

## INTRODUCTION

# Indian Removal and the Projects of Native American Writing

In 1821, several American newspapers published the transcript of a speech by a Pawnee tribal leader who had recently paid a visit to Fort Atkinson, an American army post on the Missouri River. Identified by the scribe as Shun-kah-kihe-gah, the Pawnee leader had sat in council with Benjamin O’Fallon, the American subagent at the Upper Missouri Indian agency at Council Bluffs, in the heart of Indian country. In his speech, he addressed his people’s political relations with the United States, reflecting on the first time that the four Pawnee bands had entered into treaty with the Americans, when in 1818 they declared themselves “under the protection of the United States of America, and of no other nation, power or sovereign, whatsoever.”<sup>1</sup> Adhering to a convention of diplomacy between Native leaders and American officials, Shun-kah-kihe-gah addressed O’Fallon as “My Father” and recalled a remarkable moment of historical transformation: “We considered [the Pawnees] to be the first nation on the earth; we had always appeared so conspicuous as almost to obscure the other nations around us, but when you came to this land, followed by so many war chiefs and soldiers, whose glistening appeared like a fiery son of heaven, I almost shrunk within myself; I thought I discovered my mistake, and, consulting the safety of my people, I opened my ears to your words, and became an American.”<sup>2</sup> The Pawnee leader recalled a moment when the potential of diplomacy with the United States seemed limitless, when the parade of American soldiers promised either imperial domination or protection. Yet he swiftly deflated this narrative by pointing out the limits of American

influence in the Pawnee homelands. Although three of the Pawnee bands had allied with the United States, the Skidi band continued to raid American traders in the Upper Missouri Valley, and O'Fallon's failure to punish the culprits caused unrest among the Pawnees: "Since I have been an American," Shun-kah-kihe-gah said, "my influence with my nation weakens, as you hesitate to punish every insult offered your people . . . you, altho' a great chief, have not the control of them."<sup>3</sup> The words of the Pawnee speaker pointed to a disconnect between the rhetoric of American empire and the messier realities it buried. As he recounted the waxing and waning of US influence in the span of just three years, Shun-kah-kihe-gah suggested to O'Fallon that the protection of his American "father" amounted to little on the ground.

The Indian agency at Council Bluffs was not the Pawnee's exclusive audience: his words made their way east from Indian country to readers in American cities, who encountered them in magazines and newspapers such as *Niles' Weekly Register*, the *Washington Gazette*, and the *Richmond Enquirer*. In these publications, the speech was advertised under the succinct heading of "Indian Eloquence," a standard phrase by which editors categorized the oratory of Native leaders. For American readers, the speech promised the distinctive rhetoric of an Indian Other, laden with powerfully vivid metaphors of the body, from open ears and rejoicing hearts to spilt blood and naked bones. Intimating that tribal leaders governed their people "with their tongues" while punishing enemies "with their arms," the Pawnee's rhetoric must have resonated with romantic images of eloquent Indian chiefs and fearless warriors. At places like the Council Bluffs agency, however, such idiomatic language was a regular feature of the interactions between Native leaders and Indian agents, traders, and interpreters. Even as they became part of a burgeoning American print culture, speeches like Shun-kah-kihe-gah's harkened back to the cross-cultural exchanges that were central to Indian diplomacy. By speaking to government scribes and interpreters, the Pawnee leader brought an indigenous perspective on US-Indian relations into American governmental networks. In doing so, he emphasized that his words represented not just his own views, but the deliberations of his community: "I did not leave my village in the dark but with the knowledge of my people, and after having consulted my chiefs and warriors." And as he explained the failures of the American government in dealing with the Skiri band, he realized that his speech conveyed an uncomfortable reality: "My father, I come to tell you truth, but it will be unpleasant to your ears."<sup>4</sup> Construing his own words as Pawnee communal knowledge, Shun-kah-kihe-gah offered his political allegiance along with a critique of how the Americans were managing their diplomatic affairs.

The circulation of the Pawnee speech reflects the stakes and conditions of early Native American literatures in English, the publication of which was closely connected to the world of Indian diplomacy.<sup>5</sup> Although it has never been central to mainstream narratives of American culture, Indian diplomacy had profoundly shaped North America since the early days of the Atlantic fur trade. As early as the sixteenth century, representatives of indigenous nations engaged in diplomatic exchange with emissaries of European empires. After the American Revolutionary War, Indian nations found themselves engaging in diplomacy with the United States, a nascent empire that was gradually expanding westward. As treaty after treaty reduced the land base of Indian nations, the figure of the Native diplomat became a ubiquitous actor in a continental history of exchange and dispossession. By the nineteenth century, scenes of treaty-making had become a fixture in increasingly romanticized cultural narratives about US-Indian encounters, from popular depictions of William Penn's 1683 treaty with the Lenni Lenape to the "Indian deed" discovered in Nathaniel Hawthorne's *House of the Seven Gables* (1851). The Indian diplomat gradually came to be understood as the quintessential colonial dupe: dignified and noble, but not artful enough to wield the upper hand in negotiations, and ultimately deceived by colonial adversaries. As a variation on the "vanishing Native American," Indian diplomats were worthy of commemoration more than anything, immortalized by artists such as Charles Bird King and James Otto Lewis, whose famous portraits of Native delegates extended a discourse of cross-cultural friendship. Steadily the Indian diplomat became a trope in a nationalist story that popularized a distorted or even sanitized version of the colonial relations between Indian nations and the United States.

