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April Van Camps  
*University of Central Florida*

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MEMORIES AND MILESTONES: THE BRIGHTON SEMINOLE TRIBE OF FLORIDA  
AND THE DIGITIZATION OF CULTURE

by

APRIL CONE VAN CAMP  
B.A. Palm Beach Atlantic College, 1995  
M.A. University of Central Florida, 1998

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Texts and Technology  
in the Department of English  
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2008

Major Professor: Karla Saari Kitalong

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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation project discusses individual photographs of the Brighton Seminole Tribe of Florida from the early 1900s to the current period, each organized by way of their institutional significance, not their place in chronological history. Following Jean Mohr and John Berger's model in *Another Way of Telling*, I create a narrative for the pictures with a discussion of historical information, current data from interviews, Tribal members' stories, and my own personal story as it is tethered to the tribe.

The research addresses the following questions: Can photography offer a technological means to communicate culture in a vital, organic way? Can photos communicate culture as identity and not something merely to identify with? Can this cultural identification include me, an outsider, and is it possible that a colonialist viewpoint is actually beneficial to the tribe?

John Berger, Roland Barthes, and Gregory Ulmer's theories allow opportunity for new perspectives, and even would-be answers at times. Admittedly, there is no frame large enough to hold all of the truth, but these theorists' works push the frame's boundaries to look at the pictures from other perspectives, *other* as both different and from the outside. These critics offer light and air, posing questions such as, what assumptions help a viewer transcend the normally limited perspective of a superficial observer? What possible contributions might an outsider bring to the interpretation?

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother, Claudean Cone, whose sweet hands led me from the kindergarten bus to the university.

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## INTRODUCTION



Source: personal archive

Fig. 1. Entrance sign to Seminole Brighton Reservation

The sign at the entrance to The Seminole Tribe of Florida's Brighton Reservation marks the gateway to an anachronism (Fig. 1). Situated on a little over 57 square miles of land near the northwest area of Lake Okeechobee, the reservation exists as a technological dichotomy where the remnants of a cultural dynasty reside nervously with the onslaught of capitalistic progress. On any given day, a visitor will find Seminole women in traditional dress turning fry bread, while one of the Reservation's two helicopters flies overhead. The contrasts are more startling and more intimate as families gather, elder members speaking native Creek to younger adults who have never learned the language. The distinction resonates even further, to the adults' children whose heritage is mediated by Nike, Nintendo, and MTV—children whose

concepts of self are invented and imagined via the stories of their grandparents. Inside this complex cultural milieu, one mantra unites the Seminole people: “We must remember who we are and where we came from.” This resolve has launched an educational program to teach elementary age Seminole students the Creek language and customs, and it has prompted archival data organization to record and to remember the events that have brought the tribe to their place in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

This refrain and these initiatives captured my attention since the Seminole people are my friends; consequently, I began my research with the purpose of creating a digital memory book for the Brighton Seminole Tribe as an electronic means to preserve the elders’ stories. I planned to analyze the historical, educational, and rhetorical implications of preserving stories and memories in a visual/aural medium. I wanted to arrange the data so that the entire piece offered “a sentiment as certain as remembrance” (Barthes, *Camera Lucida* 70). I wanted to give this information to the tribe.

After nearly two years of consistent correspondence with numerous Tribal members, many of whom offered genuine interest and support, I was told I cannot have access to the tribe’s pictures and essentially, my focus must change. My initial response was to panic. What am I to do with the mounds of research and piles of drafts accumulated after so much time? Three days after the excruciating email, I am regrouping and once again, rewriting an introduction to a project I should have completed at least a year ago.

My friends told me, “April, don’t work with people. Technology breaks down, but you can fix it up. People never work.” Initially, I agreed with my friends. But after sifting

through the ruins of the mess on my desk, I exhumed a body of work—the work of my own body. Now, I can see how the process of the research adds as much to my knowledge of the Brighton Seminole Tribe as the books, articles, interviews, and field trips have. So, on this third day, I’ve sloughed off the grave clothes and resurrected these bones to live again, but the frame is fleshed out differently because the research questions have changed. This introduction offers an overview of this dissertation’s project, including my personal stake in the writing. It introduces my proposed research, provides a literature review for scholarly support, offers chapter outlines to describe the scope of the project, and explains the methodological approach and the theories driving this investigation. Following Berger and Mohr’s theory and method, I attempt to arrange Brighton Seminole Tribal pictures with my written work to create a piece that will commemorate and honor their culture.

This dissertation addresses four distinct institutions as they are represented in photographs of Brighton Seminole Native Americans—photos that I have acquired from Arcadia Publishing and photos I have taken myself. The photographic medium is historically linked to memory although it is “never, in essence, a memory” (Barthes, *Camera Lucida* 91), and there are hundreds of Florida Seminole photographs in the tribe’s archives, in American archives, and in books about the tribe.

Noted Florida Seminole historian, Patsy West, owns a “collection [which] now contains over 10,000 photographs that she preserves in an archive in her home” (Rowland). It is from her collection in *Images of America: The Seminole and Miccosukee Tribes of Southern Florida* that I have chosen my pictures although I use some of my own pictures as well. I use visual images that help to contextualize the

Brighton Seminole experience, showing the way visual representations of Brighton Seminoles have helped determine their own sense of identity as well as the way pictures have also helped to shape the community's view of the Seminole Tribe. Many current assumptions of Seminole values are based on photographs taken by famous photographers and compiled by Seminole tribal members. These photos depict people of Creek descent who eventually made a home on the Brighton Reservation near my home in Okeechobee County, and each set presents a view of the Tribal people's religious convictions, family traditions, educational concerns, or entertainment enterprises.

I have organized the chapters around these institutions for two reasons. First, Louis Althusser's designates these areas as ideological state apparatuses or "a certain number of realities which present themselves to the immediate observer in the form of distinct and specialized institutions" (143). These ideologies contribute to identity formation through a process of interpellation or hailing. The collection of pictures in my work shows the subjects as both agents and recipients of meaning, and these people's traces have partly defined and determined what it means to be Seminole. Second, Gregory L. Ulmer's "popcycle" works tangentially with Althusser's theory. The Seminole Tribe's choice to reject my request, and by extension *me*, is personally devastating. In my initial prospectus, I wrote that I had chosen to set aside my indeterminate ancestry. In the wake of this resuscitation, I am sure that I lied. Now, it is important for me to know why my own identity hinged so intimately to these people's acceptance.

In fact, my personal acquired memories, mediated through visual/aural mediums, joined me to the Seminole Tribe. What should I make of my own pictures and the stories

told to me by my own parents and grandparents? Are my Seminole connections created by such means, discovered by them, or are they imagined or even transformed by them? How do photographs and stories mediate between the tribe and me, or can I create my personal story through the available photographs? These questions seem more relevant than ever, especially in light of the tribe's refusal to honor the initial promise to cooperate by opening their photo archives.

### Literature Review and Theoretical Underpinnings

Jean Mohr and John Berger's work in *Another Way of Telling* is the primary model for my work and provides my theoretical foundation. These men's photo-narrative attempts to present the lives of French peasants by means of pictures, depicting "the most profound sense of their life's work" (7). Berger asserts that their pictorial project "is not a reportage, [but it is] a work of imagination," and it is the universal experiences of viewers' lives that create the stories and determine meaning for the photographs (7). *Another Way of Telling* offers a method for considering the photographs in Patsy West's pictorial anthology, suggesting "one [try] to arrange a number of photographs, chosen from the billions that exist, so that the arrangement speaks for experience. Experience as contained within a life or lives." Berger further proposes that this method "may suggest a narrative form specific to photography" (286).

Berger and Mohr's work is about the ways in which both people and photography can make each other matter, emphasizing the photographic ambiguity that "could offer to photography a unique means of expression" (*Another Way* 92). While this photo-documentary is technical and theoretical, Berger and Mohr's book portrays the human qualities of empathy and compassion.

