read about famous orations or as told to biographies. Some of these are more suspect than others, like Duwamish Leader Chief Seattle speech in 1854. Nez Perce leader, Chief Joseph Speech of Surrender in 1877, Oglala Lakota Leader Red Cloud's speech after the massacre at Wounded Knee in 1890.

[00:22:08] These are all things that are included in books that are about Native nonfiction or I think most famously, John G. Nay Hart's 1932 transcription of Ben Black Elk's translation of his father Black Elk's Life Narrative in *Black Elk Speaks*. I did notice that a bookstore that will go unmentioned, not in Seattle, our book was put next to *Black Elk Speaks* in the collection, and I had a word with the people who directed it. So you'll notice that a lot of this work and this is sort of the genealogy that we're entering into also we're not trying to discount this genealogy, but a lot of it is from between the 17th and 20th centuries. Right. And of course, all of this work draws on as Elissa was talking about, much more expansive histories of Native writing and storytelling that stretch back to time immemorial. And so this genealogy that I've just sort of recreated for you. That's a popular one in academia depends on writing. It depends on pen and paper as the only materials capable of communication. So that's why we wanted to frame this around the basket, because the the basket helps us connect these long genealogies of

storytelling to bring together the stories since time immemorial. This foundational early Native nonfiction writing, although early for the 17th century, your like. Early to who?

[00:23:25] To whom? Excuse me. I'm an English professor, I should do that right and contemporary nonfiction writing by Native authors.

[00:23:32] So with this collection, we really wanted to highlight how this work continues in the present moment, not to show, as Elissa mentioned this is something brand new. But to demonstrate that there's this lineage of Native Native non-fiction writing in this place that continues to this day. And in doing so, we also wanted to address some of the limitations we've seen in engagement with Native non-fiction. In particular, we wanted to work against the tendency to understand autobiography as a stand in for all non-fiction writing by Native authors. An autobiography and memoir are really central to contemporary Native writing. Though I think a lot of the most prominent Native writers are known most for their fiction and poetry, a lot of them have written autobiography and memoir. So like Leslie Marmon Silko, who a lot of you may have heard of, she's the author of Ceremonies. She wrote a number of memoir pieces, including Sacred Water, which uses photography. Kiowa author and Scott Momaday who won the Pulitzer Prize.

[00:24:28] Famously, his book, The Way to Rainy Mountain is a sort of memoir like piece that integrates his father's drawings inside. Acoma Pueblo writer Simon Ortiz blends poetry and prose and Woven Stone. All of these have these interesting formal innovations that are really discounted when we only look at these as texts that are about autobiography or life narrative.

[00:24:50] And of course, the emphasis in all of those things I mentioned on the woven in the rain and the water that's connected to what we're talking about too.

[00:24:59] So, as both Lisa Brooks and Robert Warrior have pointed out, if we expand our view in this way of what we include in nonfiction writing, we also might end up bringing into conversation things like treaty literature or various agreements that are made between sovereign nations that are formalized in a material form. So not just in writing, but in things like wampum or birch bark, constitutions and other declarations of indigenous structures of governance, newspapers, letters, sermons. You might have noticed a lot of the people I mentioned were reverends or other sort of people who would give public speeches often. All of these are part of this story of nonfiction. And of course, we must then include baskets and canoes. And so we wanted to show how Native authors are engaging this rich tradition of non-fiction writing in the contemporary moment in a way that can expand our understanding of the history of Native nonfiction itself. And so in this way, we also wanted to push against that use

of autobiography as an umbrella term to understand all nonfiction, especially on Native nonfiction. And as Elissa mentioned, the tendency to read those text as this opportunity to sort of suss out authenticity. And we we sort of located that in actual other collections of nonfiction that have Native nonfiction published before this.

[00:26:16] That sort of explicitly say that what those collections do is help the reader to sort of navigate questions of authenticity for writers. So we're we're working against that. And then we also want to discourage the sort of past readings that ask the reader to use nonfiction to sort of go on an ethnographic journey in search of Native people. We hopefully by now you can tell I want to move readers away from that. So then the question is, what do we want instead? And this question is at the center of that passage that I read at the beginning and when I was thinking about how to answer it. And I realize now, even though it's a question that I posed to myself, like, how do I answer that? What came to mind was this quote that Maddie Norris, who is an essayist, an MFA candidate at the University of Arizona. She just interviewed us for Essay Daily. And she asked about this quote from Terese Mailhot, who has two essays in the collection. I think her book, Heart Berries is also for sale over here. And this quote appears in the afterword to the first edition. And it reads, The writers before me seem to do the work of looking at being Indigenous so we could look through it, and I think that this is a really perfect distillation of what we hope that Shapes of Native nonfiction can do.