The records of Indian diplomacy often echo such tropes of international friendship. When Shun-kah-kihe-gah sat in council with O'Fallon, for instance, the transcription of his speech ended with his statement that "I only aspire to be your friend, and wish to *live* in your *estimation*."<sup>6</sup> Yet this rhetoric of friendship belies a more complex history of diplomatic relations, and early Native American literatures in English reveal a detailed record of indigenous critiques of American institutions that had become central to Indian diplomacy. After 1790, the United States government established what Phillip H. Round calls lasting "institutions of Indian policy" in the War Department, the Office of Indian Trade, and—after 1824—the Office of Indian Affairs. These institutions carried out a broad attempt to "appease" Indian nations in the western territories, carrying out "intense diplomatic efforts" that took place in a "charged atmosphere." By participating in these interactions, American Indian diplomats came to model what Round calls the "emerging indigenous speaking subject in American political discourse."<sup>7</sup> More than simply extending the rhetoric of cross-cultural amity, Native diplomats used

writing and oratory to bear witness to the concerns of individual Indian nations and the state of intertribal relations, in ways that affirmed indigenous sovereignty within American institutions of diplomacy. Through the collective efforts of indigenous representatives, Indian diplomacy gave rise to an important tradition of indigenous literature.

*Authorized Agents* examines how nineteenth-century Native American writing and oratory extended the forms and substance of Indian diplomacy into new publication contexts. In the chapters that follow, I explore the works of American Indian writers and orators from the nineteenth century who insisted on the need for continued diplomatic relationships that were responsive and politically meaningful to Indian nations. As they traversed diplomatic networks, figures such as Sharitarish (Pawnee), Ongpatonga (Omaha), Hardfish (Sauk), and Peter Pitchlynn (Choctaw) worked with interpreters, traders, religious leaders, and delegates from other indigenous nations, and in doing so they secured a political voice within colonial institutions. Through these efforts, they contributed to a substantial yet much-overlooked body of Native American literature in English, the publication of which wavered between textual collaboration and institutional critique.

The literary history of Indian diplomacy adds important inflection to the study of indigenous people's agency in colonial regimes of representation. In nineteenth-century North America, Native people frequently entered the colonial record through translation and collaboration, and often by speaking alongside indigenous and settler participants in formal negotiations. They worked with scribes and interpreters, joined delegations, sat in council with American officials, wrote petitions, gave speeches, and engaged in ceremonial exchanges. Because such diplomatic negotiations typically took place between representatives who spoke different languages, they worked by scripted and ceremonial routines. While many representatives of Indian nations were able to read and write in English, others depended on the work of government interpreters and saw their oratory transcribed by field agents of the Office of Indian Affairs. At the same time, these interactions also extended indigenous protocols and ceremonies: whether held in Washington or in Native villages, Indian diplomacy incorporated oratory, parades, gift giving, tobacco smoking, and the display and exchange of regalia and uniforms. These practices represented a discursive space that was shaped by the possibilities and limitations of the diplomatic encounter. As Richard White shows in his influential history of the Great Lakes region, the frequent misinterpretations that ensued in these settings forged a "middle ground" of interaction, a new cultural plane that emerged from the mutual adaptations and misunderstandings between European and Native protocols and rhetorics.<sup>8</sup>

This is not to say that Indian diplomacy took place on a neutral playing field. Rather than dealing with Indian nations on an equal footing, nineteenth-century US policymakers consistently undermined the domestic and intertribal politics of Indian nations, grouping autonomous bands and tribes together to treat with clearly legible constructs of “nations.”<sup>9</sup> In doing so, the United States claimed more extensive diplomatic relations than their negotiations actually established on the ground, to project a further reach of US imperial power. This practice reflects that, as György Ferenc Tóth writes, the category of the *nation* is “not natural but *performed* in cultural representations, government policy, and international diplomacy.” Indian diplomacy is thus “the performance of the nation through ‘representation’—the standing in of an individual or a team for the interests and positions of a larger ‘imagined community,’” which means that the representation of nationhood in scenes of diplomacy depends on a situational performance.<sup>10</sup> While the performance of Indian diplomacy affirmed international political ties between sovereign nations, however, American policymakers translated indigenous sovereignty into a diminished form of sovereignty, meaningful only within the confines of its colonial relation to the United States. Following the War of 1812, moreover, not only did the United States divest from Indian diplomacy more and more, the conduct of diplomacy—especially by organizing delegations to Washington—became an opportunity to intimidate Native leaders with the size of American cities, arsenals, and shipyards, to demonstrate the military strength of the expanding settler nation. With federal Indian policy aimed at the erosion of Indian nations’ sovereignty and land base, indigenous diplomats typically worked in a context of limited agency or even coercion.<sup>11</sup>

*Authorized Agents* examines the works of indigenous writers and orators who pushed back against these asymmetries. One such intervention is the work of the Sauk warrior Black Hawk, who in 1833 narrated his life story for the bestselling autobiography *Life of Ma-ka-tai-me-she-kia-kiak*. The publication of this book depended on the work of a government interpreter at the Rock Island Indian agency, but it also criticizes the interpreter’s involvement in the history of Sauk dispossession. Meanwhile, the Sauk tribal leader Keokuk held frequent councils with government officials at Rock Island and St. Louis, which enabled him to establish an important body of oratory in which he outlined the shortcomings of US Indian policy. In the Choctaw Nation, the diplomat Peter Pitchlynn wrote a report on his survey of Choctaw lands in Indian Territory, in which his reflections on intertribal diplomacy became a defense of his people’s land claims west of the Mississippi. And in the early 1840s the Ojibwe missionary Peter Jones brought a petition to the British crown that challenged philanthropic discourses of “pity” for

Native subjects, offering a rationale for indigenous education that was sanctioned by local networks of Ojibwe government. Far from dupes who were played upon by colonial administrators, these writers and orators were apt readers of institutional networks and discourses, who contributed to an innovative body of literature about intertribal and colonial relations in North America.