Berger's ideas about reading photos as narrative concentrate on imagery, rhythm, and the juxtaposition of ideas and word images that encourage personal reflection and "revelation." Berger states, "The precise meaning of an oracular statement depends upon the quest or need of the one who listens to it" (*Another Way* 118). Berger invites, or more accurately requires, readers to take the role of oracle into the oracular experience to create and experience meaning. To accomplish this task, Berger suggests arranging photographs "so that the arrangement speaks of experience. Experience as contained within a life or lives," and he emphasizes the reader's ability to understand and enter into "an agreement about discontinuities which allows the listener to 'enter the narration' and become part of its reflecting subject" (*Another Way* 286).

I suggest that creating a picture narrative or a narrative about pictures is one way to both capture and release a culture, making a visual essay an appropriate vehicle for dealing with the simultaneous presence of the past, the present, and the future. The photo narrative allows for the combination or juxtaposition of record, memory, and hopes, or actual remnants, current understanding of remnants, and preservation and transmission of remnants for future generations. In this way, my work with the Seminole people and their culture is similar to Berger's photographic narrative.

Berger creates a photographic narrative, and he fashions a method for doing so. Like John Berger and Jean Mohr's *If Each Time*, this composition offers "no single 'correct' interpretation of this sequence of images," and is "not intended to be a documentary" (*Another Way* 133-34). In fact, the project is more docu-diary than it is documentary or journalistic tool.



Along with Mohr and Berger, I consider other authors who discuss visual theory and its implications for culture. Roland Barthes' *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* contributes to my discussion, particularly Barthes' notion of "studium" or "ethnological knowledge" (28) and "punctum" or "that accident which pricks me" (27). There are moments in this research where pictures reveal not only the exuberance and vitality of a culture waning and reinventing itself, but also the face of a long deceased relative whose departure from the community marked the end of an era. A Tribal member's absence is closely connected with the loss of certain values among the Brighton Seminole Tribe, and Barthes' search "for the truth of the face [he] had loved" becomes markedly poignant and relevant to the Seminole conversation about cultural preservation (Barthes, *Camera Lucida* 67).

Roland Barthes's work offers a way out of the image/storytelling bind since Barthes grapples with the compulsion to write between two languages: "one expressive, the other critical; and at the heart of this critical language, between several discourses, those of sociology, of semiology, and of psychoanalysis" (8).

W. J. T. Mitchell argues that Barthes's *Camera Lucida* is an example of a "photographic essay," because the "'co-equality' of the photographs in Barthes's text is achieved, not by grouping them in a separate 'book' where their own syntactical relations may emerge but by a consistent subversion of the textual strategies that tend to incorporate photographs as 'illustrative' or evidentiary examples" (302). Barthes's *Camera Lucida* vacillates between the personal: "There I was, alone in the apartment where she had died, looking at these pictures of my mother, one by one, under the lamp, gradually moving back in time with her, looking for the truth of the face I had

loved. And I found it” (67), and critical analysis, “History is hysterical: it is constituted only if we considerate, only if we look at it—and in order to look at it, we must be excluded from it. As a living soul, I am the very contrary of History” (65).

Like Barthes, I include a personal narrative in the critical work, one that I have created from the images, and a narrative that represents my relationship to the Brighton Seminole Tribe. I also attempt to negotiate between two languages and two voices: one the researcher’s voice, considered the sole authority and nearly indisputable in intellectual pursuits; the other personal, considered marginal and nearly irrelevant in scholarly research. Consequently, my academic work studies the Seminole images, without divorcing myself from the friendship I have with these people. I have a relationship with them, and they matter to me. No matter how I position myself as the writer inside this text, I am appropriating the Seminoles’ lives, their stories. This mixed method, situated between Berger and Barthes, openly and admittedly seizes the Seminole images, making their stories my own. In this way, I have a personal stake in the writing that makes these people continue to matter to me long after the project is completed. At the very least, the approach is more honest.

Gregory Ulmer’s work conciliates the two voices because his work encourages multi-vocal and multi-media approaches as means for invention. Ulmer’s “eureka” experience (7) is akin to Berger’s notion of “revelation” (*Another Way* 118), as well as to Barthes’s “punctum” (*Camera Lucida* 10), so the prospect for personal and academic discovery becomes plausible. Berger’s revelation is “a constituent of the relation between the human capacity to perceive and the coherence of appearances” (118), and Barthes’s punctum is “a tiny shock, a *satori*” that takes a photograph from ‘anything

whatever' to "*something*" (49). My project takes these theorists' assertions to task, incorporating Ulmer's call to create theory through storytelling and personal analogy (6-7). The method not only allows me to explore Seminole images and the tribe's cultural richness, but it also allows for personal possibilities and discovery. In this way, I am not simply reconstituting information for a privileged audience but through this discourse, the whole dissertation is endowed with humanity, which is frequently absent from this type of research.

In her book *On Photography*, Susan Sontag states, "To photograph is to appropriate the thing photographed. It means putting oneself into a certain relation to the world that feels like knowledge—and therefore, like power" (4). In a very real sense, the act of looking initiates meaning-making, and the function of meaning-making is especially noticeable and particularly disturbing when observing the marginalized or othered; however, any act of looking incorporates an act of power and initiates a moment of fear. This dissertation is founded on the principle of friendliness, and it takes on the burden of interpretation via this fundamental premise. Because I openly include myself in the analysis, not as authoritative researcher, but as vulnerable interpreter, I run the risk of misinterpretation like those who are in the pictures. By entering the narrative as April, not as professor or doctoral candidate, I willingly expose my academic underbelly, allowing for a critical view of not only my work, but also my *self*. While this does not equalize the power roles, it definitely makes my own responsibility weightier and more obvious.

Theoretically, Umberto Eco's work offers a foundation for a multi-viewpoint approach. While much narrative is sequential or chronological, a significant collection of

literary history suggests metanarrative, intertextual irony, dialogism, and 'double coding' are not new alternative writing processes. In "Intertextual Irony and Levels of Reading," Eco contends "Metanarrative, inasmuch as it is a reflection that the text carries out on itself and its own nature, or the intrusion of the authorial voice reflecting on what it is narrating, and perhaps appealing to the reader to share its reflections, is much more ancient than the postmodern" (213). Eco cites 13<sup>th</sup> century writer Dante Alighieri and 18<sup>th</sup> century writer Alessandro Mazoni as exemplars of these techniques along with his own 20<sup>th</sup> century work in *The Name of the Rose*. The real and fictionalized citations in Jorge Borges' *Ficciones* and *Labyrinth* as well as Gabriel Garcia Marquez' regular nod to Borges' work suggests more than simply an anxiety of influence, but a reference to an interjection by another author and another work. These intrusions layer the work with a richness that allows the reader to examine the text on two levels: the semantic reader, or the person "who wants to know what happens" and the aesthetic reader, or the person who wants to know "how what happens has been narrated" (Eco 223).

Equally important, Sandy Grande's vision for Native American education is iterated in her article "American Indian Identity and Intellectualism: The Quest for a New Red Pedagogy." Here, Grande calls for "a critical Indigenous theory of tribal identity and liberation, for a collectivity of critique that ultimately forms the foundation for a new Red Pedagogy," and she challenges readers to "re-imagine school as a site for revolutionary determination of all Indigenous peoples" (343). She resists the discussion of Indian identity because she says the discourse "serves to obscure the real sources of oppression, substituting the possibility for radical social transformation with a politics of representation" (344). Her essay reinforces the way notions of identity problematize her

effort and desire to write Native American concerns since she is of mixed blood. More important to my work, to reveal and to accommodate Grande's conundrum, she includes a personal narrative of her blood origins and her own struggle with identity, as well as the attributes that qualify her to speak for Native Americans. My work does this as well.

William Wordsworth's opening to the poem "Michael" is a reminder of those wonderful images that we "might see and notice not" if that which is important to see is not contextualized and offered as a story (line 16). Wordsworth's notion coincides with Susan Sontag's remark concerning photographic meaning: "In contrast to the amorous relation which is based on how something looks, understanding is based on how it functions. And functioning takes place in time, and must be explained in time. Only that which narrates can make us understand" (23).

