Native American Periodicals: The Art and Politics of Early Twentieth-Century Indigenous Printscapes

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Abstract
This essay explores Native American periodicals as a topic that is still understudied and suggests a model for investigating them as relational media objects in the context of settler-colonial and Native American printscapes. Drawing on a Deleuzian terminology, it reads Native American periodicals as assemblages and argues for analyzing periodicals as distinctive material-semiotic artifacts based on their properties, periodicity, mediality, and miscellaneity. It highlights the expansive Native American publishing business appearing in the early twentieth century in an atmosphere of assimilationist policies as inspired by Red Progressivism. In doing so, the essay examines interactions between the so-called periodicalists (i.e., Native American editors, writers, contributors) and the periodical medium using as brief examples Cherokee editor Ora V. Eddleman and Muskogee writer Charles Gibson. It concludes with a call to interrogate Native American periodicals as an innovative form of print activism for creating and maintaining visions of Indigenous life-worlds.

Key words: periodicals; Indigenous writing; print activism; decoloniality; assemblage

Introduction
Since the early nineteenth century, periodicals have played an important role in promoting Indigenous cultural and/or community development in North America. Scholars argue that an “American Indian media” (Carstarphen 59) emerged with the publication of the Cherokee Phoenix, or Tsalagi Tsu-le-hi-sa-nu-hi, the first newspaper printed by Native Americans in 1828. More than two hundred Native American newspapers appeared throughout the nineteenth century, demon-

1 Throughout this essay, the term Native American periodicals is used when referring to Native North American serialized print publications. Otherwise, we follow Mishuana Goeman’s lead and use “American Indian,” “Native,” “Indigenous,” and “Native American” alternately throughout this essay depending on context. Being aware, as Goeman writes, that “there are many intersections involved in these labels” (213), we refer to Native North Americans to indicate a generalized group, while being as tribally specific as possible when dealing with concrete examples.

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As Littlefield and Parins point out, “one can make a strong case for 1826” to be the year the first Native American newspaper was published, when Henry Rowe Schoolcraft began assembling the manuscript-magazine *The Muzzinyegun* (American Indian xii). Most of the content was provided by Jane Johnston Schoolcraft (Bamewawa-gezhihkaay), his Ojibwe wife, and members of her family (Konkle 81-101).

Littlefield and Parins’s archival studies stay within the geographical boundaries of today’s United States. While including Native Alaska periodicals, their work documents neither Hawaiian newspapers and magazines, nor those produced in the archipelagic realm of the Caribbean.

The handbook *Native American History* (Teves, Smith, and Raheja) does not contain entries on the Native “press” and/or “media” (Scheiding 89-112).

The Museum of Native American History (MONAH) runs a program on “Indigenuity,” supported by Daniel Wildcat, Yuchi member of the Muskogee Nation of Oklahoma. It reads: “Indigenuity borne of a long-standing symbiotic relationship between a People and a Place: Indigenous ingenuity or *Indigenuity*: Indigenous people were the first scientists and engineers throughout thousands of years of observation and experimentation” (see https://monah.org/indigenuity; emphasis in original). Indigenuity relates to spatial knowledge, material culture, and technology in living environments; see also Wigginton (2-18), who borrows the term for her book on *Native Craftwork and the Art of American Literatures*.

Stratifying the richness and broad spectrum of Indigenous periodical publications, the three-volume bibliography of *American Indian and Alaska Native Newspapers and Periodicals* (1984-1986) by Daniel F. Littlefield and James W. Parins identifies many of them and reveals an archive of little-known documents of Indigenous print activism. Recently, exhibitions like “From Talking Leaves to Pixels: Origins of the Syllabary and Early Printing,” organized by the Cherokee National Supreme Court Museum in 2021, highlight the continuity and close relationship between the circulation of Indigenous knowledge, language, and the periodical press. Native American newspapers like the Lumbee Tribe’s *The Carolina Indian Voice* (1973-2005) or the monthly “news bird,” *Biskinik* (1978-), published by the Choctaw Nation, have served as a public forum to struggle against the discrimination Indigenous peoples face in the context of the settler nation’s mainstream media and its stereotypical coverage of the “Indian,” ultimately minimizing the extent of Indigenous power and agency. As such, Native American periodicals—serialized publications that are produced by and targeted toward Native Americans and that focus exclusively on Native American concerns and interests—adopt Indigenous ways of communicating their content and mobilize audiences, “seeing Indigenous nations in motion, not stasis” (Blackhawk 4). Given this longstanding Indigenous print and media history, or what Choctaw writer and scholar LeAnne Howe theorizes as “tribalography” (330), Native American periodicals remain an understudied topic, especially in terms of the role they play as distinct media objects allowing literary and aesthetic innovations based on the periodical’s politics of the page.

