

# Episode 3: Native American Representations and Misrepresentations in American Media and Culture with Dr. Liza Black

## Transcript:

**Easton:** Welcome everyone to another episode of the This is Problematic podcast brought to you by Connor prairie Museum. Im Easton.

**Hannah:** And I'm Hannah

**Easton:** and we're so happy to have you all here as we take another dove through some problematic history. So for today's episode, we're going to give a rating of PG 13 There are some things in here that may not be suitable for all ages. So we're going to go ahead and play better safe than sorry. Speaking on Native American history and things in that vein, our guest today has no shortage of contributions to Indiana history. A citizen of the Cherokee Nation, a professor of history and Native American and indigenous studies at IU Bloomington and author most recently of Picturing Indians, Native Americans and Film from 1941 to 1960. We are honored to be joined today by Dr. Eliza Black. Woo!

**Hannah:** Woo!

**Dr.Black:** Thank you Easton

**Easton:** The pleasure's all mine.

**Hannah:** One thing we do want to recognize at this point before we dove in as that we are not the experts on this history. And that's why we're joined by someone who is on to acknowledge where Connor Prairie is at in our journey. e are currently investigating restructuring the Lenape of history experience that is here and that's been here since the late 20th century. And so as we step into this new phase of telling more complete histories, this process of having discussions with experts is an important part of that. So that's partly why we're here today.

**Easton:** So we are aware that this is a very broad topic, but I feel like that's a good thing because they we can go in many different ways. Dr. Black, I wanted to allow you to speak. Was there anything you wanted to share before we, like, started reading from our notes

**Dr.Black:** I saw a great tweet this morning. And I can pull it up if you want me to. But it's something like basically representations of Native people have been a hate crime.

**Easton:** Mm hmm.

**Dr.Black:** You know, Twitter is really useful for short, pithy commentary like that. So yeah. Yeah, that's the one thing I would like to start with is that, you know, a lot of representations of Native people tell us about a hate crime.

**Easton:** Absolutely. When we were first looking on our brainstorming documents, we were initially looking at this from the lens of mascotry and surrounding American sports and culture. Because when it came to the time period, this was in the immediate aftermath of George Floyd. This was right when the Cleveland Indians had announced that they were going to change their names. Now they're the Cleveland Guardians and the Washington Redskins were going by the Washington football team. Now, the Washington commanders and they're receiving a good deal of pushback, people saying, well, I'm still going to call them by the original name. I bet the only people who pushed for this name change were white or show me the demographics of who's offended. And as we know, Native culture and artistic expression have a history of being stifled by non-native cultures, placing Native folks on reservations, prohibitions on dance, sacred spiritual practices as many people in the history field know the boarding schools that they would send these people to and teach them to forget their own culture and completely eradicate it. It gets to the point where Native people are forced into this spot where they're between two worlds and they themselves have to relearn their own history. So we know that someone from a non-native perspective would never really be able to understand how deep that issue goes, especially in a vein where you're looking at this oppressed, fetishized version of what they perceive as Native American history and representation. Because, you know, a lot of people, a lot of sports fans don't go to sporting events to be educated. They go to be entertained. So I just wanted to ask what your take was on that whole thing. Yeah.

**Dr.Black:** Thank you. Wow. That was really well done. That was that was a great lead in for me. Thank you. Yeah. There's so much to say about these teams and the mascot issue and the naming issue and the things you mentioned. I mean, there's so many others, right? There's so many others at the national level. And then don't forget too. There's a lot of high school and middle school and like club teams. Right. So little kids are impacted by this as well. And we get really focused on the Washington team and the Cleveland team. But this is there's hundreds, maybe even thousands of teams with these types of names. And so it's affecting Native people from all walks of life and all ages. And it really does. And there's been so much good work done on this.

So, you know, one of the first things I want to point to is, is some of that good research is done by Stephanie Freiberg. She is a Native psych-psychology researcher who is really interested in how specifically stereotypes and mascots in team sports affect indigenous children. So she actually measures their outcome when they're doing tests before and after they've seen these types of images. And she's been able to quantify how much it impacts their self-perception and how that impacts their test scores. And so they score much lower after being shown a series of these images from these teams. And then, of course, you have kind of anecdotal evidence from kids made of kids who play on these teams and really love sport and really love their team. But they're on they're playing on a team with this problematic name. And then that name becomes part of kind of what

happens at games with opposing teams, right? I mean, there's just there's so much to unpack. Right. It's not just that maybe the team player is wearing an image that's troubling, but it's also kind of what fans do with those that imagery and maybe songs that they create at games or maybe insults. I mean, that's kind of part of sporting culture is insulting the other team and nobody doesn't expect that. But when that's racialized, it's like now it's not about the game. Now it's not about, you know, just wanting to win.