The fact that such literatures of diplomacy were typically edited and published by colonial institutions—including the Indian Office, missionary organizations, and territorial governments—has often left their authors to be misread, discredited, or simply ignored. Yet these writings deserve critical attention because they point us not only to the dialogic and colonial contexts of Native literatures, but also because they are attuned to their intertribal dimensions. Indian diplomacy generated a rich body of indigenous literature that was both tribally specific and inherently international in outlook, resistant to colonialism while also incorporating Euro-American ideologies and writing practices. Although shaped by intercultural protocols, Indian diplomacy nevertheless legitimized the representational work of indigenous diplomats who articulated concrete political goals, even when these cannot be ascribed to a singular, original “author.” Recognizing these tensions, this book revisits a body of indigenous literature that might otherwise be dismissed as merely an extension of the bureaucratic discourses of the settler state. Reading the history of Indian diplomacy back into these texts, it traces the fraught collaborations that forged them and the contributions they made to the archive of nineteenth-century indigenous literature.

#### INDIGENOUS PUBLICATION PROJECTS

In examining the relation between indigenous literatures and diplomacy, this book explores what it meant for Native authors to “publish” in the nineteenth century. Indian diplomacy depended on forms of communication in which indigenous people and settlers alike shaped the forms and substance of meaning making, through oral performance, manuscript writing, and nontextual forms of communication. In this sense, the practice of Indian diplomacy was part of what Matt Cohen and Jeffrey Glover term “colonial mediascapes,” the complex interactions of textual and nontextual materials that formed the basis of communication between Native people, settlers, and other newcomers to the Americas.<sup>12</sup> Scholars such as Andrew Newman and Birgit Brander Rasmussen have examined how early Native American literatures hinged on collaborative forms of writing, including wampum belts, treaties, and petitions.<sup>13</sup> Resisting what Craig Womack criticizes as the facile “oppositional thinking” about orality versus literacy, this work points to the ways

in which settlers and indigenous people in the Americas participated in multimedia “publication events,” Matt Cohen’s generative term for performative interactions in which neither Native people nor Europeans fully controlled the “customs and rhetorics” of cross-cultural interaction.<sup>14</sup>

In the nineteenth century, American Indians gradually gained more control over the publication of their own printed works, reflecting the changes in a media landscape that was increasingly shaped by a cross-regional market for print.<sup>15</sup> The emergence of an expansive print culture in the mid-nineteenth century brought Native writings and oratory from councils and delegations into a wider cultural realm: into printed books, magazines, petitions, and newspapers. As Michael Warner argues in *The Letters of the Republic*, the potentially unlimited circulation of printed matter had long modeled the sense of abstraction and disembodiment that is central to what Jürgen Habermas calls the “public sphere,” the free, rational-critical discourse through which private individuals come together to critically reflect on state power and to offer a counterweight to it.<sup>16</sup> American Indian writers, too, mobilized the close connection between print and the public sphere. Between 1828 and 1834, the Cherokee writer Elias Boudinot published the newspaper *Cherokee Phoenix* in New Echota, the capital of the Cherokee Nation, raising public awareness about the political question of Cherokee removal and, more generally, the relations between the United States and Indian nations.<sup>17</sup> In 1829, the Pequot author William Apess published his autobiography *A Son of the Forest*, and four years later Black Hawk published his as-told-to autobiography *Life of Ma-ka-tai-me-she-kia-kiak*.<sup>18</sup> In other words, Native authors were quick to respond to innovations in publishing, and the cross-regional reach of print made their publications an important factor in the history of nineteenth-century American letters.

Throughout the nineteenth century, Native authors carried the social and political questions of Indian diplomacy into this expansive print culture, and in doing so they fashioned new kinds of collaborations. After all, historians of print culture have shown that print publication is a relational and situational act. In the words of Elizabeth Maddock Dillon, the publication of a book represents a “series of collective interchanges” that involve “authors, editors, printers, publishers, consumers, booksellers, reviewers, and readers not to mention technologies related to such matters as paper production, printing presses, typefaces, and transportation.”<sup>19</sup> But as Eric Cheyfitz reminds us, in the context of American Indian literatures the term “collaboration” often carries a “nuanced range of . . . meanings from cooperation to coercion,” and as such the entangled questions of authorship, translation, and sponsorship also represent the power dynamics of indigenous-settler relationships.<sup>20</sup> To recognize these tensions it helps to consider

Arnold Krupat's seminal work on American Indian autobiography, in which he posited a series of analytical questions to examine the collaborative contexts of Native American literature:

How many workers . . . were involved in the production of the final text, and what did each contribute to it? . . . Under what auspices was the text produced, and what claims were made for it? . . . Was it paid for by the government or by a private individual? Was it sponsored historically or legally, in relation to a particular event or a particular claim? . . . What were the apparent intentions of the producers and what benefits did they derive from their collaborative project?<sup>21</sup>

Krupat's questions are an early call for what we could name a book-historical perspective in indigenous literary studies, linking questions of book production and dissemination to the relational or institutional contexts of early Native print publication. If print publication is the product of networks of people and technologies, the collaborative dimensions of publishing are more than merely background or "context," pointing us instead to the ways Native authors traversed these networks in order to raise public notice.

Even in the nineteenth century, however, the printed book remained but one of many avenues of publication. Despite an expanding, cross-regional market for printed books, this technology of publication stood alongside manuscript writing, oratory, and performance—modes of cultural production that were "composed of events bound in time and framed in space."<sup>22</sup> For Native writers, too, manuscript writing and oral performance remained equally important forms of publication, as is reflected in the career of William Apess, one of the most widely studied Native writers of the nineteenth century. After he became a Methodist minister in 1829, Apess promptly finished an autobiography titled *A Son of the Forest*, published the same year, in which he recounted his conversion and offered a rebuke of Euro-American colonialism and racial prejudice. Traveling around New England to preach to ethnically mixed congregations, he became involved in the political situation of the Mashpee Wampanoag of Cape Cod, who had been placed under supervision by white overseers while white settlers encroached on their lands. The Mashpee protested their conditions during what has come to be known as the "Mashpee Revolt" (1833–1834), and Apess supported their cause by speaking out publicly on their behalf in local meetings, petitioning the Massachusetts State government, and writing letters to Harvard College to contest the appointment of the minister who served the Mashpee community.<sup>23</sup> As he secured favorable coverage in the *Boston Advocate*, the affair consolidated his reputation as a writer, orator, and preacher. In short, his career as an author did not depend on his print autobiography alone but also on how he navigated networks within the Methodist



church, colonial and indigenous governments, educational institutions, and the lecture circuit. It is through these different forms of publication (encompassing manuscript writing, oratory, and print) that Apess contributed to the public discourse on Indian affairs in Massachusetts—a debate that was rooted both in colonial institutions and in Mashpee community contexts.