Thus, to better understand the broad spectrum of “Indigenous writing” (Justice 21-26), the essay suggests that more study dedicated to exploring the rich archive of Indigenous periodical cultures is needed. As we propose, one way of how this might be accomplished is to recognize how Native American periodicals serve as mediators of “complex citational practices” and “decolonial translations” (Pexa 9), creating a media-specific publishing model to materialize Indigenous peoplehood in the world maintaining imaginaries for a decolonized Indigenous future.

In what follows, we will first outline the central features of the Native American periodical form as a specific graphic-visual texture. We discuss a periodical’s properties like the distinctive non-linear and heteroglossic page arrangement, and its relevance for engaging the ambivalences of the settler-colonial nation-state’s assimilationist regime. We will also consider how Native American periodicals translate meaning (content) into dynamic systems or periodical assemblages, arguing that Native American periodicals serve as a distinct medium for “Indigenuity” (Wildcat 80-86) despite colonial displacement and “symbolic diminishment” (Justice xviii). To demonstrate Native American periodicals’ work in negotiating Indigenous modernity in a settler-colonial nation-state with its stereotypical coverage of the “dying Indian,” we draw on a Deleuzian terminology as it has found its entry into current studies in
the field of print culture analysis. We propose to study the connections of bodies, objects, and expressions embedded within the materiality of a given space or assemblage—in our case, the periodical’s graphic-visual matter. Key terms like “assemblage,” “territory,” and “smooth and striated space” highlight the Indigenous periodical’s role as a multifaceted and layered publishing model.

To exemplify the relational agency between periodical assemblages and the participants involved in them, we will finally discuss selected aspects of two Indigenous “periodicalists” (Powell, Performing 14). Cherokee editor-author Ora V. Eddleman (1880–1968) and Muscogee writer Charles Gibson (1846–1923) were Indigenous periodicalists who moved between the nation-state’s “printsca pes” (Noonan 419) and the Indian Territory press. As we will demonstrate, both enter a regional printscape and use the periodical as an assemblage for the production of a Native perspective positioning themselves as Native American editors and writers. We will conclude by briefly highlighting lines of continuity between past and present, and Native American periodicals’ role as a multifaceted publishing model for creating and maintaining what Cree-Métis-Saulteaux scholar Lindsay Nixon calls “a future present” (333).

Native American Periodicals—Definition and Assemblage

It is often unclear just what, exactly, Native American periodicals are and how they can be read productively. We suggest the following as a more complete definition for Native American periodicals: Any serialized print published, edited, and/or produced by Native Americans; with Native Americans as their subject or targeted audience; or serially featuring Native American knowledge curated by tribal members and communities. Such a definition highlights the type of medium, the information mediated within and surrounding its pages, and the ethnic focus communicated by it. This definition is by no means static or exhaustive. Rather, it balances the medium’s specific form (i.e., a periodical’s periodicity, mediality, and miscellaneity), its content, the readers, and the people involved in its publication process. One of our basic assumptions is that Native American periodicals include (but are not limited to) magazines, newspapers, journals, newsletters, and handwritten weekly chronicles. These serial texts, however different they may look, “all have in common that particular relationship to time which gives the form its name and its distinctiveness as a literary or publishing genre” (Beetham 96).

A periodical’s central feature is its periodicity (see Wald 619). This essential trait shared by magazines and newspapers serves as an organizational unit for non-linear text-image constellations that are in tandem with a periodical’s material outlook. It also strengthens its recognition value. One may think, for example, of the form of a broadsheet newspaper like the Cherokee Phoenix and how size and format make news-
papers recognizable as a periodical, or how individual serial imprints like Carlos Montezuma’s *Wassaja* newsletter (1916–1922; subtitled “Freedom’s Signal for the Indians”) use a specific design or layout that even casual observers can easily recognize at a glance and identify as the periodical’s constitutive markers (see Figure 1). Thus, periodicals are repetitive and generic as well as connective.

![Figure 1. Frontpage of *Wassaja* 1.1 (Apr. 1916). Image courtesy of Newberry Library Chicago. Photography by the authors.](image)

As a “connective tissue” (Powell, “Afterword” 448), periodicals provide insight into how cultural encounters happen. We propose to read Native American periodicals as assemblages; as sites of confluence at which persons, texts, print practices, enunciations, and affects inter-
Mark Rifkin argues that "Native texts operate as mediators in using settler templates to navigate settler networks" (16). In doing so, "Native writers strategically play on non-Native genres and expectations in ways that enable their texts both to move public conversations and to preserve Indigenous principles in situations of extreme pressure, surveillance, and intervention" (13).