So whenever I talk about this with my students, I try to kind of recognize that for fans, sports are not in their mind about race sports in their mind are about childhood memories of really enjoying sports. It's about family. And, you know, a lot of families enjoy teams together and get kind of really into that fan culture of following certain teams and maybe getting season tickets, having annual outings, where they go to these games and stuff and all that's good, all that's good and fine and probably really fun. But when there's this massive layer of racialized and racist imagery swirling within all of that it can be hard to pry that out of their hands because they're like, This is my family history. This is my team. You're taking something from me. Right. And they and they're a bit unable to separate out their enjoyment of the sport and of the game and of a particular facility, you know, from like harming people, you know, harming, harming marginalized communities and harming indigenous people.

**Easton:** Right. And as a sports fan myself, I will say as soon as I started going into the research and then going back and looking at sports, I always knew it was an issue and it was an issue that a lot of people wanted to ignore or downplay. But it's crazy how much I see now that I never saw before and how bad it's really gotten when we talk about, you know, the tomahawk chop celebration and the Kansas City Chiefs, they bang a giant drum as a celebration. The Atlanta Braves, a Major League Baseball team, they play the song Apache by the Sugarhill Gang every time one of their players hits a home run. It's just it's impossible to ignore now. And it wasn't that subtle to begin with.

**Hannah:** Yeah. I think another thing that blew me away with this research as well is despite this conversation being in the national narrative, for a number of years now, how little education has come through that process into the mainstream, into the mainstream media and into these discussions, like we've been reading work by Kevin Bruyneel, who is a non-native scholar of indigenous history and he has done a lot of work around kind of race, colonialism and politics in sports naming and Mascotry, and he was really talking in his work about the failure to center the settler colonialism narrative and really dive into deeper conversations about where the team names come from. The fact that most of them were created between 1886 and 1933 during a period of time where the Dawes Act was being passed and the Indian Citizenship Act as part of a pillar of that settler colonialism system of appropriation of territory violence and forced assimilation of native peoples, and then the appropriation of indigenous identity and culture as he was talking as the third pillar. And so we were really interested learning more about this ourselves. Even, you know, I'm a master's degree in history and I feel like this has been absent even from, from education I've had. And so why do you think we have failed to dive into any of these deeper conversations? Is it still national discomfort, national fear, Why haven't we been having these conversations we should really be having?

**Dr.Black:** Yeah, the answer to that is, in the phrase you mentioned, the settler colonialist narrative. And one of the foremost scholars of settler colonialism is Patrick Wolfe, who I'm sure Kevin cites and draws on I mean, there's really no one in indigenous studies who doesn't. And according to

Wolfe, what you saw in Brynmill part of the settler colonials narrative is appropriation, but that the reason that when you have appropriation, according to Patrick Wolfe, is that settler colonialism destroys to replace. That's a direct quote from Patrick Wolfe it destroys to replace. And so to just sort of build on that, what Patrick Wolfe is saying is destroyed in the settler colonial narrative is Native people. And what they're replaced with is, is white people. Right. So settler colonialism sort of is this phrase we use the theory that we use to understand histories of indigenous people globally in which it's a particular type of colonialism. It's not that extractive colonialism that you see in other in some context. It's a particular type of colonialism in which settlers flood into a community occupied by indigenous people and settlers instead of sort of building a society with indigenous people based on indigenous culture and values and land tenure. Displace and replace Native people, land tenure and culture. So part of that replacement has a lot to do with culture. Of course, it plays out on the law. Of course it plays out in war. Of course it plays out in treaties and moving into indigenous territory sort of legally and physically. But it also plays out in the culture where the culture then embodies settler colonialism. And, and that tells this story of triumph, of white people over native people, a victory over native people, and of course turns native people into an enemy who must be sort of vanquished but also despised and then simultaneously appropriated and you see all of that in the mascot. You see all of that where there are the vanquished part's really important, right? Because that's a huge part of sports culture, aside from race is a competition. Like there's no that that's never going to change. I mean, sports are competitive. You would agree right Easton?

**Easton:** Absolutely

**Dr.Black:** And base what it's about, right? Somebody wins, somebody loses.

**Hannah:** Yeah.

**Dr.Black:** So that narrative of settler colonialism plays out really kind of perfectly almost with mascots because it's about, you know, we're better than you. We're the best because of our particular features. And so Native people become a perfect signal of that in that you can sort of say Native people are strong, Native people are warriors. But then you can also kind of play on these themes of defeat.

