



Indians, the original possessors of the land, seem to haunt the collective unconscious of the white man and to the degree that one can identify the conflicting images of the Indian which stalk the white man's waking perceptions of the world one can outline the deeper problems of identity and alienation that trouble him ... Underneath all the conflicting images of the Indian one fundamental truth emerges—the white man knows that he is an alien and he knows that North America is Indian—and he will never let go of the Indian image because he thinks that by some clever manipulation he can achieve an authenticity that can never be his.

Vine Deloria Jr. "American Fantasy"¹

Indigenous Achievement has been a University of Manitoba strategic priority for both the previous and current University Strategic Plans (2010-2015; 2015-2020). In alignment with these goals, the Faculty of Architecture made its own commitment to Indigenous Achievement in its Faculty Strategic Plan (2015-2020). In light of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report, these priorities take on additional urgency.

This Studio supports these strategic priorities and, arguably, moral imperatives with the added goal of engaging the challenge of "Indigenizing the Curriculum" posed by Deborah Young, University of Manitoba Executive Lead on Indigenous Achievement. Further, the Studio aligns with Faculty Strategic Plan criteria of fostering interdisciplinarity and internationalization within Faculty curricular offerings. Given the quote above by the Native American scholar and activist Vine Deloria Jr., we may come to understand that "internationalization" can occur within contemporary national boundaries. As such, this studio will be working with the Navajo Nation.

What do these issues mean for “design”, for the role of design in Indigenous thought, in an Indigenous worldview, in Indigenous realities? One way of approaching this topic is by reframing dominant narratives of post-contact Indigenous history as a history of victimization and the “disappearing Indian” into more complex narratives of adaptation, survival, and resilience in which both “sides” are transformed through cultural interaction. It may also include discourses of hybridity: histories incorporating the complex intersections of Spanish Colonial as well as American interventions with Indigenous culture together with the dynamic inter-tribal relationships between the Navajo, a matriarchal culture whose origins are traced to what is now the Canadian west, and adjacent groups such as the Hopi and Pueblo (historically “urban” communities) and the Apache who, like the Navajo, were a largely nomadic people. Further, the threshold terrain between the Navajo nation and the surrounding areas might be considered as “borderlands”. As such, towns like Gallup, New Mexico, located on the famous Route 66, would be considered “border towns”, thereby invoking yet another set of discursive tools helpful to us in working in this context. Finally, the concept of decolonization, borrowing from post-colonial discourses, will be central to spatializing activities like participatory mapping: “mappings” as “tellings” that trace the hauntings of a violated homeland such as that described in Leslie Marmon Silko’s evocative and powerful book *Ceremony*:

Hummingbird and Fly thanked him.
They took the tobacco to old Buzzard.

“Here it is. We finally got it but it
wasn’t very easy.”

“Okay,” Buzzard said
“Go back and tell them
I’ll purify the town.”

And he did—
first to the east
then to the south
then to the west
and finally to the north.

Everything was set straight again
After all that ck’o’yo magic.

The storm clouds returned
And the plants and grass started growing again.

There was food
and the people were happy again.

So she told them
“Stay out of trouble
from now on.

It isn’t very easy
To fix things up again.
Remember that
next time
some ck’o’yo magician
comes to town.”²

How do we reconcile narratives of survival, hybridity, borderlands, and decolonization as outlined above, many of which have profound spatial and design implications of their own, with the “faithful storytelling” associated with traditional values of spirituality, kinship, identity, and place that are, for example, so richly offered in *Ceremony*, a story following the consequences of a mine “dug in a sacred area, a violation of nature” through which “evils have been unleashed” and “witches increased in power”?³

Such a telling of “evils unleashed” juxtaposed with the other narratives reflects the greater story of the American West, a story with many parallels in western Canada. Finding balance amongst such competing narratives is a role for the designer even if designing in such complex contexts presents its distinct challenges.



In this studio we will organize design concepts around activities of mapping, making, and mitigating. We will ask questions as to how we might offer design suggestions in a manner both respectful and insightful to Indigenous thought without re-inscribing, even if unintentionally, modes of intervention associated with Eurocentric “settler” domination (including representational interventions, such as the well-known image by Edward S. Curtis above). We will travel to New Mexico for ten days to experience firsthand the environment and cultures of the Navajo and the Pueblo. As we are collaborating with the University of New Mexico, it is anticipated that we will spend time in Albuquerque as well as Gallup, which is closer to the location of the Navajo (Nation) Chapter with which we will be working than Albuquerque.

Travel to New Mexico will be in early fall by either plane or car (students working there last year used both means), accommodations will be in reasonably-priced motels in both Albuquerque and Gallup. Visits to other important Indigenous sites such as the ancient city of Acoma (image by R. Stern below; Acoma is located on top of the mesa in the middle ground) will be organized in accordance with accessibility. It is expected that students will accomplish a significant amount of reading prior to departure and will be open to working cooperatively with students from the University of New Mexico upon arrival. Depending on timing, we may also intersect other events such as the famous Navajo Swap Meet in Gallup or possibly a Navajo Rodeo (images by Jan Sonnenmair bottom).

The Interdisciplinary Indigenous Design Studio is open to ED4 and M1 students from across the Faculty. Students interested in taking this studio should write a one-page rationale clearly articulating their interest in enrolling. This one-pager should be submitted to either Marcella Eaton (marcella.eaton@umanitoba.ca) or Ralph Stern (ralph.stern@umanitoba.ca). Decisions regarding enrolment will be made as early as possible; questions regarding the studio can also be directed to these email addresses.

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- 1 Deloria, Vine Jr. "American Fantasy" in: *The Pretend Indians: Images of Native Americans in the Movies*, Gretchen M. Bataille and Charles L.P. Silet, eds. (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1981): ix-xvi.
 - 2 Silko, Leslie Marmon, *Ceremony*, (New York: Viking Press, 1977; New York: Penguin Books, 2006): 255.
 - 3 McMurtry, Larry "Introduction" in: *Ceremony*, Leslie Marmon Silko, (New York: Penguin Books, 2006).