The tendency towards composing an assemblage pulls together seemingly disparate communities and interests (via shared settler and Native printscapes, e.g., missionary papers in Native North American languages), and allows different types of media to converge and interact as can be seen in Twin Territories (1898-1904; see Figure 4). Curated by female Cherokee editor Ora V. Eddleman, the magazine turned into a major Native North American literary outlet in conjunction with publishing White mainstream periodical content (Kelderman 12). Marshall McLuhan argues that "the ‘content’ of any medium is always another medium" (8), and if Indigenous periodicals embody "another medium" in terms of repurposing White settler-colonial newspapers and magazines, they also highlight the distinction between mediators and intermediaries. "While mediators shape the content which they transmit, intermediaries merely act as tools of transmission" (Latour 37-42; Rifkin 10-16). Indigenous magazines re-nuance and reposition content through an association of formal, material, and affective inscriptions that depend not only on human agents like writers, editors, subscribers, type designers, and printing companies, but also on technology like the four-roller, two-revolution press constructed by Cottrell and Babcock used by the Cherokees to publish The Vinita Weekly Chieftain (formerly Indian Chieftain, 1882-1912; see Figure 2). These numerous types of "agency" are encapsulated in the material form of Native American periodicals and establish a media unit through which Indigeneity matters and happens.
All messages need a physical substratum or material component to convey meaning, such as ink on paper. Mediality refers to the performative dimension of the material substratum. In the case of periodicals, it is not the medium of the types and illustrations on the paper, but the printing, typing, and layouting of writing and images. The medium of
Given its ability to organize heterogenous semiotic resources and to weave together various types of media and media practices throughout the periodical’s pages, one can only stage or put them in *mise-en-scène* via the medium of the periodical (Figure 3). A good case in point is the
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Zitkala-Ša (1876-1938) was a prolific writer and activist who advocated to improve the conditions of Native North Americans. Addressing the elite, upper sphere of U.S.-American society, she wrote a three-part semi-autobiography for the Atlantic Monthly in early 1900, expressing harsh criticism of the enforced assimilation policies, the Dawes Act of 1887, and its consequences for Native North Americans.

When Zitkala-Ša began involving herself in the Society of American Indians (SAI), she came in close contact with magazine publishing. As editor of the American Indian Magazine (1913-1920) from 1918-1919, she published a series of articles emphasizing that “any renaissance of Indian culture and values was dependent on Indians defending their remaining land bases and all speaking with one voice” (Lewandowski 153). It is important to note here that the readers she wrote for were still educated and rich contemporary Indigenous and non-Indigenous elites.

What is more, Native American periodicals serve as resources for the production and circulation of non-fiction. As serial bodies of texts they consist of accounts, news, and tribal histories. They not only trace the “intellectual trade routes” (Warrior 181) of individual tribes and their exchange amongst each other, but also expose the complexities of Native North American epistemologies and ontologies, or what Robin Wall Kimmerer refers to as “Indigenous Wisdom,” to a wider audience. Exploring the making and preserving of Indigenous knowledge, Kanaka Maoli scholar Lisa Kahaleole Hall therefore emphasizes the importance of “the materiality of print” (78), maintaining that Indigenous “[p]rint culture has been a site where these knowledges accrue and live on in formal and informal archives to be rediscovered / reanimated like messages in a bottle floating through a sea of erasure” (78).

Native American periodicals additionally function as “territories” (Deleuze and Guatarri 3) which can either smooth or striate space. Deleuze and Guatarri use the terms “smooth space” and “striated space” in connection with “nomad space” and “sedentary [or state] space” (474). “Smooth space is the space of freedom” (Parr 119), while striated space “includes intrinsic boundaries” (191). In his examination of Theo Beaulieu, the Anishinaabe editor of The Progress (1886-1889), Adam Spry points out how the transfer of sacred stories and their adaptations into “a more novelistic form […] show the legitimacy of Anishinaabeg cultural practices while simultaneously undermining Euro-Americans’ prejudices” (61), effectively showing how the settler-space is smoothed by Indigenous translations. Similarly, reprints of costume portraits and photographs of Native American female celebrities in the striated space of a White newspaper, like the one of Zitkala-Ša in The Los Angeles Daily Times (1926; see Figure 3), not only echo settler-colonial culture and its “reductive binary of assimilation/tradition” (Humud 59), but rather unfix “it within a performance of Indianness that defamiliarizes that which has become essential to colonial culture” (60). This process is continuous; it is “both in construction and collapse” (Parr 237). The space of settler colonialism is striated, smoothed, and then striated and smoothed again by ongoing publications reiterating Euro-American misconceptions, while the Indigenous press continually publishes to displace or “smooth” predominant misconceptions. Seen in this way, Native American periodicals perform acts of “unheroic” decolonialism (Pexa 148). They “seem utterly harmless to settler audiences while actually working to decolonize and rebuild Indigenous communities” (148). Native American periodicals create lines of flight, or what his-
torian Philip Deloria (Dakota) calls “route[s] into a Native modernism” (12). Thus, Native American periodicals afford continuous de- and reterritorialization within the confines of the modern settler-colonial nation-state.