The career of Apess reminds us that the writing and publishing of literature is a networked affair. In *Indigenous Intellectuals*, Kiara M. Vigil argues that in the realm of writing and cultural production, a network can be understood as a “structure, with individual centers of gravity,” in which “ideas flow through both interpersonal and mediated communications.”<sup>24</sup> Much of what we now call early American literature extended interpersonal networks within institutions and associations, including reform societies, conversational clubs, evangelical groups, academies, and seminaries.<sup>25</sup> Accordingly, studies by Susan Scott Parrish, Sean Harvey, and Kelly Wisecup have emphasized how indigenous people had long been creators of knowledge within the networks of learned societies, religious organizations, and governments.<sup>26</sup> As Richard Brodhead argues in *Cultures of Letters*, “writing is always an acculturated activity” and it is therefore important not to delimit the networks from which acts of writing emerge as merely a matter of “context.” Rather, the act of writing

always takes place within some completely concrete cultural situation, a situation that surrounds it with some particular landscape of institutional structures, affiliates it with some particular group from among the array of contemporary groupings, and installs it [in] some group-based world of understandings, practices, and values. But this setting provides writing with more than a backdrop. A work of writing comes to its particular form of existence in interaction with the network of relations that surrounds it: in any actual instance, writing orients itself in or against some understanding of what writing is, does, and is good for that is culturally composed and derived.<sup>27</sup>

Indian diplomacy represented a crucial network of relations through which Native writers and orators extended the communication networks of indigenous nations. In *Ethnology and Empire*, Robert Lawrence Gunn examines nineteenth-century literatures of US-Indian interaction from the American borderlands, showing how the institutional networks of the US state fostered “interanimating networks of peoples, spaces, and communication practices” that carried Native people’s words and ideas “across western borderlands regions and metropolitan centers of knowledge production and power.”<sup>28</sup> As “vehicles of power [and] instruments of conquest,” Gunn explains, these networks produced writings that originated in “unstable, shifting borderlands” but were filtered through the “seemingly dry

imperial matters of bureaucracy, law, and policy.” In this respect, Gunn argues, they reflected colonial relations that were simultaneously “local and national, individual and systemic, [and] firmly terrestrial yet deeply vested in the cultural imaginary of nineteenth-century US imperialism.”<sup>29</sup> For Native writers and orators, then, “publication” did not necessarily mean engaging a national mass market for print, but depended largely on networks of Indian diplomacy and colonial bureaucracies, as well as closely related spheres outside of government.

Besides Gunn, several scholars of early Native American literature have remarked on the links between indigenous publication and the workings of Indian diplomacy. In *The Common Pot*, Lisa Brooks argues that American Indians in the Northeast used petitions, political writings, and oratory to regain land rights and to assert anticolonial mappings of Native space. In particular, Brooks draws attention to a genre of Native writing that can be understood as “treaty literature,” consisting of “oratory protocol guided by mnemonic wampum belts and birchbark scrolls that contained the records of international exchange.”<sup>30</sup> Even though it was inherently transnational in outlook, treaty literature also registers political projects that were deeply shaped by the lives of local indigenous communities. The conduct of Indian diplomacy was therefore a powerfully motivating context for indigenous speech acts. Phillip H. Round’s *Removable Type* traces how “diplomatic publics” emerged from new connections between tribal leaders and diplomats (from different Indian nations), agents of settler governments (at the federal, state, and territorial levels), and representatives of religious organizations. While not synonymous with indigenous publics, diplomatic publics were an important factor in the efforts “to formulate a nascent set of American Indian ‘publics,’” as Indian nations found ways to “negotiate with each other, argue with colonial adversaries, and preserve for posterity their motives and deliberations during diplomatic struggles.”<sup>31</sup> Sometimes these diplomatic publics represent what Nancy Fraser calls “strong publics,” having a direct influence on political decision-making, while at other times they constituted “weak publics,” playing only advisory or even tokenistic roles in diplomatic settings.<sup>32</sup> In either case, the writing and oratory that emerged from these settings became meaningful in and *because of* the diplomatic situation. But if Native authors channeled the discourses of colonial networks, they also modified them according to culturally specific political objectives. As James H. Cox argues in *The Red Land to the South*, diplomacy ultimately “has an end game.” It operates by cautious interaction and “patient, tactful advocacy,” but it is also an overtly political form of cultural mediation: diplomats cannot afford to “alienate” their audience, but at the same time they need to “advocate for a specific position.”<sup>33</sup> In sum, Indian diplomacy worked by moments of exchange that were

situational and inscribed by colonial relations, but it also organized indigenous publics that were politically motivating, since it was an increasingly rare discursive space for public debate on the present and future of indigenous communities.