**Hannah:** Absolutely. I do have a question based off that actually about if there are countries that have evolved in different ways in which co-existence does exist in a better way. And learning from the indigenous culture has taken my place and I'm almost thinking of New Zealand and kind of the hackett process. I know that their rugby team has I don't know a lot about New Zealand culture, but I get the image that they have, at least in recent years, done more work to learn from and respect the people who were there before. And I was curious if there are ways that we can do better as a society in the near future to attempt to learn from other case studies and other examples

**Dr.Black:** Yeah, that's a great question. And Brendan Hokowhitu has written about rugby. I'm pretty sure Hokowhitu would say it's still appropriation. You know, if I'm remembering their argument correctly, I'm pretty sure they're saying, you know, New Zealand wants to tell you that this is progress. But I think they're making the argument that it's still just more appropriation so maybe, but maybe the argument there is more nuance and that I'm sure there's other people with other

with other takes on it. Right. And I'm and I'm sure that the intention is, is to create progress, but there's going to be different opinions perhaps on that.

So, so yes, there are settler colonial societies who are making attempts to rectify kind of the damage they've done. You know, the question is how much can you really do when your society is so built upon dispossession?

**Hannah:** Yeah, absolutely. I feel like at this point we've talked a lot about sports and Mascotry and some of these examples. And I know you're your real expert field is in kind of film and media and that way. And so do you want to lead us into kind of a discussion a bit more about popular culture in general and take us down that road Easton?

**Easton:** I do, and I don't. At the same time, Dr. Black, I will say I hate how it looks to bring you on talking about Native American representation and then bringing up Pocahontas. It just doesn't feel right. I don't like the way it feels but there's a very unfortunate truth that I've seen in my own life is that many Americans, people in classes that I've been all the way up through my college education immediately go to Pocahontas when they hear Native American culture and what their first impression of that culture was. And I just wanted to bring that up because what we were talking about mid-twentieth century, a lot of ethnologist and not just historians, we're seeing traditional stories starting to get confused and merging with non-native cultural influences, specifically in the way Disney characters are characterized. You know, children's books and North American television kind of revitalized the myths.

In the late 1960s and 1970s, interest in their traditions arose among Native and non-native populations. And this historical Native character, Pocahontas, was turned into this legendary figure by non-native writers as a means of justifying their occupation of Native lands and kind of in a half genuine attempt to alleviate their guilt after killing the original inhabitants of the United States. It was, you know, through histories and plays and novels and films written by non-native peoples, including recent Disney films. Pocahontas was spun to be a very virtuous figure who fell in love with the white man, adopted the values of his culture and helped him overcome the and I'm using air quotes here, hostile Native population. She she's, you know, she's the savior and protector of the European immigrants having being assimilated into European culture. In that non-native discourse. That implies that there are quote unquote, good Native Americans or good Indians who choose, quote unquote, civility and lead the fight against the quote unquote bad of her own people. And Pocahontas is now thankfully being reappropriated by recent Native scholars and artists now countering the non-native representations of her and reclaiming those figures of colonial discourse for the empowerment of Native people as a whole, but also zeroing in on Native women in the modern day. And I just wanted to hear your feedback as someone who's done extensive study in Native American representation in film, not just animated film, but also real film.

**Dr.Black:** Yeah. Thank you. Another great lead in for me.

**Easton:** Ah you're going to make me blush.

**Dr.Black:** Yeah, I mean, exactly Easton. It's Pocahontas is just like wild. It's this wild ride into American history added to the settler colonial fantasy, like you said, in which. Well, I don't know if you exactly said this, but. But and if you did, I'll be a bit redundant and say, you know, Pocahontas is



really kind of being used to justify the conquest of America. In her relationship with this white man, John Smith, and in her starting not just welcoming of him, but her like you know, Ill die for you kind of kind of vibe, you know, and her saving him from death and her kind of putting herself in harm's way to embrace, embrace John Smith.

And to your question of how does this fit into the larger history of narrative? Well, I would say it fits into this larger pattern of how Native women are represented in film. And this is a real trope in film about Native people, specifically about Native women in that many times Native women are presented as people who are sort of always already to fall in love with a white man. But it's not just falling in love. It's like this obsession. It's this blind devotion. It's and it's immediate. There's I can cite so many films where a native woman simply sees a white man and she's just like worshipping him and adoring him. And doing anything for him and following him anywhere he goes. And then the white male characters are dismissive of that. And we're supposed to see that he does not find them attractive in many cases. I mean, there's other examples where he does like Broken Arrow from 1950 as a famous example of a white man falling it being a reciprocal love.