[00:27:32] We hope that it can show that Native nonfiction is not the result of Native authors looking into a mirror and describing what they see. Instead, we hope that you can see their work as sort of looking out a window. The reflection is there as is a frame, but it's more luminous. The reflection is read alongside, through and within the context of the other things that can be seen, especially for settlers, scholars and readers like me. We have a responsibility to stand beside Native writers as they describe what they see, to understand their interpretations and their interventions, and to seek their input and trust their estimation on a wide variety of topics and issues, rather than only the ones we've been taught are a relevant concern. And now we get to do that because we're gonna hear Elissa and Laura read. And so I'm so sorry. Also, that Ruby Murray couldn't be with us. She got an amazing fellowship and she had to take it. But you can read her essay in the book. And so now I'm going to turn it over to Elissa, who's going to read an excerpt from her essay, Apocalypse Legend.

[00:28:35] Did you notice that Theresa and I are wearing almost the same garment? Just wondering if you noticed. Okay. I'm. Happens a lot. I'm just going to read the first three pages of my essay, Apocalypse Logic, which is in which is in the collection because I've been talking a lot.

[00:28:53] The rest, though, you know where to find it. Apocalypse Logic.

[00:28:59] My great great great grandfather, Tumalth, headman of the Cascades, was hanged by the U.S. Army in 1856, a year after signing the Kalapuya Treaty.

[00:29:11] He was accused of treason, but he was innocent.

[00:29:14] I feel like I should say I'm tired of writing this again. I am always writing that Tumalth was hanged a year after signing the Kalapuya Treaty. I am always writing that his daughters were taken to Fort Vancouver when the Cascade leaders were hanged.

[00:29:31] I am always writing about the resistance of the women who hung tough along the Columbia River for generations, even after the disruption of the systems of hunting, fishing and gathering our family maintained for thousands of years.

[00:29:47] Actually, I'm not tired of writing about this, and I may never be.


[00:29:52] But sometimes when I say once more that my great great great grandfather was hanged by the U.S. government, I can feel someone thinking, God, she's back on that.

[00:30:04] The last time I watched television, a man kept touching a screen with a red and blue map on it. After a while, I was nauseous and my whole body felt held up by metal rods.

[00:30:17] Stop putting your hands on that map.

[00:30:21] I wanted to tell him I was in a huge room full of people who were booing, crying and drinking heavily. Termination, I thought they are going to terminate my tribe. They are going to finish what they started.

[00:30:38] I am certain that I was the only person in the whole venue, a concert space thinking about tribal termination. I am always in this room and I am always lonely. From it from 1953 to 1968, the U.S. government tried to wipe out some tribes by ending their relationships, withdrawing federal recognition of these tribes as sovereigns, ending the federal trust responsibility to those tribes, allowing land to be lost to non-Natives. The tribes terminated for



the most part were those the U.S. government considered to be successful because of the wealth within their tribal lands, timber, oil, water and so on, terminating a tribe meant fully forsaking all treaty responsibilities to them.

[00:31:33] In 1993, Donald Trump testified in front of the House Native American Affairs Subcommittee.

[00:31:43] If you look if you look at some of the reservations that you've approved that you, sir, and your great wisdom have approved, I will tell you right now they don't look like Indians to me and they don't look like the Indians now. Maybe we say politically correct or not politically correct.

[00:31:58] They don't look like Indians to me and they don't look like Indians to Indians. End quote.


[00:32:04] Earlier that year, Trump had made efforts to partner with the Agua Caliente Band of the Cahuilla Indians as manager of their proposed casino near Palm Springs. The tribe declined.

[00:32:17] In 2000, Donald Trump sent a gold monogrammed letter to the Cowlitz Indian Tribe, of which I am an enrolled member.

[00:32:25] Hoping to partner with us. He toured our proposed casino site, which he said was the most incredible site he'd ever seen. In 2002, Trump submitted a proposal to partner with the tribe in developing the casino.

[00:32:40] The tribe declined.

[00:32:43] In the letter he sent us in 2000, he wrote, I want to assure you and all of the members of the tribe that I do now and always have supported the sovereignty of Native Americans and their right to pursue all lawful opportunities.



[00:32:58] Our casino will open in April by then, Donald Trump will have a hand in determining what's lawful. While I watched television and listened to the pundits talk about the man who loves revenge.

[00:33:11] I began having a panic attack that, as I write this is eight days deep, the longest I can remember in my decade of PTSD, which I developed and cultivated as a response to multiple rapes, sexual assaults, threats of violence and acts of stalking that accumulated over the years.

