Loving Indianess: Native Women's Storytelling as Survivance

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Abstract

Native women writers are storytelling to create social change in their communities. Central to this writing is a perception of "loving Indianess" that acknowledges how we may articulate our worldview and experience our "Indianess" differently, yet produce a loving space for Native peoples as a strategy of cultural survival.
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Native survivance rejects the myth of the vanishing or the dying or the already assimilated Indian. It insists that our people have endured five centuries of settler colonialism and continue to thrive through our languages, cultures, and ability to love, laugh and live amidst hardship. Survivance, for me, also means the celebration of our Native LGBTQ and two-spirit community. Since Columbus and his people first arrived on Native lands, the regulation of Western sexual and gender norms has been one of the most prominent modes of colonization. We have a gay Native woman, Susan Allen, on the Minnesota legislature and other queer Native folks doing vital work in the public and private sectors in all 50 states and 562 federally recognized tribes. Native survivance, on the other hand, is an active sense of presence over historical absence, deracination, and oblivion. The nature of survivance is unmistakable in Native stories, natural reason, active traditions, customs, and narrative resistance and is clearly observable in personal attributes such as humor, spirit, cast of mind, and moral courage in literature. In this anthology, eighteen scholars discuss the themes and practices of survivance in literature, examining the legacy of Vizenor's original insights and exploring the manifestations of survivance in a variety of contexts.