But nonetheless, you know, Native women are being used as characters in popular culture and especially in film to tell this particular story and relations between white men and Native women and, and Native women are I think, being used to say Native people want to be colonized. Native people see themselves as inferior to white people and Native people sort of want to be white. They want to become white through their relations, meaning intimate relations with white men. It's a strange, strange sort of version. Kind of performs a similar function, I think, to what we were saying about mascots in that they become this kind of sort of warriorhood. But also defeat is a similar kind of mix, I think, with the Pocahontas character and the larger Native female character in which she's sort of being defeated in one sense, but she's also sort of winning in another sense. You're supposed to believe in that she's winning the affection of a white man and then like you said.

There's also this fascinating kind of re appropriation maybe of Pocahontas today, where we see tribes and scholars really kind of trying to tell their version of Pocahontas, which is almost the exact opposite of what we've always been told, in which the story is that Pocahontas was a young, young person. She was a tween. She was like somewhere between ten and 14 that but she was basically trafficked by John Smith, that she was potentially the victim S.A. by one of his relatives. There's some there's some oral history that says she was visited by members of her tribe in England, where she was telling them this information about, you know, under living through S.A. and that she'd been kidnaped. There's some information saying that her husband, she had a native husband and children with him. There's some evidence showing that he may have been kidnaped or restrained when they got her on the ship to go to England. I mean, there's all these stories, you know, that they're that her tribal nation are getting out there now. And one has to really sort of ask what kind of massive cover up this was to she was so powerfully sort of embed Pocahontas in American culture in a way that's probably completely a lie.

**Hannah:** I, I just blown away as you're speaking about the connections this is making in my brain to the history we tell here at Conner Prairie and the way that the story of Mekinges Connor has been told. So Mekinges was William Connor's first wife. She was a member of the Lenape Nation. And I'm even thinking of there is this horrendous romance fiction book written about her in the early 2000 her relationship with William, where their relationship is just grossly written about. And I think one of the one of the issues with the way her story has been told is obviously that it all comes from this

angle of William and her relationship to him as opposed to her relationship as a woman in her own right and as a member of her community. We also have had a lack of knowledge about who she was independent of him and there's a great deal more research needs to be done. But certainly there are suggestions at our archives from what we found from the Delaware Nation that she may have been as young as 12 or 13 when she married him.

And so there are all of these connections to that story of Pocahontas that are just that are just going through my brain and the work that really needs to be done here to dove into her story and to ensure that she's been doing justice to especially we don't we really don't know what happened after she left come out and say that right now we need to do more work to ensure that we are we are tracking down what really happened to her and tell her story in a better better light.

**Dr.Black:** 13 is quite young.

**Hannah:** Yeah as a child

**Dr.Black:** Even with different sort of historical understandings of age that still is still not marrying age

**Hannah:** And he was mid to late twenties. So and he also his second wife was only 18 and he was in his fifties when he married them. So in and of itself there's a whole problem there with marrying children. Oh yeah. His dad did the same thing. Yeah. There's a strong family history there of yeah, yeah.

**Dr.Black:** Ew.

**Hannah:** Yeah, It's gross and definitely not put on display as much as we, we should owning that is certainly important.

**Easton:** Right. And Mekinges is going to have her own episode. We are in the process of putting these things together as a three parter William Connors. So we're going to tackle his history, then speak on Mekinges and then wrap things up with Pete Smith. There's a lot of problematic stuff about our namesake that we are excited to finally get the chance to talk about.

**Dr.Black:** Wow. And the institution is okay with that?

**Easton:** Absolutely.

**Hannah:** Yeah.

**Dr.Black:** Good for them.

**Hannah:** Yeah. We're really grateful for the support we've been getting to do this work because we kind of started to walk into it and the deeper we got into it, the more we were like Oh, it's just like so many institutions, it's just a mess. And so we've been having those discussions about we can't rebuild until we fully tear down who the namesake of the institution is. And, and, and we've been having so many conversations about the fact that his name because as a question that often comes

up, as you know, it's still our name, but there were so many more people that carried the Conner name. His Native children continue to use the name his White children who lived in this area use the name. And so there is so many more Connors than just William himself and so many more stories that deserve to be told. There have been neglected to be told.

**Easton:** Right. And as the fledgling curatorial department, we feel like it's our duty to get this up there.

**Hannah:** We've only existed for about a year as a department. Connor Prairie had an absence of academic historians for about 20 years. And so we're really just starting the ball rolling on getting this work done

**Dr.Black:** You've done a lot in a year.

**Hannah:** Thanks.

**Easton:** Thank you.

**Dr.Black:** Yeah, it's awesome.

**\*Music\***

**Easton:** So I think we can just go to our questions and, and run through them, h

**Hannah:** Have a more casual chat about kind of your thoughts on some of these issues. And I guess actually this is a really good one to get started with since we were literally just having that conversation. What can people in a variety of positions here at Conner Prairie and also in other cultural institution runs do to help tear down these narratives that have become so prevalent in our storytelling and in our culture here in the U.S.?