[00:33:32] For me, a panic attack is dread made physical, an embodied trauma response, nausea, insomnia. A pounding heart. Headaches. My psychiatrist said my triggers are many because I went years without PTSD treatment. In her book, *The Beginning and End of Rape*, Sarah Deer writes. Colonization and colonizing institutions use tactics that are no different from those of sexual perpetrators, including deceit, manipulation, humiliation and physical force.

[00:34:04] I watched the man touch his hand to the map and knew what my body was trying to tell me. The sexual violence against my body has been carried out in response to the settler state's instructions to its white men, and now the instructions would be delivered clearly from behind no screen. Maybe my triggers are many because to live in the United States of America is to wake up every day inside an abuser. Going to stop there. Thank you.

[00:34:38] Thanks so much. And now I'm going to welcome Laura Da' up. She's going to read her essay and a couple of poems.

[00:34:51] Thank you. Good evening. Thanks to everyone for being here. I want to just take a moment to particularly acknowledge Elissa and Theresa, because I feel that editing anthology is such a service. It's hard to amplify enough how significant it is and to know the hours and hours. The consideration is such an act of intellectual excellence. But it's also an act of profound empathy. So I really I'm very honored by this. And I see it, too, as kind of to extend that metaphor. It's kind of a basket where it has an outward facing benefit to our very large and expansive literary community. But it has an inward facing benefit because it shores up our kind of our community. We learn more about each other. I've always felt that anthologies have this unique capacity that you can pick one up and become a writer. You can pick one up and have a sort of vision or a flash of what's possible. So I appreciate it and I can't imagine the work that went into it. I want to acknowledge that.

[00:35:58] I going to read. The essay included in this anthology. This essay is called Pain Scale Treaties.

[00:36:11] Enraged at subtler atrocities and encroachments Tecumseh stamped his foot into the ground, trampling out the fault lines of the New Madrid Earthquake. Half the nation rattled to the percussions of his dismay. The very meanders of the rivers changed. Long blades were shearing Shawnee land to the bone. Sharpen nibs dripping ink were negotiating these phantom obliterations on map velum. The loam that applauded Tecumseh's vonfederacy of resistance with such might grew still with the next generation's forced removal. Even now, there are traces of that sorrow that blasted the trees into a crippled crescents, warping them back into the soil along the margins of those paths of exile. Perched on the shoulders of generational trauma, sit these two theses. Suffering begets cruelty, begets suffering, begets cruelty and pain is empathy's catalyst. When deep hurt sears, my fists and abdomen sickle inward. I compress my atoms in a futile attempt to minimize the target. When it abates, the curve of the earth returns assertively under my soles and my fingers unclench, probing and pinching the air for the velvet current of any trail home. The last Shawnee speaker in my family was my great grandfather. He was shipped away to boarding school as a young child. And his language slipped from story to sentence, sentence to fragment, fragment to adjective, leaving him with a sparsest scattering of nouns to pass down - a starvation harvest of syntax starved images. I know the words for elk and water. There are other Shawnee nouns as dense as koans with metaphor and meaning, but they remain inscrutable to me.

[00:38:17] Following the Indian Removal Act of 1830, the Shawnee were forcibly evicted from their homelands to Indian Territory.

[00:38:25] In most cases, the removal took more than 18 months. Primary source documents and the rare testimonials spared by history attest to the untenable conditions. Many Shawnee died on the removal road, particularly the society's most fragile members, the young, elderly and ill. Upon arrival, many more died due to disease, inadequate food and shelter and violence. I have an ancestor who, in the aftermath of the Civil War's upheavals, made an appeal to Congress in support of the Shawnee tribe. Articulate and intelligent. He was literate and Shawnee, English and Latin. I'm told he was sent to Washington to advocate for the tribe in a famine winter. He spent months there. A dark shadow and the elegant, Shawnee turban and clothes of his time relegated to the chilly corners of the antechamber of antechambers.

[00:39:31] A man of his generation would have been removed from Ohio alongside his parents and siblings in boyhood.

[00:39:37] He would have been removed again with his own grandchildren. By the end of his life, he would have seen his his nation reduced to a tenth. Family legend claims that he waited in the capital for a season and a half, but was met with no audience. Historians surmise that at a peak in westward expansion, the 1830s to the 1840s. The frontier of European settlement moved at a rate of 10 to 40 miles a year. I used to wince at photocopies of old treaty papers, fragile shrouds from this voracious consumption.

[00:40:19] The Shawnee

[00:40:21] Like so many of America's sovereign Indigenous nations signed many treaties with the colonial and American government.