Susan Sontag's work is critical to my discussion, not only in terms of her stance on pictures and narratives, but also because she addresses the deliberate construction of memorials via photographs and the ways in which "photographs give people an imaginary possession of a past that is unreal, [while] they also help people to take possession of space in which they are insecure" (9). Sontag's work helps to explain the tenuous balance between the Brighton Seminoles as they are now and the Brighton Seminole as they choose to be remembered, which helps to clarify the Seminole's urgency to document and digitize photos from their past. Sontag explains that "amorous relation [. . .] is based on how something looks, [but] understanding is based on how it functions. And functioning takes place in time, and must be explained in time" (23). Sontag's comment regarding time and narrative reminds of the variance between clock

time and time experienced; however, something in a photograph inherently defies and embraces simultaneously both views of time. This work addresses the time conflict in terms of transcendence, or the mystical possibilities that exist in the imagination.

John Berger's "Uses of Photography" actually takes Sontag's narrative statement to task, proposing another way of placing photographs in a storytelling context. Berger not only agrees with Sontag's assertion, but he also offers a possibility for finding meaning in photographs lifted out of ongoing continuity:

Photographs are relics of the past, traces of what has happened. If the living take the past upon themselves, if the past becomes an integral part of the process of people making their own history, then all photographs would re-acquire a living context, they would continue to exist in time, instead of being arrested moments. (291)

In this dissertation, I accept Berger's challenge to contextualize public pictures by writing about several photos of Brighton Seminole Indians whose images are in Patsy West's *Images of America: The Seminole and Miccosukee Tribes of Southern Florida*. The reading privileges subjective experience and emphasizes interpretive possibilities with a view toward "conflating time and history so that the two become indivisible, so that [I and, hopefully, you the reader] can no longer read [my/your] experience of them separately" (Berger and Mohr, *Another Way* 105). Through a reading that acknowledges the historical explanation and the personal meaning of each picture, I intend to show what Berger calls the particular "equalized with the universal" or the way in which a "photograph is lucid because it speaks, through an idea . . . to our memory . . . [so that] event and idea are naturally connected" (Berger and Mohr, *Another Way* 126).

In *Protocols of Reading*, Robert Scholes reminds that the process of reading includes "connecting one time to another, one place to another, one text to another through the figures of memory, which are the same as the figures of speech. We read,

as we talk, write, and think, by connecting signs and weaving texts, using the figures of resemblance, contiguity, and causality to accomplish this work” (18). This process is as true for visual texts, photographs, as it is for written texts, and reading includes not only the signs of the texts, but also the signs of our lives. Reading is not simply a matter of acquiring information from a text, but it is “learning to read and write the texts of our lives” (Scholes 19).

According to Gregory Ulmer, this point of view merger “is organized associationally,” bypassing the linguistic dichotomy that creates a then/now, authentic/simulated discourse that leads nowhere (216). Visual technology and narrative provide another means to preserve a culture which can be lost, offering a medium that more closely resembles the oral tradition and circular narratives of Native American Seminoles because it presents Brighton Seminole Tribe in a way that “proposes an agreement about the unstated but assumed connections existing between events” (Mohr and Berger, *Another Way* 284).

Walter Ong speaks of these connections as an “episodic structure,” which in an oral culture would have been “the natural way to talk out a lengthy story line if only because the experience of real life is more like a string of episodes than it is like a Freytag pyramid” (148). This is important because the Seminoles live and function in a world of ideas that is a merger of life as it is, life as it was, and life as it should be, not only according to their own sense of identity, but also according to a version of identity constructed by their enemies, friends, and neighbors. The photo narrative arranges visual information in a way that encourages the reader to discover omissions between visual images and written sentences, a method that complements without simplifying or

sentimentalizing the Seminole experience—a reading where each “step is a stride over something not said” (Mohr and Berger, *Another Way* 285).

I have not sidestepped those who would oppose my reading of the Seminole experience. Postcolonial theorists, like Edward Said, contend that Western readings and Western literature cannot convey the experience of the colonized. The weaknesses of those who look at others include the tendency to totalize and essentialize the culture in a nostalgic version of itself and to forget that a culture is not solely its past, but it is also a compilation of its historical and idealized past along with its appropriated values. Said assumes that Europeans and Westerners are the other, who are capable only of colonizing:

I doubt if it is controversial, for example, to say that an Englishman in India or Egypt in the later nineteenth century took an interest in those countries which was never far from their status in his mind as British colonies. To say this may seem quite different from saying that all academic knowledge about India and Egypt is somehow tinged and impressed with, violated by, the gross political fact – and yet *that is what I am saying* in this study of Orientalism. (*Orientalism* 11)

Although it is not especially useful to my work to deconstruct this argument or Said’s scholarship, Ibn Warraq, Robert Graham Irwin, and Ernest Gellner have taken Orientalism and Said to task. For Said, there is no one outside who can offer a story that resonates true for the observed because all those who are *other* are racist and cannot help but be so, for Said assumes those who are *othered* have no agency.

In Edward Said and Jean Mohr’s collaborative project *After the Last Sky: Palestinian Lives*, Said asserts the following statement concerning the inside/outside relationship of people in his culture:

To be on the inside, in this sense, is to speak from, be in, a situation, which, paradoxically, you do not control and cannot really be sure of even when you have evolved special languages—sometimes evasive, always



idiosyncratic—that only you and others like you can understand. The structure of your situation is such that being inside is a privilege that is an affliction, like feeling hemmed in by the house you own. Yes, an open door is necessary for passing between inside and outside, but it is also an avenue used by others to enter. Even though we are inside our world, there is no preventing others from getting in, overhearing us, decoding our private messages, violating our privacy. (52-53)

Said's view assumes that those who observe from the outside cannot understand anything because no universals exist, no absolute truth exists, and there is no way to transcend our particular perspective because biology, our parents, our environment, and our DNA determine not only who we are, but also how we think and feel. In fact, even listening to another culture is a violation. No one from inside or outside can convey a truth, and certainly not the Truth, because neither exists. In fact, even those inside have limited view and voice since all they say about themselves falls victim to eavesdropping *others* who seek to undermine "private messages" and personal "privacy" (*Last Sky* 53). Ultimately, Said leaves his own people as well as us with an option to talk only about ourselves. What is useful about Said's work for my study, though, is to question and address the idea of outsiders looking into the culture of *others* to see if fruitful insights are possible. Said's work also raises questions about the importance of place to define identity.

Ian Baucom's book *Out of Place: Englishness, Empire, and the Locations of Identity* proposes place and not blood is the element that preserves national identity by creating "architectures of belonging" (23). He contends that place changes to accommodate the language and needs of the contemporary community, and that the essence of a place is created and perpetuated as it is changed. The transformation in place, which results from imperialism in Baucom's context, implies that identity "can be

spoken of only, indeed can exist only, in a perilously intimate relationship with the empire that ravages and defines it” (29).

Baucom’s conversation has implications for the Seminole Tribe as it defines itself inside American Indian sovereignty, with American capitalism, and against Anglo colonialism. For the Brighton Seminole Tribe, the conversation of identity and place is critical since the Seminole people are struggling to reconcile the paradox of their waning and emerging culture into an identity that can embrace new opportunities without letting go of tradition. There is no less “Seminoleness” in the 21<sup>st</sup> century Seminole, but there is a different “Seminoleness” and one that brings both anxiety and anticipation for the Brighton Tribe. Preserving a collected past through the photo narrative offers a medium for transmitting an old way of life and a new generation of innovation, without the paranoia and elitism that post colonialists fear.

