

Indigenous & Native Studies Meeting
May 3-5, 2007
University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma

PLENARY REMARKS
Robert Warrior

OPENING

Two years ago this month, Jean O'Brien, Jace Weaver, and I started discussing what we might be able to do to address the ongoing need for an academic association for our scholarly field of American Indian and Indigenous studies. In July, 2005, we had our first conference call and decided to ask colleagues on our separate campuses if they would serve as hosts for a series of three annual meetings to bring together scholars interested in this issue. That was the first instance in which we asked others to join us in this effort, and our numbers have grown ever since through the creation of a steering committee, the distribution of a call for papers, and the development of the incredible program upon which we are all feasting on these three days. This weekend, as we gather here in Norman, all of us are now part of that expanding circle.

In December of 2005, we had gained the commitment of our colleagues to host these first three meetings, first through Native American Studies here at OU, then at the Institute of Native American Studies at the University of Georgia, and third through American Indian Studies at the University of Minnesota.

At that point, Jace, Jeani, and I decided two things. First, that we needed a larger leadership group to guide this work and, second, that we ought to attempt to articulate the principles that were most crucial to us in this effort. This morning you'll be hearing from each of the six of us who are part of the steering committee of this effort and much of what you'll hear from us is a reflection of those principles.

Principles, of course, are only as good as the people behind them, and the group of scholars you will hear from this morning are worth listening to not only because of all they have done to bring us all together, but because of the way each of them has risen to the challenge of providing wise, engaged, committed, and good-humored leadership. I have taught their work in my classes, cited them in my work, and watched them take on important administrative positions and professional roles. Over the past two years they have on countless occasions provided razor sharp insight, vast knowledge of our field, and genuine moments of grace to a process that has been marvelous to share. I wish you all could have sat in on the discussions and deliberations that brought us to this place today, as you would have seen as the six of us have the depth of intellect and professionalism that exists in our field.

This morning, though, is not a lovefest or a lecture, but a prelude—the final prelude in two years of preparation for the open meeting that will take place later today. There, we will decide together how to proceed from here, how quickly, and in what forms. This morning, we will each be sharing with you some brief thoughts on what we deem to be most germane to the issue of creating a new academic association. We will start with Tsianina Lomawaima, chair of the American Indian Studies department at the University of Arizona, past president of the American Society for Ethnohistory, and author or co-author of several important books on American Indian education and policy. Next, we'll hear from Jean O'Brien, former chair of the American Studies Department at the University of Minnesota, founding chair of the Executive Committee of the Committee on Institutional Cooperation American Indian Studies Consortium housed at the Newberry Library, and a distinguished historian of colonial New England. Next to

speaker will be Ines Hernandez-Avila, whose scholarship on Native religion and literature, not to mention her beautiful poetry in English and Spanish, reflects her long-standing commitment to challenging the thick border between Indigenous people in the northern and southern parts of this hemisphere. She is a professor in the Native American Studies Department at UC Davis, where she has formerly served as chair. The next speaker is Jace Weaver, director of the Institute of Native American Studies at the University of Georgia, and one of the most productive scholars in the history of our field. A true polymath, his writings on religion, law, and literature have helped defined the cutting edge of Native studies for our generation. Finally, Kehaulani Kauanui, tenured and promoted just this year in American Studies and Anthropology at Wesleyan University, is setting the bar for excellence among scholars who take seriously the need to connect agendas between North America, the Pacific, and the rest of the Indigenous world. Her work on gender, sexuality, and the politics of Indigenous recognition represents some of the most exciting and forward-thinking work being done in our field today. I will close out our part of the session with a few remarks of my own, then open the floor to your questions and comments.

Please join me in welcoming Tsianina, Jeani, Ines, Jace, and Kehaulani.