[00:40:30] 1786's Treaty with the Shawnee conducted at the mouth of the great Miami River. 1795's Treaty of Greenville; 1803's Treaty of Fort Wayne; 1805's Treaty with the Wyandotte held at Fort industry; 1808's Treaty with the Chippewa conducted at Brownstown; 1814, 1815, 1817 and 1818's Treaties with the Wyandotte; 1825's Treaty with the Shawnee conducted in St. Louis; 1831's Treaty with the Shawnee concluded at Wapaghkonnetta; 1831's Treaty with the Seneca in Logan County, Ohio; 1832's Treaty with the Shawnee; 1832's Treaty with the Shawnee made at Castro Hill in Missouri; 1832's Treaty with the Shawnee and Seneca concluded at the Seneca agency on the headwaters of the Cowskin River; 1854's Treaty with the Shawnee made in the city of Washington; 1865's Agreement with the Cherokee and Other Tribes in the Indian Territory; 1867's Treaty with the Seneca, Mixed Seneca and Shawnee, Quapaw, Etc..

[00:41:46] The gore of the battlefield seeps into the ground and is lost.

[00:41:51] Ink on vellum is its approximation.

[00:41:55] I'm laid low on a bed of dried blood, but it has been graciously consumed by the hospital's large absorbent sheet guards and rendered into rusty shadows under the papery layers.

[00:42:07] Any treaty is an artifact of unimaginable suffering. Only twice do I attempt to articulate my discomfort in my own terms. Once in a sham attempt at restrained stoicism, I say that it's hitting a raw nerve and then in hysterics I whimper that I see the glint of the teeth and at once they are clamped down inside me. The third time I have learned to say that it is a 7.

And accept the quicksilver pulse of intravenous analgesic like a benediction. I recognize that I have made a treaty with myself. Bartering the refinement of my language for rapidly delivered slivers of chemical mercy.

[00:42:57] All I need now are my hands to talk. When I hold up the numbers of the pain scale, I feel a shiver of what I have ceded with such terrified alacrity. I sign my mark in the air with my dominant hand. A timber scribe is a small, sharp gouge designed for blazing trees. This tool, small enough to fit in a pocket, was once the first and most essential component of any surveyor's gear. Stick is an anachronism. The traditional bellow of the surveyor as the blaze is carved into the sight trunk and the first chain is placed. Stick seven marks are carved into my torso and abdomen. I meander into the territory of illness and must learn to make its land my own. My body's sovereignty evaporates. Is it mercy or cruelty

[00:44:01] That compels a surgeon to sign her initials on the layer of skin above the first incision so that as her scalpel begins to preforate my flesh, she is compelled to cut through her very name. A narrow conduit is surgically buried deep in my body. One end curls at the terminus, three inches, a flexible plastic tubing droops like a tiny cannon from the side of my torso just under my ribs, a portal that obliterates my skin's compromised frontiers.

[00:44:33] The myth of the America land mass as virgin soil is pervasive.

[00:44:40] I don't see my former self as pure, but something integral is stripped away from me just the same as I disaggregate into the numbers of disease, I am no longer a mystery. No dark stand of untouched timber is left in me. The exact equations of my survival are tallied hourly, daily, weekly, monthly, mathematically. I have one ancestor who surveyed in the American South just after the period of removal. I have another whose notation I once read in the Eastern Shawnee tribal library. I don't like those lines running so close to what's mine.

[00:45:20] Stuck.

[00:45:22] The response to the surveyor's call and the confirmation of the act of measurement.

[00:45:35] I think.

[00:45:37] I'd like to read a short poem from my most recent book as well, because this interaction with nonfiction I found to be particularly liberating as a poet, and I think that it's very reflected in my growth as a as a writer of poetry to feel the sense of the increased capacity of being able to transcend the label when it comes to genre. So this poem, which is a little bit essay ish, is called Nationhood.

[00:46:13] I'm a citizen of two nations, Shawnee and American. I have one son who is a citizen of three. Before he was born, I learned that like all infants, he would need to experience a change of heart at birth in order to survive. When a baby successfully breathes in through the lungs, the heart changes from parallel flow to serial flow and the shunt between the right and left atriums closes. Our new bodies obliterate old frontiers. North America is mistakenly called nascent. The Shawnee nation is mistakenly called moribund. America established a mathematical beginning point in 1785 in what was then called the Northwest Territory. Before that, it was known in many languages as the eastern range of the Shawnee, Miami and Huron homelands. I do not have the Shawnee words to describe this place. The notation that is available to me is 40 degrees.

[00:47:19] Thirty eight minutes. Thirty two point sixty one seconds north. Eighty degrees. Thirty one minutes. Nine point seventy six seconds. West. Thank you.