Finally, it is necessary to locate the Seminole Tribe against a historical background, and Jerald T. Milanich’s *Florida’s Indians: from Ancient Times to the Present* and Brent Richards Weisman’s *Unconquered People: Florida’s Seminole and Miccosukee Indians* offer concise histories of the Seminole cultures. A number of websites offer pictures and information about the Brighton Seminoles and Okeechobee history, but the most significant site, and one that offers numerous visual representations of the Seminole Tribe and its influence on Okeechobee, Florida, is Tommy Markham’s site, [tommymarkham.com/OCF/ocf01.htm](http://tommymarkham.com/OCF/ocf01.htm) . Tommy Markham’s family was among the first Okeechobee settlers, and Tommy has spent many hours compiling pictures of early Okeechobee’s integral settlers and landscapes, along with data concerning the many events and changes the city has seen over the last 150

years. When the Okeechobee County Commissioners and the Williamson family decided to create a written history of the city, they consulted Tommy Markham's data. The award winning *Seminole Tribune* ([seminoletribe.com/tribune/](http://seminoletribe.com/tribune/)) is "the official newspaper of the Seminole Tribe of Florida," and data regarding the new charter school is taken exclusively from the here since the site offers only the tribe's focus concerning the school.

Most of my pictures are from Patsy West's *Images of America: The Seminole and Miccosukee Tribes of Southern Florida*, Frances Densmore's *Seminole Music*, or I use pictures I have taken myself with permission from the Brighton Seminole Tribe of Florida and University of Central Florida's Institutional Review Board.

### Project Description

The Seminole people's concept of their own identity includes a conscious amalgamation of history along with a real and an idealized merger of memory. This dissertation does the same. The photographic eye and the narrative *I* are appropriate tools to communicate the multiple roles that exist among Tribal members, while considering the numerous ways a viewer examines a photograph: the eye who takes the pictures, the *I* who sees the picture, the eye who looks back from the pictures, and the *I* who writes about the picture. This approach lends itself to various points of view, modeling the ways individuals view pictures: This is me, this is you, this is her, this is us, we were there.

This dissertation project discusses individual photographs of the Seminole Tribe from the early 1900s to the current period, each organized by way of their institutional significance, not their place in chronological history. Following Jean Mohr and John

Berger's model, I create a photo narrative for pictures that seem to fit inside Seminole institutions of Family, Religion, Education, and Entertainment. Each chapter presents pictures from the Brighton Seminole Tribe along with a discussion of historical information, current data from interviews, Tribal members' stories, and my own personal story as it is tethered to the Brighton Seminole Tribe of Florida.

These photo narratives offer a visual possibility for remembering Florida Seminole culture both as it was and as it is and as it relates to outsiders who care about not only the Reservation culture, but also the people who live there. It is likely that the project cannot escape colonialist assumptions on the reading, which iterates an important question: Is there something to be gained by the outsider's view?

The product does not endeavor to memorialize a costumed, pre-twenty first century version of the Brighton Tribe, it does not seek to arrange chronologically Seminole history, and it does not undertake to narrate the Seminole experience from an authoritative point of view. However, a narrative does occur—one between the pictures and one between the pictures and me. The photo narrative juxtaposes many points of view and numerous pictures with and without explanation so that “the reader is free to make his way *through* these images” (Berger and Mohr, *Another Way* 284). The photo narrative celebrates the Seminole people's cultural values and offers an interesting way to communicate these principles into perpetuity through a language of images. Does this free the narrative from colonialist taint, or might the tribe have reasonable fears about opening its archives? The following chapters will reveal a story and at least a partial answer.

My research attempts to answer the following questions: Can photography offer a technological means to communicate culture in a vital, organic way? By organic I mean, is the media of photography able to communicate a culture as lived-practice instead of as artifact, museum fodder? Can photos communicate culture as identity and not something merely to identify with? Can this cultural identification include me, an outsider, and is it possible that a colonialist viewpoint will actually be beneficial to the tribe? Is it possible that within the frame of a Seminole picture, I will find myself?

### Chapter Summaries

I situate my research in the contemporary discussion of Seminole institutions, particularly religion, family, education, and entertainment and against the limitations of a single theory. Institutional and theoretical information are tightly affixed to discussions, which suggest photography and narrative reveal ideological tendencies to determine historical meaning. However, I posit that the investigation of photography and narrative as memory touchstones for both Seminole stories and private stories provide a way out of this bind, offering an opportunity for a multiplicity of stories and meanings for the Seminole Tribe and for those who care about the tribe's cultural perpetuation. Although I organize the work to explore the connection between cultural memory and visual technology via these institutions, the picture-narrative and stories occasionally blur the lines of institutional organization and blend. Consequently, some pictures recur as do some arguments, particularly the polemic concerning the outsider's gaze. In essence, the institutional organizational pattern is simply a means to relay the research.

## Chapter One: Brighton Seminole History: Backwards Is Forward

Chapter one offers a synopsis of the Seminole desire for cultural preservation. The chapter gives a short history of the Seminole Tribe's origins and explains the dilemma the Brighton Seminole Tribe of Florida faces as its people struggle to maintain both traditional and modernized identities, while perpetuating a sense of cultural values for posterity. The chapter includes conversations about the value of land and sovereignty. This chapter also begins a conversation about the advantages of looking from the outsider's view, considering the risks that accompany such an endeavor. In this first chapter, an argument begins to develop for an existential approach to viewing pictures.

## Chapter Two: Brighton Seminole Family: Tradition and Transition

The second chapter reveals a way of life that existed less than thirty years ago, and highlights traditions that continue to this day. While the Brighton Seminole people struggle to maintain their heritage in the midst of technological change and economic abundance, remnants of their familial roots, including their chickee homes, bear the mark of ancient culture and clanship.

Marjorie Perloff's essay "What Really Happened: Roland Barthes's Winter Garden/Christian Boltanski's Archives of the Dead" presents a theoretical basis to examine Christian Boltanski, Roland Barthes, and John Berger's notions of death and photography. This chapter takes on the notion of death and resurrection as pictorial possibilities, reckoning the picture's data as the recognizable and undeniable idea, with the generalization inherent in pictures that are rife with narrativity. These pictures evoke a multiplicity of feelings and coherences, which create meaning and a metaphorical

resurrection of the dead. In this way, personal tradition, custom, and affiliation exist as that which transmits and perpetuates culture and meaning.

In this chapter, my own narrative enters more freely, emphasizing a familial connection to the Seminole Tribe that provides a window from my own homegrown-view. In fact, the chapter opens with a picture of my grandfather who was a close friend of Billy Bowlegs III, who is also in the picture.

### Chapter Three: Brighton Seminole Religion: Altar Alternatives

Chapter three discusses the Green Corn Dance, its known significance, its rituals, its leaders, and the tribe's trend toward and resistance to Christianity. The chapter highlights the human capacity for empathy, which spans the breadth of culture and time. Personally, the chapter models my own transcendent reading through the Brighton Seminole's religious institution as it applies to my own understanding of all that is spiritual.

In terms of photographic theory, I address Charles Martin's "Autobio-Photography: Beauty and the 'I' of the Beholder," which takes a critical look at the photographer's intent. Martin challenges the motives of several photographers, including Jean Mohr's aim in *Another Way of Telling* and John Berger's claim to have collaborated with the French peasants to make this book. Martin argues that there are ambiguities in such statements and he says, "It seems unlikely that in any real sense the book is the work of the locals, and certainly the nature of the collaboration is unclear" (NP). My work in the third chapter takes Martin's inquiry a step further by asking, what happens when the subject is neither complicitous nor oppositional? What

does a photo mean when the subject catches the photographer unaware instead of the other way around?

Catherine Lutz and Jane Collins' essay "The Photograph as an Intersection of Gazes: The Example of National Geographic" points out that while the subject's look into the camera does acknowledge the presence of the photographer and by extension, the reader, there is some controversy over exactly what the look does. Lutz and Collins offer seven different readings of the subject's gaze, which can intersect and overlap to create "a complex and multi-dimensional object," allowing "viewers to negotiate a number of different identities both for themselves and for those pictured" (355). By considering these multiple possibilities, the reading of the Green Corn Dance pictures becomes richer and narrate-able.