The publication of indigenous writing and oratory was thus organized within institutional landscapes, and indigenous diplomats and tribal leaders created texts that showcased an astute awareness of the administrative functions and malfunctions within colonial bureaucracies. Through collaborative acts of publication, they carried out projects to pursue meaningful change in diplomatic institutions, thereby intervening in the relations between Indian nations and the settler state. To capture these situational and goal-oriented logics of Indian diplomacy, I use the term “projects” to describe acts of publication that were institutionally embedded but also forward-looking and oriented toward future change. But what does it mean to think about writing and publication as a “project”? In a study of technological and scientific projects in eighteenth-century Britain, the literary scholar David Alff argues that to carry out a project requires “a thinking through of possibility” to make one’s “proposed endeavor seem plausible in the context of the future.” A project, Alff suggests, depends on individuals weaving together “strategies of rhetorical persuasion, publication, and embodied action,” in an effort to apply “their faculties of imagination to achieve finite goals.”<sup>34</sup> This goal-oriented nature is also central to other definitions of projects, which typically indicate a relationship between imaginative acts and their impact in the social world. In *Phenomenology of the Social World* (1932), the Austrian philosopher Alfred Schütz defines a project as the “phantasying” of social action that precedes a person’s agency, an imagining of the impact that one’s action will make in the social world. Schütz argues that social action depends on the ability to theorize for oneself a “project” that can be visualized as a completed, fully realized act, and is thus motivated by how individuals imagine their actions will effect meaningful change.<sup>35</sup> In this respect, there is an inherently social component to the notion of a project. In her work on South American youth movements, for instance, the cultural sociologist Ann Mische draws on Schütz’s work to theorize projects as imagined possibilities that motivate collective social action, what she calls an “imaginary horizon of multiple plans and possibilities.”<sup>36</sup>

But if there is a social component to the idea of a project, there is an institutional one as well.<sup>37</sup> In organization theory, the concept of a project concerns the making and remaking of organizational structures. The organization theorists J. Rodney Turner and Ralf Müller define projects as “temporary organizations” that depend on the workings of existing organizations but also modify them. In their definition, projects are collaborative and short-term endeavors that often operate

under a sense of urgency, and that tap into the resources of existing organizations to “deliver beneficial objectives of change.”<sup>38</sup> This usage helps to understand projects as goal-oriented and often collaborative endeavors that are shaped by the institutional networks of Indian diplomacy, even as they work toward discursive and political change within them.

Drawing on these different usages, I argue that nineteenth-century Native American writers and orators generated what I term *indigenous publication projects*: mediated forms of indigenous representation that are produced with non-Native collaborators, which take place in institutional and diplomatic networks but also intervene in them. They are *indigenous* not because they authentically give voice to the ideas of indigenous actors, but because these mediated forms of publication nevertheless construct indigenous counter-discourses within colonial scenes of interaction. And they are forms of *publication* not because they necessarily hail a potentially unlimited audience, but because they organize politically meaningful publics within existing communication networks. Finally, I define them as *projects* because they are collaborative forms of textual production, directed at some measure of institutional change. Indigenous publication projects organize various forms of writing and speaking in the context of diplomatic interaction, but if they are shaped by institutional structures and discourses, they also inflect them. In the nineteenth century, Native authors circulated their critiques by working closely (sometimes problematically so) with collaborators such as Indian agents, administrators, and missionaries, who often imposed their ideas and political goals onto these attempts to gain public notice. Even as their projects were sponsored by American policymakers, however, they were important interventions in existing institutions, constituting crucial attempts to claim a place for Indian nations in North America. By considering Native American publication as a *project*, then, I emphasize the political and intellectual goals of indigenous writers and speakers while being realistic about the process and conditions of their path to publication. To approach such acts of writing and speaking as indigenous publication projects emphasizes the strategic agency of Native authors who navigated diplomatic publics within government and civil society—communication circuits that included coauthors, amanuenses, translators, printers, and participants in treaty councils. These networks provided the discursive means by which their texts were disseminated within a range of (intimate) networks, but they were also inflected by the efforts of Native writers who pushed back against their very structures.

In the era of Indian removal, indigenous publication projects negotiated different visions for the political and economic organization of tribal nations. These projects extended but also modified the long history of indigenous writing

in North America, which since the first days of colonial encounter had been shaped by the practice of treaty-making and the confines of colonial law. In an important survey of American Indian literatures, Eric Cheyfitz suggests that the form and content of US-Indian treaties reflect deeply rooted colonial conditions, revealing how “Indian communities are subject to, even as they resist, cultural, social, economic, and political translation.”<sup>39</sup> And since treaties became central to the official status of Indian nations under American law, federal Indian law itself can be seen as an early form of “collaborative American literature.”<sup>40</sup> In the nineteenth century, Native writers proved themselves deeply aware of the political implications of how Indian nations were constructed in American law. As Maureen Konkle has shown in *Writing Indian Nations*, Native American intellectuals engaged with the history of treaty-making to affirm the existence of tribal nations as modern nations living in historical time, holding undiminished claims to political sovereignty.<sup>41</sup> Writers from Elias Boudinot to George Copway recognized that treaties represented a central site of contestation over the meaning of Indian nationhood in relation to American empire. In this respect, such projects extended a distinctive tradition of Native American literature that engaged the history of US-Indian treaties and thereby asserted the political sovereignty of Indian nations.

Yet if US-Indian treaties and federal Indian law had a profound shaping influence on indigenous literatures, they were not the only diplomatic contexts that Native writers and speakers engaged. Indeed, Cheyfitz reminds us that American legal institutions were by no means the only state apparatus that affected Native people’s lives profoundly, and indeed the White House and the United States Congress had a more immediate impact on the conduct of Indian policy and diplomacy.<sup>42</sup> Since Indian diplomacy was a situational affair, taking place in different locations in and beyond Indian country, indigenous publication projects emerged from a wide range of diplomatic settings: intertribal councils, the offices of Indian agents, delegations to Washington, speeches in the US Congress, collaborations with state governments, and meetings with the leaders of religious organizations. It was in these multivalent sites of diplomacy that Native writers and orators intervened in the institutions of the early American republic. The writings that came out of these settings were not defined by a US-Indian dyad but were profoundly shaped by negotiations within and among Indian nations. Through these diplomatic networks, Native representatives generated an important tradition of indigenous writing that was both tribally specific and intertribal, chronicling the failures of American policy and diplomacy while articulating new possibilities for Indian nations in a colonial situation.