**Dr.Black:** That's a great question. And of course, you know, I'm a professor, so I think education is the answer to pretty much everything. I well, I should say pretty much everything. I really do feel like often this is this is my hopeful side. That if people have information, they can they can do better. And that the first step in doing better is to know something about what it is you don't know about. So I always hope that if people learn about Native people in some way, if they fill in some of the gaps that they might have, I think that's a really great first step. And I would say most people in America don't know anything about Native people. I mean, that sounds cruel. That sounds arrogant, but it's actually usually true. And it's usually true of even other marginalized communities. And usually whatever people sort of field of influence includes, whether that's their family or their friends or their social media or their work, that usually doesn't include any Native content.

So I always feel like step one is just to include some Native content in whatever content I may. I mean, contact would also be good, but some Native content in your in your regular life, whatever, whatever that is, if you're a podcast type of person. To maybe throw a podcast about Native people or hosted by a Native person into your weekly notification. If you're more of a social media person to follow some Native people, you know, whatever your interests are, whether it's journalism or sports or fashion or politics, law, whatever, to include some Native content in your life so that you at



least either know current events or you know leaders in our community. Just, just to start small with that would be, I think, a really good step. And then just introduce I mean, maybe this just doesn't even I say this all the time, but I always feel like people want something much bigger than what I'm suggesting. But I'm always like, hey, start small you know? And then and then that becomes a way of introducing it in conversation with people. Hey, did you hear about the protests at? Did you hear about the podcast on. Right. And just making that kind of part of the life you're already living.

**Hannah:** I love that. That's something people can do today after listening to this podcast or while they're listening, they can check out their Instagram feed and make sure they're diversifying it. And I love that. I also love that that's giving money to creators who are doing important work so all around. That's phenomenal advice. Thank you.

**Dr.Black:** Yeah.

**Easton:** Yes. And kind of going off of that, I just wanted to know if you had any advice for us or anybody else listening on how to navigate conversations with Native communities and individuals all of which have their own valid thoughts and feelings on these issues that we've spoken about. I know there is a very wide swath of different Native American nations and opinions among them when it comes to just mascotry in general. And we do want to recognize that a large part of them that's kind of low down on their priority list for social change. But they all have again, their feelings are all valid. And we definitely want to support that. But I just wanted to ask if you had any advice in that regard.

**Dr.Black:** Yeah, I mean, that's a really great and sensitive question. And it recognizes, you know, the tribes are nations like you very carefully use the word nation know that's definitely something that people from tribal nations like to hear is people using that that term in particular nations, you know, calling. I mean, in the U.S., people don't mind being called tribes. In Canada, they definitely don't like that word tribes. And in other parts of the world, they don't like the word tribe. So I think nations is a great word to use, recognizing that that in the interests of tribes are different from each other.

There's over and there are over well over 500 federally recognized tribes in the United States. There's also state recognized tribal nations in the United States. Then there's also unrecognized tribal nations in the U.S. So I mean, kind of the short answer to your question is, is that, you know, it might be daunting, but just to realize that there's incredible complexity in Native America and I've been studying this my whole life, and I still feel like a novice in many ways. I still feel like I'm learning all the time. So there's a lot a lot to it. There's a lot there. And for somebody who just now is starting to try to think about it, it's like, yeah, there's a lot a lot to learn and that it can be done. And then in terms of being sensitive, I mean, I just think it never hurts to be a good listener, you know, you can you can ask a question and maybe use a word or two that's maybe problematic, tricky, but and that might be the end of the conversation. But hopefully the person you're speaking to recognizes what you're trying to ask. And hopefully it's not worded so poorly that it comes across as deeply offensive. So, yeah, I mean, in terms of being sensitive and kind of not having expectations, kind of trying to find out where that person or that community is coming from is, I think a lot better than telling that person or that community where they should be coming from. That's always a good that's always a good place to start. I think people worry a lot about naming and what words to use. I get a lot of questions about that, and so maybe I can speak to that just for a moment. Easton, you know, people talk a lot about like, well, I heard I hear a lot of non-native people ask me, am I

supposed to say Indian or Native American or American-Indian or indigenous or native? And I would say all five of those are being used currently I'm hearing all five of those being used by Native people, by Native people. So if the question is what are Native people using, I would say they're still using all of those. All of those words are being used. But I think non-Native people are the ones who are really worried about this question.