Indigenous Relational Periodical Works

Despite the repressive U.S. settler-colonial politics and ethnocidal attempts of U.S. institutions to “strike” Native people as “primitive objects of curiosity associated ineluctably with the past” (Wigginton 161), a vibrant Native print activism flourished in the opening decades of the twentieth century. While leading national magazines like Collier’s promulgated images of the “vanishing race,” Native American periodicals were essential to the formation of an alternative public sphere in which a self-conscious Indigenous public was able to exchange ideas. Red Progressivism and the Society of American Indians (1911-1923; henceforth SAI) promoted modern modes of editorship, print, and journalistic entrepreneurship that “modernized Indianess” (Lyons 170) and helped facilitate Indigenous notions of being-in-time and becoming. While the American Indian Magazine, sponsored by the members of the SAI, advocated Indigenous rights on a national level, the Indigenous press in Indian Territory had long furnished Native American communities with stories and pictures to convey alternative viewpoints refuting the debilitating images of Native Americans in the mainstream settler-colonial media. The newspapers and magazines in Indian Territory established a form of Indigenous writing (Figures 2, 6). As a public forum, they collected Indigenous literatures and added to the rich and diverse range of Native writings in general. The regional Indigenous press constituted distinct print genres for readings and interactions and, as communication media, Native American newspapers and magazines provided collective experiences and “facilitate[d] social identifications at levels below the nation” (Ballantyne and Paterson 18) establishing a reading public. In this manner, they integrated Native writers, editors, and culture and connected Native American literature to periodical work inside and outside of Indian Territory. Given their miscellaneous nature—the use of pen-names or the decision to anonymize writers—periodicals seem to contradict notions of authorship. They are frequently collaborative publishing projects, and even editorship is not exclusively an undertaking by one person but embedded in networks of like-minded people, i.e., intellectuals, activists, artists, writers, etc. Nevertheless, the periodical and its publications gather diverse forms of writing and writers. Manushag Powell contends that “periodical work is normal” for the “development of authorship,” and that periodicals “objectify people” and “force private lives into the public eye” (“Afterword” 444). This is especially evident for both male and female writers who become periodicalists. These writers are not
Indian Journal (1896-1), for instance, was brought to life “by some of the most influential citizens of the Indian Territory” (Littlefield and Parins 189) and is still published today. Another example of a weekly periodical is The Progress (1886-1889). Its multi-series history of the Chippewa / Ojibwe people and several entries on regional history emphasize Indigenous representation, turning it into a “revolutionary” paper and “a forerunner of the strongly pro-Indian publications of recent decades” (Vizenor and Diederichs, Littlefield and Parins 303).

17 For a recent and seminal recovery of Eddleman’s “early Cherokee Woman’s work,” see Carpenter and Kilcup, “What the Curious”; see especially the section “The Ethics of Recovery Work” for Eddleman’s mixed Cherokee-Irish-German descent and how her work relates to the Cherokee tradition of resistance. Charles Gibson is usually referred to as a “full-blood” Muskogee (Creek), although scholarly research suggests a more complex lineage. Littlefield and Parins point out that he is “the son of John C. Gibson” (Native American 111), and Bernd Peyer adds that Gibson’s father is “a white farmer from Georgia” (173).

18 See “Literary Cherokee Maiden,” Evening Gazette 8 Feb. 1902 (Iowa); “Indian Beauty an Editor,” Los Angeles Evening Express 15 Feb. 1902; “An Indian Girl Editor,” Los Gatos Mail 6 Mar. 1902 (California); reprinted in the Pullman Herald 8 Mar. 1902 (Washington); “Twin Territories,” Braman Star 1 Mar. 1902 (Oklahoma). The Bedford Daily Mail 1 Mar. 1902 includes a sketched illustration of Eddleman (3), and the previous year the Kentucky closed off within the confines of the newspaper or magazine for which they are writing, but instead form a variety of new connections given the periodical’s assemblage dimension and its “directions in motion” (Deleuze and Guattari 21). The relational periodical work of Ora V. Eddleman and Charles Gibson illustrates this point.