INDIAN REMOVAL, SETTLER COLONIALISM,  
AND INDIGENOUS SOVEREIGNTY

That Native writers and orators were shrewdly aware of institutional structures and rhetorics was an important recourse for Indian nations, in a colonial culture that sought to extinguish indigenous people's social and physical place. A good case in point are the removal-era writings of the Cherokee elder Nancy Ward (Nanye'hi, c. 1738–1822), who contributed to a longstanding tradition of political petitioning in the Cherokee Nation. In June 1818, Ward called a meeting of thirteen women to discuss the Cherokees' shrinking land base and the possibility of their removal to the trans-Mississippi West. For years, the Cherokees had faced pressure and intimidation from American settlers and speculators, and treaty commissioners now urged them to abandon their homes in Georgia to remove to Indian country. The women drafted a petition to the Cherokee National Council, urging it to take a firm stance against the prospect of removal: "We have heard with painful feelings that the bounds of the lands we now possess are to be drawn into very narrow limits. The land was given to us by the Great Spirit above as our common right, to raise our children upon, & to make support for our rising generations. We therefore humbly petition our beloved children, the head men & warriors, to hold out to the last in support of our common rights, as the Cherokee nation have been the first settlers of this land; we therefore claim the right of the soil."<sup>43</sup> Ward was a logical choice to present the petition to the council, having played a long-standing role as a diplomat. Having once fought in battle, she was allowed to speak in council on national affairs, and she had made speeches to American treaty commissioners going back to the years of the American Revolutionary War.<sup>44</sup> Faced with an increasingly urgent debate over removal, Ward used her status as a diplomat to mediate between the Cherokee women and the National Council and, ultimately, to intervene in the workings US-Cherokee diplomacy.

Still, there was another strand to the Cherokee women's argument as well. While they protested the sale of Cherokee lands, their petition also testified to the influence of Euro-American narratives of "civilization" as a rhetorical defense against indigenous displacement: "Our Father the President advised us to become farmers, to manufacture our own clothes, & to have our children instructed. To this advice we have attended in every thing as far as we were able. Now the thought of us being compelled to remove [to] the other side of the Mississippi is dreadful to us, because it appears that we shall be brought to a savage state again, for we have . . . become too much enlightened to throw aside the privileges of a civilized life."<sup>45</sup> In rejecting the prospect of removal, they embraced the rhetoric of civilization as promoted by "Our Father the President," arguing that the Cherokee's accomplishments in arts, science, and agriculture brought their nation "enlightenment"

and in fact reinforced their claims to their lands. Recognizing that the concept of “civilization” was an important argument in asserting national sovereignty, the Cherokee women marshaled their pride in these agricultural and educational accomplishments to speak out against removal.

The Cherokee petition underscores that Indian removal was both an immediate political crisis and a wider ideological debate over indigenous sovereignty and “civilization.” The Cherokee removal treaty, signed at New Echota 1835, and the subsequent Trail of Tears (1838) loom large in American Indian history, as do the presidency of Andrew Jackson and his signing of the Indian Removal Act in 1830. Yet these were by no means isolated events in the history of removal, nor was this a crisis that affected the Cherokee exclusively. Indeed, the timeline and geography of removal extend far beyond the 1830s and the Cherokee Trail of Tears. Indian removal involved the long-standing displacement of Indian nations by making treaties that extinguished indigenous land title, and as legal historian Stuart Banner notes, this practice had predated Andrew Jackson’s presidency by some 200 years.<sup>46</sup> In the early 1800s, however, removal became a more standardized policy for the American government than it had been before. In 1804, following the Louisiana Purchase a year earlier, the United States Congress authorized the American president to negotiate with Indian nations for the exchange of their lands, a resolution that was renewed in 1817. This meant that if Anglo-Americans had previously used money and goods to expropriate lands from Indian nations, “now they would be purchasing it with other lands,” as Banner puts it.<sup>47</sup> In essence, removal policy meant that the United States made treaties with sovereign Indian nations, forcing them to abandon their lands in the East in exchange for lands west of the Mississippi. The exploratory expeditions of Lewis and Clark (1804–1806) and Stephen Harriman Long (1817–1823) provided the knowledge needed to work out the logics of relocating Indian nations, as well as the boundary line that would separate American society from Indian country.<sup>48</sup>

In the two decades following the Louisiana Purchase, the US government effected removal on a regional rather than cross-continental scale, pushing for relatively smaller land cessions and relocations on a more local level. After the War of 1812, Secretary of War John C. Calhoun first pursued plans for large-scale removals and in 1824 President Monroe proposed to Congress the idea of a territory west of the Mississippi that could offer a potentially permanent home for eastern Indian nations. After Andrew Jackson assumed the presidency in 1829, the American government pursued the relocation of all eastern nations on a grand scale. In 1830, following a fierce debate in Congress, Jackson signed into law the Indian Removal Act, which reasserted the president’s power to directly negotiate removal treaties with Indian nations and appropriated \$500,000 to fund

removals.<sup>49</sup> In his State of the Union address that year, Jackson considered the government's policy "not only liberal but generous," arguing that it "kindly offers [the American Indian] a new home, and proposes to pay the whole expense of his removal and settlement."<sup>50</sup> American policymakers assumed Native people's moral inferiority and thereby their incapacity to determine their own futures, which allowed them to pitch removal as a humanitarian project. They promoted removal as part of the country's paternalistic duty toward Native people, arguing that it would offer them a chance to "catch up" with civilization in the West before they were overrun or corrupted by white settlers in the East.