#### Chapter Four: Brighton Seminole Education: From Chickee to Academy

The fourth chapter looks at the early beginnings of education on the Brighton Reservation and its evolution to a brand new charter school, where students daily dedicate hours to learn FCAT strategies, as well as to study Creek language and Seminole culture. This chapter also offers photos and stories that document Seminole efforts to maintain the community's intimacy and educational emphasis among the tribe.

Keeping with the academic emphasis of this project, the Education chapter concentrates on the theoretical value of looking at *others'* pictures, while narrating the experience of learning that may prove common to all.

Besides appearance, language is often the most apparent determinant of identity, but it has clearly been the most neglected agent in current Seminole culture. The Creek language has literally skipped a generation of Native speakers, and there is



currently a vigorous effort to teach the Kindergarten through fifth grade Seminole children the language. The critical situation regarding the Creek language is a grave concern among the Brighton Seminole people, and this anxiety has initiated an education program that deserves attention.

Education for the Seminole Tribe and for most American indigenous cultures cannot separate itself from the inherent spiritual values of the Tribal belief system, so this chapter follows closely, even blends with the prior chapter on religion. In fact, Daniel Wildcat offers a succinct and moving definition of the foundation for Native American education:

Knowledge and understanding come from our relatives, the other 'persons' or 'beings' we have relationships with and depend on in order to live. And it is through these relationships, physical and psychological, indeed spiritual, that human beings begin to understand who, why, and even to some degree what we are. A value-free, neutral, objective science of things cannot give us that, and it is this discovery of meaning through very complex relationships that is the hallmark of American Indian education. (33)

In fall 2007, Brighton Reservation instituted the charter school for grades K-5 that emphasizes Florida's requirements for all grade schools, while incorporating classes that focus on the Creek language and Seminole customs. If the Seminole children are to embrace and practice their heritage, it will have to be taught as a vibrant, lived experience.

#### Chapter Five: Brighton Seminole Entertainment: Poverty to Prosperity

The final chapter offers a visual discussion of the tribe's move from sheer poverty to opulent wealth. This chapter also considers the effects of this move on institutions

discussed in previous chapters, highlighting the conundrum that exists between allure and necessity, and emphasizing the way work and play are integrally connected.

Land development and commerce are inextricable on the Reservation, and there is clearly a values shift from screening the world through nature's lens to observing the world through capitalistic eyes. Seminole photos portray the angst resident in the Tribal members who long to reconcile past standards with present principles. Both their testimonies and their pictures of themselves represent grappling with their own uneasiness inside the shift from isolated obscurity to worldwide economic power, and this wrestling presents new challenges to communicate the tribe's values and views to its youth. Pictures representing this period change dramatically in content and in form. Since the wealth is newly acquired, photographic technological advances capture in color and clarity the opulence that is the twenty first century Seminole Tribe.

### Theory and Methodology

My work is a qualitative study that explores the possibility of communicating culture via visual technology and associational narrative. My primary methodology includes interviews, pictures, observations, theoretical application, and personal narrative. I model my dissertation on John Berger and Jean Mohr's book *Another Way of Telling*, which addresses "the problem of communicating experience" (84). Both Berger and Mohr grapple with the connection between photography and meaning and conclude with a series of photographs entitled *If Each Time* that attempts to place the images in "a context of experience" so that "appearances become the language of a lived life," which resembles memory (289).

While Berger and Mohr's work concentrates on French peasants, my own work examines the Brighton Seminole culture and investigates photography and its presentation as a means to perpetuate the culture as a lived experience. Consequently, my work asks and answers questions regarding specific issues in Seminole culture that challenge and affirm the notion of Seminole identity with a view toward creating a visual composition that contains and expounds the Brighton Seminole experience.

In addition, I write a personal narrative inside the theoretical discussion that explores the reasons that compel me to identify with this tribe as well as the memory-connections and stories these pictures evoke. While the personal product is not necessarily the major component of the dissertation, it serves as an experiment in narrative technique, much like the photo narrative itself. This portion of my work loosely models Gregory Ulmer's mystory and CATTt methodology. Because this dissertation experience has included a personal rejection trauma, I need to make the research process and the final product reconcilable. The conversation inside the theoretical work contrasts sharply with academic writing expectations. My academic voice will maintain the privileged place in the dissertation as it discusses the eye of the camera, but my personal voice will intrude occasionally as it discusses the / of what I learn. I use a window as my analogy because it frames information in a limited way, excluding the viewer from the occurrence observed, much like the frame of a picture. Through a window, I can feel the warmth of a hand placed on the opposite side, but it will not allow for embrace. A window allows only for the surety of presence via kinesthetic tactile observation. Since a camera also has a window/ view finder to frame what it sees, the

analogy works well. I use italics to speak with my personal I, so that the two discourses, although parallel in subject matter, can be distinguished by my colleagues.

Just like in the primary text, I draw on Berger and Barthes for visual theory, but I also lean on Robert Scholes' narrative theory, Gregory Ulmer's theory of invention, and Umberto Eco's literary theory to anchor my personal voice. My target is the same questions that exist in the primary text: How can culture be perpetuated in a vital way, and what might the Seminole people gain from an outsider's point of view? I also want to know why I am so deeply hurt by these people's rejection. My tale is the story of my life within the Seminoles' lives and their pictures, and I use italics to indicate my personal voice. I use Microsoft Office Picture Manager to create the photo narrative.

### Justification

My interest in this project is both personal and academic. I have a deep admiration for the Seminole people who are both my neighbors and my friends, but I am also deeply interested in photography and narrative as media to convey cultural significance. If in the process of writing this dissertation, I create a project that communicates the meaning of Seminole culture in a vital way through photographic technology as a narrative arrangement, then I have combined both interests and, perhaps, made the dissertation project a service learning initiative. If I walk away with a deeper knowledge of how the technologies work together, then that is also good. If I gain a keener sense of my own identity, then I have an even higher purpose for this work.

The Seminole people want to perpetuate the culture handed down via oral tradition. A generation is ready to take their elders' places in leadership, but many do

not know the language and some do not know their cultural history. My project offers an ancillary to the programs already in place to educate and to revitalize Tribal consciousness of Seminole identity in a way that suggests a glimpse of the lived experience, which is the focus of my work.

## CHAPTER ONE BRIGHTON SEMINOLE HISTORY: BACKWARD IS FORWARD

### Brief History

The history of the Seminole people is ancient. A number of historians' works provide extensive views of Seminole history, a rich history that goes back at least 12,000 years, according to Jerald T. Milanich, Brent Richards Weismann, and Patsy West. However, for the purpose of this work, it is more efficient to begin with the eighteenth-century Creeks' move from middle Georgia to Florida, and it is more in line with the tone of this work to access the Seminole Tribe's condensed history by consulting Willard Steele and the Seminoles' own worldwide website.

According to the tribe's brief historical account, the Seminole people were already in Florida during the sixteenth-century Spanish rule, and it was as much the establishment of Spanish missions in northern Florida that drew Creeks from Georgia as it was the hostile relations between the English and Creeks. According to Willard Steele, the first Creek-speaking Florida residents were also cattlemen, and their success instigated greed among the white Floridians, who wanted not only the Creek land but also their cattle.

The Seminoles view the string of wars from 1812 to 1858 as a series of assaults that were primarily aimed at Seminole destruction. Steele claims that the Second Seminole War (1835-1842) nearly devastated the tribe, reducing their population from an estimated 1,200 to less than 300, and forcing the population to live as "hunters,

guides, and sometimes, curiosities for the tourists.” Patsy West’s book, *The Enduring Seminoles*, gives a detailed account of the tribe’s survival strategies during those impoverished years.

Between 1907 and 1913, eighteen “Indian reservations in Florida, ranging in size from 40 acres to 16,000 acres” (Steele) were established, but the Seminoles opposed reservation living because they resisted land ownership as a principle. However, white people’s encroachment on Seminole land made Annie Jumper Tommie the matriarch of the first reservation community in 1926 (Fig. 2). Those who chose to embrace the reservation as home have made the land a place where they continue traditions, cultural customs, and self-government. By 1957, the pressure to become federally recognized as a tribe or watch the termination of U.S. government services forced the Seminole people to organize the Seminole Tribal Council, which deals solely with Tribal affairs and the Seminole Tribe of Florida, Incorporated, which deals solely with business affairs.