[00:47:37] Ok, so we've been talking for a long time. So what we want to do before we go into question and answer is just give you all a couple of minutes to talk to each other. Stretch your legs. Maybe if you have a question you'd like to ask, maybe peer review your question with somebody sitting next to you. And this tactic, I should say that this tactic comes from a great Twitter thread from Eve Tuck, who suggested running Q and A this way. So we're going to try it. So we're just gonna give you a couple minutes. We're gonna drink some water, take a breath. When I come back up here to this podium, you'll know that question and answer is gonna start. And when we do that, we're gonna do what's called a reverse stack. We're going to prioritize questions from Native folks in the room and especially if there's any students. We'd love to hear from you all. So when I'm back up here, we'll start question and answer, and there will be a microphone in the audience for you.

[00:48:25] Thanks. OK, so we are happy to answer some questions now. I think there is an audience, mic, that Stesha will go around with. Hi. So you can just raise your hand if you'd like to ask a question.

[00:48:40] We have a question here.

[00:48:42] [UNKNOWN] Hopi, Ethiopian, [UNKNOWN] Coast Salish, Duwamish. Hi. My name is Susie/g Calky/g. I am from the Hopi Nation Corn/g Clan. I am also the Chico/g Eagle clan. I am [UNKNOWN]. And I am also Ethiopian. I raise my hands and knowledge and thank the Coast Salish people and specifically the Duwamish whose land we are currently occupying. And I want to say [Speaking an Indigenous Language] thank you. My heart is full. For all the medicine you have given us. So my first question is, as you mentioning, is very common for non-Indigenous people to try and write about Indigenous people and these often times credit their attempt to respect us in our own visibility to doing such work. What's your advice on that? And then secondly, as more people like myself and other youth or the older younger generation or my age are graduating from these four year institutions. When we're beginning to publish our work and say publishers who are non-indigenous don't understand, and want us to explain. How do you select these publishing companies, like people who want to work with us but want us to compromise the integrity of our people?

[00:50:14] Such good questions. Thank you so much. You know, one thing that comes to mind immediately is that.

[00:50:22] So many problems arise for, you know, non-Native people writing about Native people and Native knowledge is when you can kind of tell that the writer that, you know, the non-Native writer doesn't know any Native people, might not particularly like Native people, doesn't have relationships, has rushed, has not spent the time to really make relationships and learn about what it means to make an ethical commitment. And, you know, it has not really thought about their ethics. And so I you know, my advice is always, you know, to to non-Native writers who want to do this work, to really think about their motivations. Think about their ethics and think about, you know, what what story they want to tell. And you know who. Like what impact they expect that to have and to really figure out, you know, who. Who will be impacted and whether they really know those people and actually have made relationships.

[00:51:28] Yeah, I mean, my just my quick advice would be that it's always OK to say no. Which I think there's a lot of pressure in academia and other places in publishing to say yes, because there's so, you know, publish or perish like whatever. But it is I think it's OK to say no. And also, just when Elissa and I were doing this project as a Native and non-Native person, we talked a lot about the basic things like workload that I think people don't talk enough about with publishing that this is something Laura mentioned that like a lot of little things go into making an anthology. And so I think being clear about what that workload was was really helpful. And I mean, we University of Washington Press was great and Larin especially, I think understood what we wanted to do and never sort of required us to do other things. I mean, was always OK when we said no about something that we said, you know, there were things there for sure

were things that reviewers said or that like the copy editor said, that we were like, no. And Larin was always like, that's fine. Like, just an example is, I think part of the sort of guidelines for publishing is that foreign languages need to be italicized. And so when they are copy editing a bunch of foreign languages in the book they wanted to italicize. And we said no. And so I think that it's OK to do that. And then making I think you're getting it this just it's making sure that whoever like Elissa is saying whoever you might be working with. You have no responsibility to work with them. They have a responsibility to you. And that's how sort of every interaction should be oriented.

[00:53:05] Other questions.

[00:53:07] My mom's gonna ask a question, what could it be? What don't you know?

[00:53:18] I think this will be easy.

[00:53:20] You have 27 authors in your in your anthology. And I would just like to know what your selection process was for each of those, how they, you know, spoke to you or how they interacted with you or why you chose the authors that you did to to be included in the book.

[00:53:35] You know, I.