On one level, then, Indian removal was a time-tested practice that consolidated policies, racial ideologies, and imperial narratives around the goal of extinguishing Native land title. But Indian removal also refers to a more specific period—roughly between the War of 1812 and the American Civil War—when the forced relocation of Indian nations became a defining policy goal for the United States government in its dealings with indigenous people. During Andrew Jackson's presidency (1829–1837), removal became a more prominent political debate in the United States, and the Indian Removal Act of 1830 made removal the go-to policy for handling what came to be known as "the Indian problem." In 1834 the Indian Trade and Intercourse Act established the lands west of the Mississippi as "Indian country" (often used interchangeably with the term "Indian Territory") and designated the trans-Mississippi region as a zone for removed indigenous nations. However, in his historical study of Indian country, William E. Unrau notes that already by the end of the 1830s, the "weak administration" of Indian affairs and the "chronic violations of the new Indian code" meant that even those lands that had been designated for removed tribes were taken, once again, by white settlers. The US government frequently reduced the size of reservations, which soon led to the "blatantly illegal white penetration" of the eastern parts of Indian Territory.<sup>51</sup> As historian Christina Snyder observes, removal should therefore not be seen as "a single act of Congress" or the "lone experience" of the Cherokee Nation, but as "a thousand betrayals, a series of disposessions, an ethnic cleansing designed to radically restructure North America."<sup>52</sup> The policy of Indian removal echoed narratives of American empire that increasingly depended on ideas of white supremacy. According to Snyder, Andrew Jackson's presidency marked a key moment when the racist ideologies of his constituency combined with new concepts from scientific racism, crystallizing a "new brand of racism that would empower a core republic of whites." Indian removal logically became a key principle for "a continental empire where people of color could be marginalized as perpetual subjects or, worse, chattel."<sup>53</sup>



The debate over removal cast sharp divisions not only in Indian nations but also among white policymakers and religious reformists. Historian John P. Bowes notes that the politically controversial case of the Cherokee Nation profoundly influenced the wider public debate over removal, which was shaped by the Cherokees' "language of resistance" as much as the rhetoric of those who promoted removal.<sup>54</sup> As Bowes argues, the dominant rhetoric about removal was shaped by four different if overlapping discourses: the Cherokee constitution's assertion of sovereignty, the American government's policy deliberations, wider debates around removal in the public sphere (which was dominated by white missionaries), and a body of "legal ideologies and judicial rulings."<sup>55</sup> Yet the polarizing responses to removal policy did not reflect fixed lines of ethnicity or tribal affiliation. Many prominent missionaries vehemently opposed removal in word and deed, such as Jeremiah Evarts of the American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions, who worked in the Cherokee Nation during the 1820s and widely publicized his arguments against removal.<sup>56</sup> Other religious leaders, such as the Baptist minister Isaac McCoy, promoted removal to Native leaders and worked with territorial and federal agents to negotiate removal treaties.<sup>57</sup> Similar divisions existed within Indian nations. While many tribal leaders and intellectuals opposed removal, others found reasons to sign off on it, and if many of them moved to Indian Territory with their people, others stayed behind and became citizens under American law.

The ideology and practice of removal thus depended on local and regional dynamics, and on the often limited and contextual powers of white Indian agents and administrators.<sup>58</sup> To understand the relation between Native writing and diplomacy therefore requires an effort to recuperate the iterative and uneven histories of Indian removal and those who negotiated it. For the Southern nations that became known as the "Five Civilized Tribes"—the Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Creek, and Seminole—removal represented an immediate political crisis when state legislatures threatened to impose their laws over Indian nations. In May 1830, Choctaw representatives signed the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek, which ushered in the first large-scale removal to Indian Territory since the Removal Act of 1830. Perhaps most famously, a Cherokee faction signed the Treaty of New Echota in 1835, which led to their removal three years later. An estimated 4,000 Cherokee people died on their march to Indian Territory, known today as the "Trail of Tears." The removal of the Southern nations in the 1830s, however, is part of a longer and more regionally varied history of removal. In areas that were less densely populated with white settlers, such as Michigan Territory, removal followed a different timeline and geography. Members of the Ottawa, Potawatomi,

Shawnee, Sauk, and Meskwaki nations signed removal treaties relatively early—in the 1830s and 1840s—and were relocated to Indian Territory. Yet many of the Ojibwe tribes in the Great Lakes region fended off removal as late as the 1850s and relocated to smaller tracts of land nearer to their original homelands.

Despite such local and regional differences, the policy and practice of Indian removal was a central factor in the history of settler colonialism in the nineteenth century. Briefly put, settler colonialism is a form of colonialism in which the structuring imperative is not the domination of native labor (as is the case in extraction-based colonialism), but rather the extinguishing of an indigenous presence.<sup>59</sup> In an influential formulation, Patrick Wolfe defines settler colonialism as “an inclusive, land-centred project that coordinates a comprehensive range of agencies, from the metropolitan centre to the frontier encampment, with a view to eliminating Indigenous societies.”<sup>60</sup> This logic of elimination, Wolfe argues, has manifested historically in a range of tactics to erode indigenous peoples’ sovereignty and land title, including treaty-making, military violence, assimilationist policies, and boarding-school education. In other words, settler colonialism does not indicate a historical “event”—not an “invasion,” “encounter,” or “period”—but a continuous relationship of indigenous nations to colonial rule, one that may have changed over time but remains a structuring relation as long as there exists a settler demand for indigenous lands. In North America, settler colonialism has followed the pattern of what Carole Pateman calls the “tempered logic of the settler contract,” as distinguished from the “strict” logic. Under the strict logic, settlers do not recognize the sovereignty and land title of indigenous nations but render their lands “vacant,” thereby relinquishing the need to make treaties with them. The United States, however, upheld the “tempered logic” of settler colonialism in which agents of the settler state made treaties with sovereign indigenous nations that were part and parcel of how their land title was extinguished.<sup>61</sup> Under the tempered logic of settler colonialism, the government *did* recognize indigenous sovereignty and the imposition of a settler state operated *through* US-Indian negotiations.