Source: *Images of America: The Seminole and Miccosukee Tribes of Southern Florida* by Patsy West; photographer Frank A. Robinson. Reprinted with permission and available from the publisher at <[www.arcadiapublishing.com](http://www.arcadiapublishing.com)> or 888-313-2665.

Fig. 2. Annie Jumper Tommie

Today the Seminole community is an economic force through its casinos, cattle industry, citrus ventures, and Hard Rock ownership. Their move from poverty to affluence testifies not only to their adaptability as a people but to their vision and foresight in the face of change (Steele).

### Photographic People and Landmarks

A number of Native American scholars speak to the importance of place and memory, and many visual theorists speak to the way photographs construct memory. Brighton Tribal familial identity is inextricable from the land and the Brighton Reservation now, even though there was tremendous resistance in the early twentieth



century. In fact, there are people still living on the Reservation who have stayed on the 57-acre confine since the day they arrived in Glades County. The notion that space defines identity is Western in origin, but the Seminoles have made the tribal space distinctly their own. Consequently, land is critical to Seminole Indians, and their sense of place is a matter of both pride and identity. While looking through the photo archives in Hollywood, Florida, my guide said, “That picture is of Big Cypress Reservation, not Brighton. I can tell by the Palm trees and the look of the children’s faces. They look different from us” (Personal communication, 12 October 2007).

The geographic discourse between tribal elders and government officials at county, state, and national levels is fraught with tension as the Brighton Reservation’s landscape adjusts to preserve the Reservation’s own boundaries. The Tribal Council and Board members have had to be shrewd to keep their own territory. Pictures of the Brighton Reservation show not only the effects of time but also the effects of the times, and the photos emphasize the fragile balance between the role of land use and technology and the importance of Reservation land for continuing tribal traditions.

Brighton Seminole people grapple daily to reconcile their perception of self as doggedly persistent Native people, whose traditions remain vital, with their twenty-first century capitalistic identity, whose enterprises create exorbitant wealth. This identity dilemma manifests in a desire to embrace economic progress while simultaneously adhering to past values, and their longing is evident from their political decisions regarding land use to their religious traditions regarding death. Perhaps this is why on any given day a visitor may see a mother and baby in traditional dress, driving a new model Cadillac Escalade to the Reservation’s modern day-care facility (Fig. 3).



Source: *Images of America: The Seminole and Miccosukee Tribes of Southern Florida* by Patsy West; photographer William D. Boehmer. Reprinted with permission and available from the publisher at <[www.arcadiapublishing.com](http://www.arcadiapublishing.com)> or 888-313-2665.

Fig. 3. Charlotte Mary Tommie and daughter Pricilla Doctor

On Brighton Reservation, old and new reside side-by-side, interacting and influencing decisions that are both public and private, making the reservation not only a place of evolution, but also a visual paradox. As a people forced from their original homes and into the Florida Everglades, Seminoles learned a way of life that focused on survival. Even now, the focus remains. The Brighton Reservation is by itself a functioning city, complete with its own utility plants and police force. The people are self-contained, self-governing, and self-sufficient. The Reservation has developed its land so that it can withstand the flooding catastrophes of events like the 1948 hurricane (Fig. 4) with modern canals and drainage management (Fig. 5).



Source: *Images of America: The Seminole and Miccosukee Tribes of Southern Florida*, by Patsy West; photographer William D. Boehmer. Reprinted with permission and available from the publisher at <[www.arcadiapublishing.com](http://www.arcadiapublishing.com)> or 888-313-2665.

Fig. 4. Hurricane of 1948



Source: personal archive

Fig. 5. Reservation Canal (2007)

One example of Brighton's cultural irony entails reservation land in Glades County. The relationship between Brighton Tribe and Glades County has not been without problems. There is far more cooperation between Brighton and Okeechobee County, and there is historical precedent in the minds of Seminole members to make them suspicious of Glades County's intent. Consequently, Florida's Law of Eminent Domain is a potential threat to Brighton Reservation's undeveloped land in Glades County because Brighton residents fear the possibility of Glades' encroachment on acres of gorgeous, primitive Florida land that belong solely to them.

To evade the possibility of having Tribal land confiscated with the U. S. government's permission, Brighton has plans to build a vacation spot that will rival Disney's Vero Beach Resort. The enterprise turns once-unused land into additional income for the already wealthy tribe and rescues their territory from greedy politicians. The resort also turns the Seminole's pristine land into a commercialized version of itself, but Brighton Tribe's history expert, Willy Johns, argues, "Someone will exploit this land. It should be us. It's ours" (personal communication 12 February 2007).

Currently, the project is no more than a plan, but it is a plan on standby status, ready to be enacted should Glades County try to expand into Seminole territory, and it has held the reservation's predators at bay for over seven years.

In *Power and Place: Indian Education in America*, Vine Deloria, Jr., argues that Native Americans' means to make sense of the world include the notions of "place and power, the latter perhaps better defined as spiritual being or life force" (2). Deloria's conversation about place concerns the Native American view that place is an "experiential dimension" that encourages relationship and unity with nature, not an

observation of nature, which is a western ideal (2). That is to say, the intrinsic, spiritual value of the land as mother/creator has given way to the extrinsic, utilitarian value of the land as material/commodity, objectifying place as a source of livelihood instead of the source of life. Deloria's discussion of place opposes western scientific thought about science and its claims to understand the world in terms of things instead of nature, emphasizing the growing abyss between Native American views of nature and science. This notion first collides and then combines with Seminole ideals when Christian missionaries first enter the culture in the mid 1930s.

In the same book, Daniel R. Wildcat argues, "Indigenous people represent a culture emergent from a place, and they actively draw on the power of that place physically and spiritually" (32). This metaphysical view of place is problematic in light of the Seminoles, since their ancestors are not native to Florida lands but escaped to Florida and were given their Indian lands from the federal government. However, both Deloria and Wildcat's explanations of place indicate that land means a connection to family, tribe, ancestors, nature, sacred sites, burial grounds, and medicinal plants more than it does to a specific geography. Essentially, land and home are synonymous for Seminoles, and their memories are inextricably tied to their place, even if the place is one assigned to them by a government foreign to their own ideals. Narrating this relationship and the changing nature of the link between land, home, and identity has been a struggle for Brighton Seminoles, but they have managed to do more than adapt. They have flourished.

Along with cultural incongruities that affect public, political decisions, the private lives of Tribal members are tangled with past and present ideas. This is especially

evident when there is a death in the Seminole community. Although Brighton functions as a self-sufficient reservation with its own law enforcement, medical facilities, schools, and government, the entire reservation halts when a tribal member dies. While Tribal members are no longer sent outside the camp or Reservation for sickness or birthing functions (Fig. 6), fires are built in the deceased's front yard, and death is dealt with much the same as it has been over centuries: The Seminole grieving process is deeply ceremonial and equally secretive. Connie Whidden, who holds a master's degree in Health Administration and is the Health Director for the entire Seminole nation, whispers the very little information about death that she is willing to offer: "We just don't talk about death here. It's sacred. We simply don't talk about it. That's all" (personal communication 12 February 2007).



Source: *Images of America: The Seminole and Miccosukee Tribes of Southern Florida* by Patsy West. Reprinted with permission and available from the publisher at <[www.arcadiapublishing.com](http://www.arcadiapublishing.com)> or 888-313-2665.

Fig. 6. Birthing shelter

One of the most disquieting incidents that occurred during my research actually addressed the subject of death. On one of my visits to the Friday School Pull Out Program, I witnessed the children's response to their own cultural practice.

The children were tired and bored; after all, it was the end of the day, and they had done the language exercise twice. They giggled and whispered to me that they had done it more times than twice before I arrived. Three little girls began to whisper and point at another little girl, who sat at the opposite end of the table.

