

Sovereignty and Survivance in Spatial Archives and Urban Landscapes

NCAIS Graduate Workshop in Narrative and Research Methods
Hosted Virtually by Oklahoma State University
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“We did not move to cities to die. The sidewalks and streets, the concrete, absorbed our heaviness. The glass, metal, rubber, and wires, the speed, the hurtling masses—the city took us in.”

– Tommy Orange (Cheyenne/Arapaho)

Workshop Theme and Description: Our virtual and interdisciplinary workshop in Native Studies narrative and research methods invites participants to think creatively and critically about settled, unsettled, visible, and concealed features of urban places that can function as spatial archives. We ask students to explore their own home communities and institutions, or any city of their choice, and bring their findings to the group, in the interest of producing a collaborative workshop archive, derived from individual urban archives. So, rather than pore over traditional archival materials filed away in Halogen boxes stacked in research center basements, we hope to upend that standard approach and instead explore primary sources embedded in our respective cities’ historical and contemporary Indigenous avenues, spaces, structures, communities, and topographic memories. While we will read some literature in the form of monograph chapters, journal articles, maps, and Native newspapers, we are more interested in reading material embedded in Indigenous cityscapes. Whereas scholars have often cast cities merely as settler metropolises or terminals for twentieth-century assimilation projects, we are interested in how Native peoples incorporated cities into their own efforts at work, education, social, and political opportunities, while creating or preserving Indian cities, and remaking, repurposing, and reclaiming Indigenous space. Ultimately, we intend to discuss how cities can be read as stories of sovereignty and survivance.