Although Eddleman and Gibson are widely acknowledged as writers, activists, and public intellectuals, little is known about their periodical work and how it occurred in combination with the newspapers and magazines in which their writing circulated. Both used local and translocal periodical networks connecting readers and communities in Indian Territory and beyond. The writings of Eddleman were widely read across the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and she gained the reputation of a charismatic female entrepreneur in the publishing business. In 1902 at least a dozen daily and weekly serial imprints featured articles on Eddleman and Twin Territories, usually with headlines focusing on her ethnicity and gender—some articles were even illustrated. In early October 1902, The South McAlester Capital (1894-1908) published an article on Eddleman and Twin Territories. It states that “Miss Eddleman has the distinction of being the original Indian woman in Journalism and has displayed so much originality and enterprise that her literary efforts have been exceedingly popular” (“One of the Interesting Visitors” 6). The article goes on to describe how Eddleman had been sent an issue of her magazine that had been “read […] to pieces” by “400 employees of [a Montana] manufacturing establishment” (6), after one of the employees had requested a sample copy and encouraged the others to read it. The following day, the article was reprinted by The Indian Journal under the title “Read the Magazine to Pieces” (5), possibly to highlight how well received the literary endeavors of Ora V. Eddleman were across the United States to readers of the Territory Press. The polyphony of voices and the repurposing of serialized reprints show not only how Eddleman enters the regional printscape, but also how she begins to use the periodical as an assemblage for the production of a Native perspective, her positioning as a female editor, and the “politics of location” (Rich 210). Within the pages of Twin Territories, her periodical work diagnoses the problem of difference by assembling an array of new genres like the photo sequence “Types of Indian Girls” (see Figure 5; see also The American Indian, 1926-1931, edited by Lee F. Harkins, which later expanded the use of photography), portrait photography, special sections on women-run literary clubs, and extended reportage series on “Territorial News” and women’s reform clubs.

Eddleman’s periodical work happens not only within the pages of Twin Territories, but also through the circulation of shared information about the magazine and its editor. Unlike the bounded space of books, periodicals’ miscellaneity invites “encounters of inside and outside” (Thoburn 216, 241). As multilayered assemblages that are “both inside
and outside simultaneously” (216), periodicals familiarize readers with periodicalists such as Eddleman and connect Indigenous writing to the nation’s print sphere. In doing so, the striated notions of Euro-American dominance and expectations of what an educated editor looks like is smoothed by the journalistic achievements of Eddleman as the successful proprietor compiling Twin Territories. And while the articles about
Figure 5. "Types of Indian Girls." Twin Territories 4.5 (May 1902): 126. The magazine remediates the aesthetics of nineteenth-century individual oval portraits using the page to create an assemblage view of publicly engaged Cherokee and Creek women. The authors' private collection.
Eddleman and her magazine leave no doubt that she was perceived as an exceptional phenomenon outside the “norm,” her periodical work illustrates how she serves an active agent forming her own autonomous space both for becoming a self-conscious editor and for promoting “the role of aesthetics in Indigenous communal vitality” (Calcaterra 14).²⁰ In its section on “Good Stories for All,” The Boston Globe (1902) noted: “In Twin Territories Miss Eddleman […] has gathered in its pages material from Indian writers; in fact, only those of Indian blood are permitted to contribute to its columns and the illustrations have been made from Indian [T]erritory scenery” (“Good Stories” 10). Eddleman’s magazine demonstrates the “transit between Native and non-Native literary practice” (Calcaterra 14) and how Native American periodicals connect to local and transregional audiences via periodical transfers that occur across the United States.

In the opening decades of the twentieth century, the reception of Native North American literatures and their authors by the broader U.S. society was shaped by the perception of individual writers and, to a certain extent, how they interacted with their audience. From the December 1900 issue onwards, Eddleman printed a column titled “What the Curious Want to Know” in Twin Territories, answering questions and queries of White readers in regard to Native North Americans.²¹ However, “Eddleman’s answers to White letter writers are sometimes so dismissive as to shut down the lines of communication” (Dean 161). She treated the questions from White readers as one would expect a White respondent to treat questions from a Native North American person, showing how a Native North American educated elite could behave as tersely and condescendingly as their White counterparts. Eddleman’s periodical work and her connections to the Territory press enabled her to address different publics and to establish her magazine as a distinct “object of knowledge transfer” (Warkentin 48). Janet Dean points out that “Eddleman’s adaptations of the commercial magazine genre facilitated resistance against mainstream efforts to categorize and manage Native people as they redefined what it meant to be a Native American at the turn of the century” (156). However, this is not limited exclusively to Eddleman’s activities in the pages of Twin Territories but includes those who wrote for the magazine, like the poet Hen-Toh (1870-1927), Cherokee Mabel Washbourne Anderson (1863-1949), or Creek Charles Gibson (1846-1923).