[00:53:38] It was easy. It was really easy. You know, Theresa talked about when we got together and had our first meeting where we were talking about what we're talking about, what we wanted to do with the book proposal. And it was so easy. We just sat at her table and made a list of, you know, I mean, I had been thinking about this anthology idea since 2013, 2014. And so, you know, I'd been thinking about form conscious nonfiction by Native writers. I had been an editor at The Rumpus. And, you know, that's when I first read Laura's essay that she read and some of the other pieces and in the collection. So I already knew, you know, like this is this kind of work I do. You know, in my own nonfiction, it's always very conscious of the form. It's always been that way for me in writing nonfiction. And so I was, you know, always aware of who else was doing it. And I'm always looking like actively looking to see what other Native writers are doing and what my community is doing, because I admire those writers so much. So, you know, we just kind of sat down and thought of specifically essays and then writers who we knew were doing this work. And writers we suspected might be doing this work like Billy-Ray Belcourt is an example of the latter. He you know, we knew that he was known primarily as a poet. And and he had done some scholarly work as well. But we just figured we'll ask him because he's going to have something.

[00:55:09] Yeah. I was just thinking about how you called that meeting, and I love the sort. I'm meeting me or meeting. We made nachos and I sat at my kitchen table.

[00:55:16] Josh made chili. Yeah, but it was a meeting because we did work. But I think that what really happened is that we came up with a wish list.

[00:55:24] Like we really I remember sitting there and saying what, like in our ideal world, like in the biggest active imagination that we could have. Like, who would be in this collection? And that is who within this collection, like it really is like a dream come true to have. I mean, and people said yes so fast. And that really made us feel like it was a thing that we really needed to be in the world.

[00:55:50] Can you talk a little bit about why the basket as a specific set of forms or form more broadly versus other kinds of forms that might have existed to structure this work?

[00:56:03] Yeah, the basket. You know, I am.

[00:56:06] My students make fun of me a little bit in a loving way because, you know, I try to kind of, you know, talk about other processes and objects and I just like pull from, you know, similar.

[00:56:24] I don't like similar things in order to explain what I'm trying to talk about when I talk about various aspects of essay craft and sometimes it's like. You know, it's it's OK, but it's a little limited, like like assembling a chair and it comes out wobbly or, you know, something crockpot, a crockpot.

[00:56:45] You told me once, like some, you can't dump anything into a crockpot and have it be delicious.

[00:56:50] That's true. That's right. That is correct. That is Native American wisdom.

[00:56:58] Yeah. So I've got all this, you know, Native American wisdom about how to assemble IKEA furniture, how to make stuff in a crockpot. But, you know. And so, like, it's kind of just you know, what I'm saying is is just a natural way I think about craft is by thinking about, you know, craft not just isolated to the essay, but craft broadly about how we do what we do, you know. And so I guess because my brain is always reaching for those connections and enlarging that idea of making.

[00:57:33] You know, I thought about it. I thought about the basket in the essay a lot and.

[00:57:41] I guess I had just been out to my timelines a little, little unclear, but I first went out to Suquamish.

[00:57:48] At some point and there's a we talk about this a little bit and in the introduction, Ed Carriere is a master basket maker out there who lives like really close to the Port Madison Indian Reservation. And I've gone out there twice now to his house to hear him talk about baskets. To hear him to see him show us baskets. I went out with my friend Cindy Updegrave twice and some students from the University of Washington and. I mean, such an influence on me, you know, a huge, huge influence. To see him show us, you know. In particular, this basket that tells the story of his life. It's amazing. And, you know, he'll sit for hours and just things take the time they take out there at his house and, you know, show us different techniques the way that he has brought. You know, he's brought back older techniques that were, you know, not used for many, many years that have been found through collaboration with a non-Native archaeologist, so. You know, I was just really thinking about materiality and the essay and, you know, thing. And somehow that connection just kind of popped into my head as I was I think as I was working on my job talk when I was on the job market, you need to say something special.

[00:59:15] So.

[00:59:16] So, you know, as I was writing about, you know, how I think about nonfiction, and that's I think that's that's how how it came up. Right.

[00:59:25] Yeah. I think that we also talked. If I'm remembering we thought we also thought it was very fun to have something about basket weaving because as somebody I was my PhD is in Gender Studies and that people were always like, oh, it's like PhD in basket weaving. Like it was the thing that was like really easy to learn and like was a ridiculous thing to learn.

[00:59:46] And it was right. Yeah.

[00:59:49] And so we really like sort of emphasizing this taking this thing that's used as like a really sort of derogatory thing about like the humanities or literature or gender studies and saying actually that means it's really complicated and you know. But I also love at what you said Laura, too, about the inward facing and out. We. We did not think of that. That's amazing. Thank you so much.

[01:00:13] I'm going to. It's a lot to think. Question over here. Kristen, hi.

[01:00:19] I want to say what a pleasure it is to hear your work. I teach Apocalypse Logic to students. I know how not just as a reader, but as writers. People can learn from that work in its form. And so I'm excited to have this book as not just a writer but also a teacher and be able to teach from it. That will be my honor to do so. But I'm curious because I know that you've spoken about your collaboration as a way of an example for a possible patterns for dismantling the settler colonial state and that it serves as it's in service of that goal. And so I'm curious to hear what that means and how the writings that you've helped to bring into the world and amplify will also serve that.