I distinctly heard a little girl say, "Her mother is dead," somewhat accusingly, but more as a matter of fact. I could not bear to look. I sat at the table, frozen. Death is not discussed among the Seminole people, and the cultural conflict was a pool in the motherless child's eyes.

Then, without ruffling a paper or nudging a crayon, the child was by my side. She was not supposed to touch me; she really was not supposed to talk with me because I was a stranger, but she came to my chair and her oversized, crocheted shawl brushed my arm. She whispered, "This is my mother's shawl and my mother's skirt. It's beautiful, isn't it?" Then, she opened the shawl for me to see her pink Disney Princess t-shirt.

*Before I talk about the visual analogy, the illustrated human paradox but simultaneously true lived experience, represented by the child's body, I will say what her communication meant: In front of her friends and her teachers, she approached and violated the boundary of Seminole culture and tradition regarding death, and touched a woman—not a Native American, not a mixed-blood, not a white, not a doctoral student—me. And I am eternally changed. Even as I write, I feel the slight weight of her*

*body against mine, and I feel some deep connection to this little girl who moved me to the soul.*

The child's appearance is a living representation of the cultural dilemma, the constant negotiation of Anglo influence and cultural tradition that makes walking the Seminole path both tedious and painful. In this little girl's world, silence about death was relegated to long weekends, but Monday through Thursday, she negotiated a white world. Here, in this space influenced by conflicting pedagogies and educational technologies, children decide how Vine Deloria's discussion of place and power matter or if the discussion matters at all.

The story is representative of the cultural milieu that survives on Brighton Reservation. The people move forward, clutching their past closely, for they stubbornly refuse to lose the foundational values of the clan, and they celebrate their past daily to remind themselves and their children of their heritage.

Brighton Seminole Reservation Friday School was initiated to encourage and perpetuate the language's use among the Native children. Through this program, Native Seminole American, Seminole African American, Seminole Hispanic American, and Seminole Anglo American children all recited the Creek alphabet, numbers, and pledge to the Seminole flag. To most Seminole families, the Creek language is more artifact than utilitarian, so the tribe works hard to make the children aware of the language's significance in their daily lives.

Still, the Seminoles' effort to rescue their language and their culture is no reason for them to withhold their pictures from me. They use pictures themselves to describe



their language and their ancestors' way of life, so what might have made them renege on their promise to give the pictures to me?

### Photographic Fears

Perhaps the Seminole Tribe was not without good reason for withholding their pictures, for as Sontag suggests, looking is an act of power and appropriating someone's pictures includes change. Change is rarely welcome or comfortable; however, it is inevitable, even if those who live inside the community are the only people who view and narrate their experiences with pictures.

The portrait of Billy Bowlegs calls upon the subject to be Indian, to perform this icon, without regard to the experiences of his life (Fig. 6). We recognize Bowlegs's picture as culture, but we call portraits of our own family real life. For instance, Figure 7 is an Indian, and Figure 8 is a female child. To Billy Bowlegs's niece, Figure 7 is her uncle. To me, Figure 8 is my baby. Relationship, not context alone, makes the difference in meaning.



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Fig. 7. Billy Bowlegs (September 24, 1852)



Source: personal archive

Fig. 8. Emma Rose Van Camp (March 2004)

Both responses are acts of power based on the reader's own lens and the reader's own meaning-making apparatus, and fear is situated at the heart of the meaning-making process. The part of me and the part of the Seminoles that recoil at allowing our images to circulate freely is all that fears loss of the sentimental, or the part of tradition that makes the past seem valuable. Relationship based on an ethic of care and/or friendship is the only factor that allows us willingly to release our images.

As a mother, who puts a picture of my late-in-life baby in the introduction of this dissertation, I fear readers/viewers will not see her as the beautiful child I know. When I give away her image, I give away her story. Once someone else has her story, the story is re-interpreted, re-invented, and re-presented, becoming a story about her, and not her own story nor my story of her. *I shudder at other more sinister possibilities.*

Victor Burgin's essay "Art, Common Sense and Photography" discusses the aesthetic ideology that accompanies photography, and he points out that "there is no content without a form, and no form which does not shape a content" (43). For Burgin, a certain amount of credibility accompanies photojournalism, and he cautions the reader that particular moments have the potential to become general truths via this genre. If memory-making is a construction, and indeed it is with the medium of photography and storytelling, then Burgin presents a viable concern and one that must be reckoned both during the creation of the product and after the product is complete.

There is fear each time we relinquish our pictures, and justifiably so, for when another looks at us or our own, s/he views through a particular lens that cannot help but alter the way we see ourselves. Each time we bring in a new view, we violate our attachment to the old. Every time we give, accommodate, or change a picture, the

image becomes something else, not necessarily less, but something different. While we may not lose our soul by giving away our pictures, we definitely lose a portion of our original identity, and we definitely lose our story.

We fear we cannot follow behind and undo the damage if those who tell our stories are unkind. But what will happen if our stories are not told at all? What happens when our pictures are lost, or the people in the pictures are simply forgotten? What happens if the pictures exist, but no one pays attention?

Steve Edwards' essay "The Snapshooters of History" challenges Burgin and other postmodernists' notions that there is no "world prior to the shutter, or a meaning authorized by the artistic subject." He suggests that while postmodern theory has benefited gender and race, it has, perhaps, reduced our vision of knowledge to that which is acquired via a "circulation of mass media signs," and led us to believe that "representation is all there is and can ever be" (180). Edwards' discussion purports to show that there are other ways of knowing and that "photography contributes to this process of meaning formation, focusing images and desires" (194).

Pictures alone are nothing to fear; they cannot do evil although they can become material for evil. We cannot control the production of images or the misreading of images anymore than we can censor the creation of stories. However, knowing how point of view, purpose, and viewers' points of view can and do work to determine meaning can aid in a better interpretation and can keep us from inadvertently, ignorantly, or intentionally misreading. Knowing how pictures can be read helps us to take a clearer, more insightful look at the image.

Berger and Mohr's method offers an interesting way to consider photographs that have lost their historical significance or have been reduced to a statistical catalogue. These men suggest that correspondences between related events evoked by pictures "compensate for the lack of sequence" (*Another Way* 120). However, their approach also raises questions about the stories' ownership and highlights what might be the Seminoles' main concern with giving me their pictures.

When I take/get their photos, I also appropriate their stories. I decide the how, to whom, and under what circumstances the stories are interpreted. I also include my own observations—observations they may choose to ignore, hide, or even consider irrelevant. The stories I see may not be their stories at all. If they give themselves to me, their *sel/ves* in pictures, then I can reveal them, revise them, retell them. If the Seminoles give me their pictures, then they give me their stories. Perhaps, they do have reason to worry about lending their images. Certainly, many theorists have warned readers of colonialists' interpretations, suggesting that colonialists' interpretations are tainted, whether the misreadings were deliberate, accidental, or the cultural products of time's evolution.

John Tagg's *The Burden of Representation* discusses the way we understand the past through a photograph, and his work informs the analyses of the photographs and the way we remember and retell cultural heritage:

What is real is not just the material item but also the discursive system of which the image it bears is part. It is to the reality not of the past, but of present meanings and of changing discursive systems that we must therefore turn our attention. That a photograph can come to stand for evidence, for example, rests not on a natural or existential fact, but on a social, semiotic process. (4)

Tagg argues specifically against Barthes and other social historians, that the evidentiary value of photographs is historical, not existential, and that the problem with interpreters is that they do not see their interpretations as the product of “specific social relations— that is, relations of power” (5).

John Tagg takes a Marxist, post-modern position: our time, place, society, background, history, and social standing condition our interpretations of photographs. There is obviously some truth to this. Indians from India might see things in ways that Indians from Indiana might see differently. Nevertheless, this fact of life can hardly destroy the idea of universals. There is still something in the photograph.