**Easton:** Right.

**Dr.Black:** And they don't want to say something offensive. So I, I mean, and I'm certainly not the only voice on this. And there's other opinions and I feel like I feel like I'm sensing a generational shift with Native people or maybe younger native people like Gen Z and Millennials are more using Native and indigenous more frequently. I'm not really hearing them say Native American. And in Canada they don't say any of these terms. They say First Nation. So Native and indigenous seem to be pretty common right now. But then you still hear like older Native people say Indian and American Indian, and that's definitely what they're most comfortable with. But I know that for non-Native people that they've been taught that that's a word that's definitely problematic and they feel pretty uncomfortable using it and that's fine. They don't they don't need to use it. They can just say Native or tribal or for First Nations that they're in Canada.

**Hannah:** I think that something from that that's come up in quite a few conversations we've had is for people kind of being uncomfortable with that not knowing place and being comfortable with learning. And it's challenging. But I also think it's the most exciting place to exist because it's where you're going to make the biggest strides. And, and so I think that's definitely an encouragement to listeners as to just try right? Like just keep trying, keep making the effort and, and, and caring and hopefully, hopefully you can learn and grow in that place. I think one of the things we wanted to ask you personally, obviously not as a representative but you as an individual is what do you think is missing currently from the national conversation about native experiences? What do you wish we were talking more about? Where do you hope the conversation will go in the coming years?

**Dr.Black:** Hmm. Great question. I would I wish the conversation would go. I mean, I feel like in Indian country, the conversations are really lively and vital and animated and exciting. What I sadly rarely see is I rarely see that kind of jumping, what I call the fence between Native America and the rest of America, you know? And I think that's one reason that I'm always asking people to at least engage with Native content. Around whatever they're already consuming, because I sense that there's just this barrier between Native people and what we all know and what we're all talking to each other about and not being just so separate from everybody else. So that's what I would really like is for every now and then for either other marginalized communities to engage with what we're talking about or mainstream America to engage with some of the things we're talking about.

**Hannah:** Get following some content careers. Everyone, come on,

**Easton:** Please

**Hannah:** Let's start that journey today.

**Dr.Black:** Yeah. I mean, I think I think one, if I want to be generous towards mainstream America, I would say I feel like we're saturated with media and with content. And there's just so much to

choose from that I think a lot of those choices are kind of made for us. And, you know, like if you go to Twitter and you see what's trending, you want to make sure, you know, like, oh, I want to know what's trending. I want to I don't I don't want to not be in the know. And you could just live your whole life, I think, as an American and never be asked that. Never be made I never feel pressure to know about some current event in Native America. Nobody's ever going to say, oh, my God, you don't know about that, right? Like they would with you know, a celebrity or a major sports event. And so that, you know, I just I wish I wish some people were more engaged with that. But I do know that it does take up all of people's time to keep up with sports and celebrities, but just that and work is like a whole life

**Hannah:** I guess maybe a good question. But I also don't know, maybe like you said, it's personal depending where your interests lie anyway. But do you have any like favorite creators, favorite content producers that you would really encourage people to maybe start with?

**Dr.Black:** Yeah. I mean, I think it's always best to follow your own interests like like Easton's into sports. And there's definitely like native sports guys who talk of sports stuff that I don't know anything about and I don't really follow them. I think I think there's a guy whose last name's Monkman who's on Twitter. I think he's like, I think he does stuff about sports. And then there's another guy on it. Pardon?

**Easton:** I said, I'm definitely making a note of that.

**Dr.Black:** Okay. Okay. Yeah. I mean, my interest is in something really sad, which is the crisis of missing and murdered indigenous women. And that's what my next book is about. So I follow a lot of that, which I think I mean, of all the issues in Native America that is the one that doesn't even get much play Native America, let alone anywhere else. I mean, that seems to be just a very small group of the same exact people posting to each other and reposting each other. And it's just this close the loop. So like, I really love Connie Walker. She's this journalist in Canada who has, I think, just taken over the podcast format. It's like I feel, you know, I love the podcast and I think she is just does a podcast so incredibly well. And she only does it on missing and murdered indigenous women up and vanished I think his name I can't remember his name. He did a really good one on Olivia Lone Bear that I thought was really well done. And he's got like a huge podcast following. I thought that was really good.