[01:01:10] Yeah, we've been talking about this in interviews and Kristin and I have been talking about this a little bit individually, I think has you know, she's heard me talk about this recently.

[01:01:20] You know, I just think that. What, I think I think, you know, I think like we were talking about, what I was talking about earlier was like relationships and making relationships. And I said before that, you know, I. I entered into this partnership to work on this book in an act of like extreme trust. Like this means that I trust Theresa with my life, which is, you know, not something I say lightly. This is my life. These relationships are my life. This work is my life. And, you know, I'm not just going to kind of casually enter into into a collaboration with somebody who I don't trust, who might mess things up, who might not care, who might abandon me. And, you know, I had to know that, you know, Theresa had done a lot of work in order to be that trustworthy person that you know that. That real collaborator, and so I think that, you know, and as Theresa said there, there's a lot of like practical stuff that makes that up. It's not just what's in my heart, although it is there, of course, but it's also, you know, like specific things. I think that she models really well. And I tell lots of people about. About how to, you know, lift up Native voices, how to intervene. This was like when we first met, Theresa had brought me out to Western for an event. And in the Q and A, there were some disturbing

aggressive questions. And just like really like just questions that were otherwise like, not not great.

[01:03:00] And I thought, you know, a lot of people are sort of, I think, nervous about like, what should I do? What how should I how should I act? Should I intervene? Should I not intervene? This is something that Theresa had already worked out. She had already thought about this. She'd already, you know, planned for for what happens when it's important, too, to step in. And she stepped in and made it so that I didn't have to answer those questions that were terrible. You know, and so. And and I could see that, you know, in the beginning of our friendship, that's a piece that I think is going to be necessary for this ongoing work like. I believe that, you know, our nations are going to endure long after the settler state fails. I really you know, it's not doing so great. I don't know if you've noticed the American experiment kind of shaky. And I believe, you know, our nations have been around forever and they will continue to be around. And you know, when. When we're here and they're not, you know, it's not we're not talking about any kind of deportation. Absolutely not. We're talking about everybody being here and the, you know, endurance of Indigenous governance, how are non-Native people going to live here? How are we going to work together? You know, is there's going to be some things that I think are are going to need to change and they can change right now.

[01:04:29] non-Native people and, you know, Native people can work together right now and not, you know, in ways that are kind of like. Looking, you know, projecting things into the future, but but like right now and some of that, you know, a big piece of that is like, how much in a collaboration, you know, I know when I'm asked to do to collaborate with someone and it's really about serving their career. Right. Or serving what they think, you know, like their artistic needs. I can tell, you know, and. It's like in a collaborator. I'm looking for someone who is on the same page as me, wants the same things as me. And, you know, certainly, you know, I want Theresa to get things out of this like I want the best for her. But. But like I want that best to be in a partnership and not anyone having to. I don't know. I think that like. It needs to be a real, meaningful commitment that. That's not going to go away when it becomes inconvenient. And so I think I think that this is this can be, you know, the more we talk about it in interviews and Q and A's like this. You know, I tell people about it because I want people to know that this is you know, it's not hypothetical. It's something that we do. You know, Theresa and I do every day. And we're gonna continue to do it. I think for the rest of our lives.

[01:06:02] Thank you so much. I think that I'm just so humbled by the amount of trust that you've put in me, and I hope that I can continue to live up to that. But I think that that there's to like the fact that that is a commitment for life is one of the things about it that I think is really important.

[01:06:20] Elissa and I aren't just like we didn't just do this together. I mean, we text every single day.

[01:06:26] We are. We talk about and we talk about like all of the basics about like who is going to send this email? Who is going to do this? And it might seem laborious, but that is what we check. Like, are you okay with this? Like, how does this feel? And so I think that that's really important. And just in,

[01:06:46] Like Elissa was talking about, this form is the thing that you start seeing everywhere. And one of the things we've talked a lot about is how the form likes the relationships that are set out for us. Like settlement requires us to have certain relationships for it to continue.

[01:07:02] And that one of the things that we want to do and that we've talked about a lot is to figure out other forms for that. And not because that needs to that's like something new. But actually, there are old like old examples. And I think that Laura's piece is so amazing to think, too, about treaties as this thing that is like this example, this form that has been given to us about relating to each other. But then like how that form has been, you know, just completely stomped on or like, what is the new version of that form? So we've talked a lot about friendships and relationships. We don't even really feel like we never know how to refer to each other. We're like we're related cosmically.