Eddleman refined her power-sensitive strategies when she began editing the “Indian Department” of the popular Sturm’s Statehood Magazine (1905-1911, renamed to Sturm’s Oklahoma Magazine with the July 1906 issue when the magazine moved from Tulsa to Oklahoma). In the magazine’s October 1905 issue, she printed an article entitled “A Creek Indian Fable” (88-90) by Creek humorist and writer Charles Gibson. Prior to this, in the July 1899 issue, Eddleman had published an article of his titled “A Creek Festival, Green Corn Dance” in Twin Territories.

²⁰ See Eddleman’s series on Native American legends and stories titled “Indian Folk-lore: Gathered from Many Sources” that opened the magazine’s 1902 August issue. While single pieces from the series were reprinted in other publications across the nation, the magazine itself functions as a “little archive” or micro-anthology of Native American storytelling traditions; for magazines as “little archives,” see also Frank and Podewski 38-41.

²¹ Eddleman’s column first appeared under a literary disguise using the initials “B. A. N.” and later, “Yours Candidly” (Morrison 150; Carpenter and Kilcup, Selected Works).
Unlike Eddleman, the distribution of (re)prints shows that Gibson’s stories mostly circulated in the Southwest. A search of “Gibson’s Rifle Shots” using the Historical Newspaper Archives’ database renders the following results for the period from 1902 to 1910: Oklahoma 127; Texas 1; California 1; Arkansas 1; Tennessee 1; Kentucky 2; Ohio 1.

Gibson was regularly featured in The Indian Journal. He wrote folklore tales and historical accounts of the Creeks, as well as biting commentary on contemporary political developments regarding the future conditions of Native North Americans. Gibson preserved information on his tribe in a tone that was both factual and humorous. On March 14, 1902, The Indian Journal published Gibson’s first “Rifle Shot” titled, “Why a Coon Is So Black around His Eyes” (1). The article is featured on the paper’s first page, as are many of his preceding and subsequent articles, pointing to Gibson’s popularity as a writer. Over the course of the following years, his “Rifle Shots” featured prominently in the newspaper, with ongoing responses from the readers. Gibson’s friend, the poet and journalist, Alexander Posey (1873-1908, Muskogee), who edited The Indian Journal from 1902 to 1903 and again in 1908, used readers’ feedback to anchor the author’s series within the newspaper’s pages by printing teasers and cliff-hangers: “Charles Gibson’s rifle shot at Indian education in last week’s Journal has elicited a clever reply from Frank Shortall, principal of the Eufaula High School, which we will publish next week” (“Charles Gibson’s Rifle” 4). Shortall’s reply was printed under the headline “Replies to Gibson” and picks up on Gibson’s humorous tone: “We have the greatest respect and good will for Mr. Gibson as a friend of the Indian schools, but we think that when he wrote his last communication he must have been eating some of that dried fruit he mentioned in his article” (Shortall 4). Similarly, a letter to the editor was printed on August 22, 1902, in response to Gibson’s “Shot” the previous week, stating that “[t]he shot at the Joneses last week was a regular shot gun shot. Gibson must have used a cow horn for a charger” (“Say Mr. Editor” 4). The dialogue shows how the “Rifle Shots” can be read as a “communal literary creation” (Calcaterra 1) and a site of Indigenous agency made possible through The Indian Journal opening a space to connect to mixed audiences and to distinguish oneself as a Native American author.