**Hannah:** I've just added that to my podcast queue. That's up next.

**Dr.Black:** I mean, one of the reasons I say that it's hard, it's hard to get mainstream America interested in Native issues is like the Up and Vanished podcast. He has a huge he has a huge following. When he did it on a Native Woman, you know, a lot of people felt guilty in 2020, like, oh, we only talk about white people all the time. And so since 2020, they've been scrambling to stop talking about white people all the time in many, in many walks of life. He was one of them. He could hardly get anybody to engage with the content when he did it on her, you know, even though he has a really, really engaged fanbase.

**Hannah:** That's wild. I mean, do you think its...

**Dr.Black:** He decided to give away cookies made by his grandmother to get people to try to do what they normally do, which is like they go to his, they go, he has like a website and people normally are really, you know, talking about details of his shows. It's like the true crime community is very maybe like sports, like very active listener you know?

**Easton:** That's a shame.

Hannah: Yeah. I wonder if it's fear to engage or if it's lack of interest. Like, I'm really curious what was driving people to not engage in the way that they normally would. That's really crazy.

**Dr.Black:** I kind of feel like it goes back to Easton's question about Pocahontas. And I think perhaps I mean, this is just a guess, but perhaps it's that everyone knows about Pocahontas. And that is a very comforting story to them. And the story of missing and murdered indigenous women is just total inverse, right? It's the total inverse. It's Oh, Native women are in danger.

**Hannah and Easton:** Yeah.

**Dr.Black:** And many of their assailants are non-Native men are mostly white men. That that's a story that they can't get their mind around. Maybe. And it's too uncomfortable. Perhaps. I don't I don't know. I don't know. Sorry. To get it on such a down note, but

**Hannah:** No, please. I do feel like that opens up a great window that into you just talking about your work. I mean, that's one of the questions we had is why are you working on where are you going with it? You want to plug anything like please go ahead and use this as a forum to share what you're working on.

**Dr.Black:** Yes. Thank you. Yes, I'm writing this this book called How to Get Away with Murder. It's a transnational history of missing and murdered indigenous women. I have seven case studies. I just published a piece on Savannah Greywind in a collective volume called Gender and the American West. Savannah Greywind was very brutally murdered in 2017. And so that that chapter is the story of what happened to her and how she was stopped by her white neighbors and surveilled by her white neighbors and killed in a really, really horrific way. And so I go into a lot of detail not about how they killed her, but making the argument that that settler colonialism targets Native women in particular and targets their reproduction in particular and sees Native women bearing Native children as a powerful threat to settler colonialism. And then I've got six other six other chapters I'm working on. One is set in early 20th century Oklahoma with the Cherokee woman. Another is from the Highway of Tears. That we talk about in Canada. It's this highway that was opened in 1969 and has generated tremendous violence against First Nations women who travel on that highway to have a chapter about Mexico. Two chapters on or one chapter, sorry, on the domestic oil industry and a particular victim there. I also have a chapter on a woman who was killed by police officers and also covers police violence. And then the last chapter is on a trans woman who is still missing and it's unsolved. And her case went from county hands to federal hand because of a Supreme Court case of *McGirt v Oklahoma*. So I go into sort of violence against trans women in particular in that chapter, but also jurisdictional issues and that chapter.

**Hannah:** Amazing

**\*Music\***

**Easton:** But I did want to talk about. Our new exhibit, Promised Land as Proving Ground. And the first cabin actually opened today, June 21st 2022. And we're recording this episode. And I found that when it comes to public push for historical accuracy, the 1960s and 1970s always serve as this resurgence era for historical curiosity when it comes to the Civil War, the Underground Railroad and other significant stages in Black history. And it seems like this is somewhat similar for Native American history and historians wanting to re-approach the real happenings that led to our country being what it was and what it still is. And I just wanted to ask you as a professor, why do you think that is?

**Dr.Black:** Yeah, great question. I think that that is because of the civil rights movement and, and the Red Power Movement kind of challenging all aspects of society, which has just happened again in 2020, I feel its happened again in 2020. And even now it's still percolating where the whole culture, or at least young people, I should say young people in the culture in the sixties and seventies were sort of forcing the older generations to look at some of the myths that they had created and, and demanding that they that those myths be challenged and that these, these ways in which society function. They demanded that that that change right with racism, with sexism, with homophobia and part of that change included academia kind of rewriting their own scholarship and rewriting for historians are our versions of the past. So I think it was a direct response to especially their students who were in their classroom rooms face to face with them saying, you know, you need to change your narrative.

**Easton:** Right.

**Dr.Black:** You can't keep pedaling this white supremacist nationalist mythology. We want to know we have some questions about the past and you're going to answer that.