[01:07:45] So we have time for one more question. Huh? Anyone want to be the last question? No pressure. No pressure. It has to be really good.

[01:07:54] When you when the two of you were doing the readings of the pieces inside the anthology. I was paying a lot of attention to the content, but I wasn't paying attention to the form. And so I'm curious about if you could speak to what you know in terms of form when you got to what you wrote or what other people have written in there. What should we what would you see? What should we be seeing in regard to form paying attention to? You know, at the very beginning, you said we should be paying attention to these things as vessels as in and pay attention to their forms. So if you could if you could speak to that in regard to what you read or other pieces in there/

[01:08:34] I mean, I can just say, as far as what we read, like what you saw with so much planning went into talking about who is going to talk first. Who is going to say what? And so part of that planning is like Elissa giving thanks first. Her being the first one to talk. Having

Laura finish us out like that. So part of the form of that thing was this all like alternating conversation and then making sure that we hopefully aspirationally. We had a sort of narrative to what we were telling you. And so as far as the presentation tonight, like that's how we thought about the form. And we I mean, we have it we had it laid out by by minutes like this many minutes we'll talk about this, making sure that the most possible amount of time was spent listening to their pieces from the book and stuff like that.

[01:09:21] Do you want to talk a little bit about. The form of the collection? I think.

[01:09:27] Well, I really want to talk what comes to mind. I've been teaching Laura's essay. I haven't told you this. Yeah, I taught Laura, as I say, twice this week at Port Townsend Writers Conference.

[01:09:36] And we thought, you know, and like in reading that it's you know, I pay attention to form as like where the paragraph breaks is very meaningful. You know, where like that that breakage happens. That's like one hallmark of form in that piece. And like, you know, in my essay, you you know, you may have noticed that I paused quite a bit that space on the page. So that's kind of like just one element of a form that I think. Everybody who reads something and hears it experiences the form. And, you know, we may be kind of like actively paying attention to the content, but we are absorbing the form. Laura, did you want to say anything?

[01:10:20] I guess because I'm quite visual. I actually find interaction with form, I guess a little more natural on the page for me. But I can sort of speak to the elements of form that went into the creation of my essay. And in this case, I think I was reliant on juxtaposition. And I think it was maybe juxtapositions between concepts of selfhood, nationhood and then the land. So like whatever a big umbrella, we can talk about how we actually live. And then I tried to utilize white space within the essay as a poet, but I also did pay quite a bit of attention to breaks and word so that, you know, a paragraph break might end on a word or phrase that would be picked up or reexamined later within the essay. So I've actually really enjoyed sort of poring through these examples and recognizing there's such a vast diversity of form. In many ways. The form is so sophisticated. I know I'll need to be. Have had the opportunity to have some kind of talk me through it, read it many times. But I guess that informed the form of my essay. And I did think a lot about the treaties as both kind of necessary artifacts of our sovereignty, but as documents of brutality and brokenness. And then I I had a strong personal reaction with illness to that sense of what happens when something whole is measured and broken.

[01:12:01] I can say to you that I've taught I've taught Laura's essay also and Elissa's essay. Have you taught your own essay?

[01:12:08] No. Oh, I'll I'll ask you later. But one of the.

[01:12:14] This is just like a really quick if you're looking for sort of a really easy set of questions, like to ask yourself, as your reading. Is that one of the things I always tell students is, look, it just like in a sentence, say, like, what do you think the author is trying to say? And then how does the shape of how they're saying it lead to that sort of conclusion? Right. So like one of my favorite activities to do with students is when they read a book or anything like that saying what is your initial reaction? And a lot of times they'll be like, oh, I hated this character or something or I loved this character either way.

[01:12:45] And I'll say it's really interesting that all of you had that same reaction. That's about like that's about the craft of the author that they did that somehow. Now let's figure out how they did that. So I'm both of my parents are engineers. So I always think of this as a very engineering thing. So don't tell them that I said that they had an impact on my thinking as engineers, but it's very mechanical in some ways to say how does that how does it work? Like how does a piece of writing work? And to me, that's what I think of when I think of form too, because I think that that's what writers think about too when they're creating something is how do I make this work? And so it is reading the essays.

[01:13:26] I would just say, think about that. When you get to the end of an essay or during an essay, say what?

[01:13:31] What is the main takeaway? I think that's author's saying. And then how does the way that they wrote it. You know, lead to that.

[01:13:40] I love that. I feel like that's an amazing note to end on. So thank you all so much for coming.

[01:13:47] Thank you, everybody. Thank you, Elissa, Theresa and Laura, thank you so much.

[01:13:55] This podcast was presented by the Seattle Public Library and Foundation and made possible by your contributions to the Seattle Public Library Foundation. Thanks for listening.