The “Rifle Shots” were set apart from the rest of the page not only by the decorative features of the series’ title, but also by using Grotesque letters, a sans-serif typeface that was widely used for advertisements and high-speed printing (Figure 6). Unlike old style typeface or Roman letters, the irregular Grotesque had a modern and avant-garde appearance. The title’s typesetting branded Gibson as a modern Native voice. The series’ layout also expressed the exclusivity of Gibson’s writings in (160–61), promoting Native American regional publications. Though it is unclear when Gibson began writing for periodicals, he “wrote extensively for Indian Territory newspapers and journals” (Littlefield and Parins, Native American 111) after 1900. Gibson is regarded as “one of the foremost representatives of Indian Territory humor” (Peyer 173), and his most well-received writings were a series of articles titled “Gibson’s Rifle Shots,” which appeared from 1902 until 1910 in The Indian Journal (1876–; see Figure 6).22
Figure 6. “Gibson’s Rifle Shots: Written Expressly for The Indian Journal by Charles Gibson a Creek Indian.” The Indian Journal 30.18 (23 Feb. 1906): 3. Gibson’s series was frequently published with the framing slogan, “Horse Sense Humor.” Such advertising statements and the repeated appearance on the front-page illustrate how Native American Indian Territory periodicals were instrumental in establishing a Native American regional authorship canonizing specific local literary trends. The authors’ private collection.
The Indian Journal, despite his works being copied and pirated by other publications across the country. When reprinted, Gibson’s “Shots” were sometimes accompanied by an elevating subtitle. The Arkansas Fort Smith Times (1894-1906), for example, published “Gibson’s Rifle Shots” with the subtitle “Celebrated Indian Writer Comments before Congress” (7 Mar. 1905: 6), and the Bartlesville Examiner-Enterprise (1904-1973) reprinted a “Shot,” adding the subtitle “The Creek Philosopher Writes of ‘Indian Incompetency’ and Degrees of Blood” (23 Mar. 1906: 3). The Stroud Messenger (1899-1940) reprinted his “Indian Proverbs,” describing him as “the Indian sage” (13 Mar. 1903: 4). The media echo could also take a more negative tone. The Cherokee Advocate on April 12, 1902, published an article on Gibson which described his writing as “filled with vulgarity about the Indians,” and Gibson as “the first Indian by blood, who takes great delight in abusing and making fun of his own people” and “deserves not to be called an Indian” (“The Creek Writer” 2). On May 31, 1902, another article claimed: “This Creek [Gibson], [sic] writes falsehoods about the Indian race, and because it is fun for the White man, to see an Indian guilty of such, he goes into hysterics, when the White man throws bouquets [sic] at him, by alluding to him as a smart Indian” (“Charles Gibson” 2). Contemporary periodicals printed responses or reviews of Gibson’s writings in both a positive and a negative light. This points to a lengthy and difficult negotiation of Gibson’s quality as a regional activist and humorist, assembled and conducted in the pages of Southwestern periodicals.

Eddleman and Gibson embody early Native American periodicalists whose work connects literature to Native American worlds. While they develop their presence in the periodical press along different routes, both engage in the rising business of writing, journalism, and print as it developed further in the opening decades of the twentieth century. It should be noted that Native women are fairly abundant in early periodical journalism. Sarah Winnemucca (1844-1891, Northern Paiute), Susan La Flesche (1865-1916, Omaha), Zitkala-Ša, and others (Batker) engaged in reform politics and used the periodical press as it opened opportunities into a distinct profession for women. Unlike other female Native journalists and their journalistic endeavors, Eddleman is an early example of Native American women entering the publishing business as female entrepreneurs and editors. Many Native women had dedicated themselves to various forms of the print business in boarding schools as active members of the composition room staff, working in the newsroom, or as anonymous editors of school papers. While most female editors who emanated from boarding schools remained unidentified, Eddleman was one of the first professional magazine publishers among Native American women. In many ways, she established the format of a Native American magazine as a hybrid publishing model promoting Indigenous content within a commercial framework as can be seen in her monthly extended advertising section. She borrowed this strategy from the Indian Territory press and adopted it to her publishing business. Besides her entrepreneur-
ship, Eddleman’s periodical work set the style and tone for later magazine projects undertaken by Native women like Zitkala-Ša, who redesigned the quarterly newsletter of the Society of American Indians and “turned it into a magazine,” as Carlos Montezuma derisively put it (May 1916: 3). In his “Arrow Points,” a series of biting comments on politics, print, and society in Montezuma’s newsletter *Wassaja*, he condemned the magazine as a cheap form of popular entertainment detrimental to the cause of Indian affairs: “Like all magazines, it cannot have any definite object, but to tickle its readers at the expense of Indians. Buffalo Bill and P.T. Barnum used the Indians. Now it is the American Indian magazine’s turn” (3). Montezuma’s verdict also brings in a gendered perspective by privileging the static, linear, and bookish form of the newsletter over the indefinite and disjunctive object of the miscellaneous magazine. For women editors, however, it seems that the magazine’s openness generates a highly creative assemblage for making and preserving Indigenous knowledge (Zuck 75).

Moreover, the responses to Gibson’s writings from Territory readers (Native and non-Native) reflect the ongoing discussions on the status of Indigenous writing in general and “why Indigenous literatures matter” (Justice). As a writer, Gibson was certainly as productive as he was controversial. When his “Shots” hit the target, the people responded, and the reactions kept readers interested and made them buy a publication’s next issue. The popular name in an easily recognizable series echoes Cherokee John Rollin Ridge’s words: “They [newspapers and magazines] present the more cumbrous facts and truths contained in books in a shape to attract, please and enlighten the general reader” (2). And while not always eliciting a pleasing or enlightening reaction, Gibson’s writings did attract the attention of a general readership. Despite the criticism from the *Cherokee Advocate*, the frequent reprints in non-Territory periodicals with a praising subtitle attest to his popularity at the time. Both Eddleman’s publishing entrepreneurship and Gibson’s peculiar writings on local affairs illustrate how the periodical’s distinctive properties mediate the vitality of Red Progressivism’s expressive culture at the turn of the century.