**Easton:** Every book you would have read back then seems to be telling the exact same story, just different authors and in different ways. And so things needed to change I really do appreciate you bringing up the Red Power Movement, because even in conversations about civil rights, which a lot of people don't like to talk about, of course, that's for another episode. But, you know, it kind of flies under the radar that there were plenty of groups reaching out, trying to inspire real change back then and the fight continues. So we can go back to the personal questions now, but that was I think that was my last huge one. So thank you

**\*Music\***

**Ryan:** I was going to say the one thing I'd be interested in because this is very local. And if neither of you know about it or she has not you do not know about?

**Hannah:** A little bit..

**Ryan:** Anderson town mascot controversy. The thing interesting about that is that the school board is directly talking with the Delaware tribe about it and what they can do to remedy it. It puts it in some local context to Conner Prairie, especially since Anderson, is so integral to the story of Conner Prairie itself.



**Hannah:** The town of Anderson, which is about 45 minutes north of where we're sat here in Fishers, Indiana, and their high school has had... I did read a short article about it actually the other day that they're their team has had a native mascot and also chants and cheers and all kinds of things. And so he was saying they've been engaging with the Delaware Nation and beginning that conversation process about how to change their high school mascotry. And so he was just asking if you had any thoughts or knowledge on that specific situation local to us here on the Prairie.

**Dr.Black:** Yeah, I think I was asked about that back in 2019. I think they've been talking about it for a long time. I feel like I was part of that conversation back then. And yeah, I mean, it's great that they're speaking with the tribe. Is the team named after the Delaware Nation?

**Hannah:** She has named the teams named after the Delaware Nation.

**Ryan:** So Anderson is named after Chief Anderson, who Mekinges' father. So very specific Conner Prairie as well.

**Dr.Black:** Oh. Yeah, I mean, they need to change the name, but or, I would say they probably need to change the name, however. However, that being said, the Seminole Nation has gotten very involved with that team in Florida maybe, Easton knows?

**Easton:** I didn't talk about Florida State. The Florida State Seminoles.

**Dr.Black:** Something unpredictable could happen with the situation that, Anderson, because with the Florida State Seminoles, Seminole Nation did get consulted by Florida State and they were like, we're into this. Keep it as Seminoles. We want to.. Seminole nation is very, very wealthy. They own the hard rock franchise. I don't know if you knew that, but they are rolling in money and they all have alligator boots. And they're they they're doing very, very well. So they actually liked the idea of being called the Seminoles. However, they wanted to have if I if I'm I hope I'm getting all of this right. Jessica Catalino knows a lot about this because writes some on the Seminole nation from I think she shared all of this would be they wanted to be involved. Like they want an owner. They want to be in the owner's box at every game. They want I think I think they asked that the mascot be an actual Seminole student. I think they wanted control over the imagery and they were like, yeah, we're we're fine with being portrayed as warriors, but we want to be in control of it and we want to be in the owner's box and show up in their alligator boots and all that. So you can see something potentially happened that you wouldn't expect with Delaware Nation where they might say, well, sure. But I mean, we weren't we weren't seats right at the at the line or whatever. I mean, it's a high school team. So maybe that wouldn't pan out that way.

**Hannah:** That goes into because the town is Anderson. And then you're right, there's Anderson University there and the high school. So Delaware nation might say, sure, and you can keep it as is Delaware. But we want to have some influence over that. They might they might do something more like Seminole Nation did or they might say, we really don't care about this, just change it, but we don't care what it's to. Who knows? I mean, and then that's kind of an educational position to take because that's to understand that tribes are sovereign and that if the tribe if the tribe decides they want something, even if it doesn't seem like the best decision from a mainstream point of view, it kind of is because the tribe the tribe has spoken and that's kind of that. So, yeah, I think it's great that they're consulting the tribe. I mean, it's really not up to me what it should be changed to.

**Hannah:** I think I think we've really dug through a lot of the questions we had. I think often we kind of and on the know of do you feel like there's anything we've missed? Is there anything we haven't got to today that we should have and that you want to bring up before we close out and say goodbye?

**Dr.Black:** No, we were so well-prepared. These were excellent questions and you're just great interviewers. Thank you so much.

**Easton:** Thank you. Believe it or not, we were a little nervous.

**Hannah:** Yeah.

**Easton:** Today.

**Hannah:** Believe it or not this is our first Zoom interview. And so we were like, we hope everything worked. And so...

**Dr.Black:** What do you think, Ryan? Do you think that you've got a good recording?

**Easton:** He says, yes.

**Dr.Black:** Well, we all are real proud that this is really great. Thank you so much.

**Easton:** Thank you. Dr. Black, thank you so much.

**Hannah:** We appreciate you so much. Thanks for joining us for another trip through problematic history. You can find us on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, and in all your normal podcast places.

**Easton:** Until next time.