Pateman’s analysis points to the vexed status of indigenous sovereignty in North America. Native studies scholar Amanda J. Cobb argues that in critical discourse, the term “sovereignty” is often used “in the same manner as terms like ‘freedom’ and ‘liberty’—passionately evoked but rarely accorded precise definition or practical meaning.”<sup>62</sup> In a settler-colonial context, indigenous sovereignty is an elusive category because it generally refers to two closely related concepts. First, it names Native people’s self-determination, their right and ability to determine their own political, social, and cultural affairs; second, it names a more circumscribed legal status of Indian nations as sovereign entities *within* the United States. These settler-colonial logics were reinforced in US law with Chief Justice John Marshall’s

ruling in *Fletcher v. Peck* (1810), which decided that indigenous land title was temporary, subject to being extinguished by the United States government, even if it did not specify any process by which that could occur. More famously, in the early 1830s, three of Marshall's Supreme Court rulings on Indian sovereignty—the “Marshall trilogy”—codified the status of indigenous nations as “domestic dependent nations” within the United States.<sup>63</sup> Scholars have long grappled with this status of Indian nations as “domestic dependent nations” vis-à-vis the American government. The anthropologist Audra Simpson explains indigenous sovereignty in terms of a “nested sovereignty,” a political status that is paradoxically “within and apart from settler governance.”<sup>64</sup> And the political theorist Kevin Bruyneel has argued that after the United States stopped making Indian treaties in 1871, Indian nations’ appeal to US-based rights, and at the same time their resistance to colonialism, created a “third space of sovereignty” that codified Indian nations as both external and internal to US rule.<sup>65</sup>

This paradox of indigenous sovereignty shaped the workings of Indian diplomacy in the nineteenth century. On the one hand, by making treaties Indian nations reaffirmed their inherent sovereign status as nations external to the United States. On the other hand, the American government recognized indigenous sovereignty only within the context of the colonial relationship between Native people and the United States: for instance, it did not recognize Indian nations as sovereign powers that could engage in formal diplomatic relations with other foreign powers. This also meant that Indian nations were directly affected by American policies, acts of Congress, and legal rulings at the federal level—and often in drastic ways. In Native American studies, therefore, the vexed status of indigenous sovereignty has become a central paradigm for examining indigenous literary and intellectual productions, as evidenced in influential frameworks such as Robert Warrior’s “intellectual sovereignty” and Scott Richard Lyons’s “rhetorical sovereignty.”<sup>66</sup> This scholarly recentering of sovereignty has spurred a proliferation of critical heuristics evoking the concept of sovereignty to emphasize the issue of self-determination in Native cultural productions, including “visual sovereignty,” “temporal sovereignty,” “sonic sovereignty,” and “data sovereignty.”<sup>67</sup> This work has opened up new and productive avenues to explore Native American writings as not beholden to narrowly defined notions of indigenous “culture” or tribal traditions, but to the political life of sovereign nations that have always known social and linguistic diversity, different religious traditions, historical change, and transnational relations.

Yet the emphasis on sovereignty as a critical heuristic has also tended to make this concept legible in mostly a metaphorical sense, evoking Indian self-determination without engaging the matter of tribal governments or their political

representation vis-à-vis the United States. By focusing on questions of diplomacy I mean to center a more strictly political notion of indigenous sovereignty in the study of nineteenth-century Native writing. Because Indian diplomacy negotiated conflicting indigenous and settler claims to land, it exposes the discursive spaces where Native speakers critiqued US-settler colonialism and represented indigenous sovereignty within colonial institutions. If American ideologies regarded Indian nations' land title as temporary and prone to be superseded by the settler state, Native writers and orators entered an ideological debate in which they consistently challenged the colonial assumptions that buttressed Indian policy.<sup>68</sup> These debates took place in a wide array of institutional settings, well beyond the United States Supreme Court. Congress, the White House, treaty councils, and Indian agencies were among the scenes of Indian diplomacy that directly influenced US-Indian relations, even more so in the era of Indian removal. The Office of Indian Affairs also played a central role in the life of Indian nations after its founding in 1824.<sup>69</sup> Its first director, Thomas McKenney, saw in removal a fundamentally humanitarian policy, calling it "one of the kindest that has ever been perfected," because it would "perpetuate the Aboriginal race, elevate it to its proper dignity, and impart it to a perpetuity of happiness."<sup>70</sup> By the time Andrew Jackson's administration ousted him from office in 1830, McKenney had already promoted removal by championing the Removal Act and by personally negotiating removal treaties with various nations.<sup>71</sup>

Such diplomatic interactions often happened far away from the Indian Office in Washington, typically taking place in councils in or near Native communities, or at the offices of Indian agents or superintendents of Indian affairs. For Native authors, then, to critique Indian policy meant navigating a range of institutions that were loosely structured and often poorly connected. When it was established in 1824, the Office of Indian Affairs was quite literally an office: the director, his two clerks, and his office managers shared only one room in the War Department building in Washington. By the 1850s it fared not much better, with its staff sharing "seven shabby offices."<sup>72</sup> Until its bureaucratization after the Civil War, the Indian Office represented a loose network of US officials, traders, field agents, and members of religious organizations, who conducted policy through oral conversations, letters, and councils with Native leaders. Indian policy relied on the local diplomacy of its employees—field agents, traders, translators, and regional superintendents—and because Indian agents were political appointees, these networks were continually being made and remade. This does not mean that removal happened in the *absence* of federal power. In his history of the nineteenth-century administration of Indian affairs, Stephen J. Rockwell argues that the Indian Office relied on a "culture of discretionary authority and localized decision making."<sup>73</sup> In