**Indigenous Print Culture and Decolonial Futures**

In her study on Kiowa photographer Horace Poolaw (1906–1984), Laura Smith writes that “in Oklahoma, periodicals had long provided [I]ndigenous communities with public forums for negotiating new visions of Indian people” (98). Smith not only refers to the “long” history of Native American periodicals as an enduring medium in a specific regional context, but she also highlights an independent Indigenous print market that existed within the confines of the settler-colonial nation’s print culture. Since the 1920s, there has been a growing number of Native American newspapers, magazines, newsletters, journals, and weekly chronicles that have engaged tribal-specific issues, or that have continued to take on, especially over the course of the 1960s and 1970s,
the print activism of earlier Indigenous editors and writers like Ed-dleman, Montezuma, and Lee F. Harkins. Bibliographies and archival findings demonstrate that there is a continuous history of Native American periodicals throughout the twentieth century and into the present unfolding an Indigenous periodical culture characterized by a web of relations combining text, photos, illustrations, cartoons, artwork, and typographic design to communicate with Indigenous and non-Native audiences.

Progressive Era Native American periodicals and their multimodal designs had a lasting impact on the surge of Indigenous print activism in the 1960s and 1970s, during the era of the American Indian Movement and the rebuilding of Indigenous nations.26 The Indian Historian, which began in 1964, started as mimeographed bulletin of six pages; relaunched in 1967, it presented itself as a richly illustrated quarterly and scholarly journal. The Indian Historian folded in 1980 after the magazine had been redesigned as a “combined publication” with the newspaper Wassaja (1973-1983). The new journal appeared under the title Wassaja: A National News Magazine of Indian America. The newsletter and magazine were edited by Jeanette Henry Costo (1909-2001), who identified herself as born to the Turtle clan of the Carolina Cherokee, and her husband Rubert Costo (1906-1988, Cauhilla) who served as the editor of the national advocacy newspaper Wassaja. Costo derived the newspaper’s title from Montezuma’s publication and promoted it as “The Indians’ Signal for Self-Determination” (see Figure 1). Both Jeannette and Rubert founded the American Indian Historical Society (AIHS) and ran the Indian Historian Press. They also published the children’s magazine The Weewish Tree (1971-1981).27

Another strikingly graphic magazine assembling political events, Indigenous philosophies, and artifacts was Akwesasne Notes (1969-1992), an activist paper of the Mohawk Nation that became famous for its design activism, especially the collectible centerfold-posters and resistance stamps. As a continuous archive of Indigenous subjects, Akwesasne Notes serves as a documentary history of the tumultuous decades of the 1960s and 1970s, thus providing in-depth coverage of the siege at Wounded Knee, James Bay, the Long Walk on Washington, the Alaska Pipeline, the Pine Ridge Murders, and the Alaska Claims Act—to name just a few important historical moments—revealing the magazine’s decolonial message embodied in its countercultural graphic art.28 Today, Native North American periodicals continue these earlier practices of print activism. They afford spaces for exclusively Indigenous narratives through community newspapers like the Choctaw monthly Biskinik, or non-profit volunteer-run magazines like Red Rising Magazine (2015-) that promotes itself as an “unfiltered” forum for Indigenous peoples to tell their stories “about what is happening right now, and what is about to happen next in our communities” (“Welcome to Red Rising”).29 Curating a collage of multitextual and multimedia weavings to engage U.S.
settler-colonial conditions, contemporary Indigenous periodic projects (both online and offline) intensify the print activism and content production of earlier Native American periodicals.

In this essay, we have approached periodicals as an assemblage of people and things, textures and networks, and materiality and technology. Studied as such, periodicals can help us understand why Indigenous literatures matter and the ways in which Indigenous writing took form over time in the pages of magazines and newspapers. Periodicals envision Native peoples’ continuity and change. Their visual and textual matter extends the practices of Indigenous expressive technologies to decolonize the settler-colonial nation-state and to challenge its ongoing striation of land, identity, and territory. Thus, this essay’s purpose was to reassess Native American periodicals as distinct material-semiotic objects. As we have shown, Native American periodicals are instrumental for shaping and producing publics and subjectivities. Given their relational arrangement, they gather other people and things, but also spill over into each other, turning the periodical into a dynamic and polyphonic fabric or “multiscalar space[ ]” (Goeman 11) to translate (multilingual) Indigenous life-worlds. As such, this essay has been a first step toward offering a fresh approach to analyzing Native American periodicals and the role they played in the expansion of Indigenous printscapes. Future studies should aim at expanding our knowledge of Indigenous periodicals’ ongoing political and cultural work enacting identity, establishing and participating in traditions, and asserting sovereignty.

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