One could even argue that Marxists bring their interpretations to the photograph, and the photograph itself says nothing relevant to Marxist viewers. That would be wrong. It would be wrong to argue that we cannot see class, gender, oppression, and exploitation in photographs, but it would be even more wrong to claim that we are conditioned to see what we see by our time, place, society, background, history, and social standing. The Marxists themselves prove this. How can they see oppression and exploitation when many times they are themselves members of upper-class society, living in comfort? They transcend the historical limitations of their perspective using a critical theory, which they have learned to manipulate like a tool of sorts (a computer, for example). This tool helps transcend limitations. When we transcend our limited perspectives, we actually acknowledge the presence of universals: truth, knowledge, and common human understanding.

The existentialists are much better at recognizing that individuals do not just analyze photographs or even filter photographs through unconscious social lenses;

instead, they experience them—existentially—as they see and react to the details. A photo of a bloody corpse can cause fainting—an existential reaction. We are not forced into mutually exclusive categories, as Tagg would have us believe. By choice, Tagg narrows his focus. I choose not to do this.

Believing in universals frees people. For example, to embrace the idea of transcendence does not mean that all interpretations must be transcendental. As a writer/teacher/student/woman who embraces this idea, I can accept the claims of the Marxists along with others' claims. Those who deny universals and transcendence cannot reciprocate. Their theory will not allow for universals. They live in a narrower world of determinism, from which nobody can break free.

However, this dissertation does not concentrate solely on the evidentiary value of photographs, although I am interested in the evidentiary value of photos, where and when it suits my purpose. This work values the interpreter's transcendental power to view photos in multiple contexts as launching places for potentialities that might lead to more interesting possibilities than simply rehashing what has already occurred. Consequently, no theoretical ways of seeing are out of bounds or off limits because of a single theoretical perspective. I dismiss from my own mind the idea that my flirting with multiple theories either binds me to or blinds me from other approaches to truth.

The outcome of this project should allow for “the sequences of individual life” as in the human recorded history of what matters as opposed to “the individual awareness of time passing” as in the chronology of earth, or placing major political, social, or technological change on a line (Berger and Mohr, *Another Way* 106). In this way, the

remembrances are more akin to original Native American Seminole thought as a nonlinear storytelling methodology, which is similar to the oral tradition.

Juxtaposing and repeating images of Seminole life disrupts and disturbs the clichéd version of these people, which is often displayed in souvenir shops and even museums. The reader/viewer is called upon to consider the culture, not as a chronological history lesson or a sentimentalized version of thematic platitudes, but as “an agreement about discontinuities which allows the listener to ‘enter the narration’ and become part of its reflecting subject” (Berger and Mohr, *Another Way* 286).

Lucy Lippard’s essay “Doubletake: The Diary of a Relationship with an Image” models an interchange between the critical viewer and the photographic subject, who happens to be Native American. Lippard’s analysis of Mary Schaffer’s travels through the Canadian Rockies and her encounter with Sampson Beaver’s family is a fitting literary landmark for my own discussion of the Seminole people. Lippard poses piercing questions that force the reader to examine the potential dangers of the outsiders’ multiple views. She also discusses the marginalized, sightseeing position characterized by non-native viewers. This is a position that also deserves attention, especially in this work, because this view encourages looking as a means for storytelling and invention.

Clearly, an identity crisis occurs when old meets new, when camera meets subject, but Berger, Barthes, and Ulmer’s theoretical approaches give breathing space and allow an escape from the confines of a poverty-stricken theory. There are many stories and many storytellers, and each stands in a particular, peculiar place. All desire to point in the direction of a truth that represents a life. My work argues these views are



worth consideration. Certainly, other fields of study see the value of multiple contexts and storytelling as a means for both healing and therapy.

In Howard Brody's *Stories of Sickness*, he recounts literature professor, Kathryn Montgomery's, experience of a medical conference. The professor noticed a pattern in the presentations. Each presenter began with praise for the scientific method and condemnation for anecdotal evidence followed by a lengthy consideration of raw data. After putting the audience to sleep, speakers typically ended, "Now, let me illustrate the relevance of these findings by means of a case from my own clinic. There once was a man who..." No one saw the irony between the ritualistic denunciation of anecdote and the unmistakable appeal of the story (8-9).

This story represents an emerging trend in the sciences and social sciences: a revaluing of storytelling as a means of transmitting and producing knowledge. This work offers another way to look at not only a body of pictures or the body in pictures, but also a way of writing life. Like this dissertation, the approach encourages cooperation and collaboration based on a decision that friendliness is possible. This approach posits that there is a very good possibility that working with and alongside theory, I will learn something, even if the only thing I learn is that fear cannot bear up under kindness—a lesson far greater than any academic pursuit can typically offer.

Berger, Barthes, and Ulmer's theories give opportunity for new perspectives, and even would-be answers at times. Admittedly, there is no frame large enough to hold all of the truth, but these theorists' works push the frame's boundaries to look at the pictures from other perspectives, *other* as both different and from the outside. These critics offer light and air. They tell us that we can examine pictures from various points

of view: religion, family, education, and entertainment, as well as Marxism, Feminism, Modernism, Post-modernism, Existentialism, and the Platonic idea that universals exist. In terms of this work, these theorists and their works help pose questions about a picture that a casual observer might not ask, like what assumptions help a viewer transcend the normally limited perspective of a superficial observer? What assumptions might make the details more vivid? What possible contributions might an outsider bring to the interpretation?

## CHAPTER TWO

### BRIGHTON SEMINOLE FAMILY: TRADITION AND TRANSITION



Source: personal archive

Fig. 9. Granddaddy (Dan) Cone, Billy Bowlegs III, and Albert Devane (1959)

#### At Home

Current timelines say that the advent of tax-free cigarettes on Seminole reservations occurred around 1971, but my granddaddy said something different. In 1959, the year I was born, Granddaddy Cone visited Brighton Reservation to “shoot the bull” with his buddies, Billy Bowlegs III and Albert Devane, but he wanted more than a conversation. Granddaddy had smoked since he was ten, and he was always looking

for a good deal. This picture (Fig. 9) always struck me as a memorial to patriarchs of a bygone era: Albert Devane, a famous Florida historian and wealthy landowner; Billy Bowlegs III, the last of the warrior/hunters on the Brighton Reservation; Dan Cone, one of Lake Okeechobee's legendary fishermen.

Granddaddy's historical significance nearly disappears into obscurity, with the exception of John Walther's award-winning picture of Granddaddy's fishing prowess, but he was part of the historical mid-twentieth century, South Central Florida evolution from sawgrass, timber, and lush green swamps to paved roads, canals, and housing developments. Granddaddy saw Lake Okeechobee before and after the drainage projects, and his presence here in this photo somehow substantiates my claim to care about this tribe and this reservation.

Devane stands like a Christ-figure, one hand on the shoulder of each man seated. Granddaddy's right paw dangles from his right knee. With his left hand, Granddaddy touches Billy Bowlegs' shoulder. Touching, in my family, is a necessary function of love. We can communicate without words, but we cannot love without touch.

*Maybe this is the place where my own story begins. The same giant hand that rests perpetually on Billy Bowlegs' shoulder rested softly on my back just hours before this visit. My own story is here with my grandfather and Billy Bowlegs III, whose conversation occurred on that sunny Florida afternoon in 1959, while I was sleeping in a crib, and just outside the frame of this picture.*

There is more to see here. Devane's over-sized, crisp, white pima cotton shirt reveals only a glimpse of his neck, while Granddaddy's snug, slightly wrinkled polished cotton shirt reveals a glimpse of his belly. The socioeconomic distance is clear. The two

white men do most of the talking, while Billy Bowlegs looks away from them. Is he disinterested? Does someone distract him? Does he resent the photographer? Does he look away from the lens that will immortalize his image toward a future that will market it? Does he know my granddaddy, his friend, will not live to see another summer?

*These memories are my inheritance, I am the caretaker of these family stories, and these stories bind me to the tribe. I have today's personal memories, and the memories I am still making with these people because of their place in my community. I live here now and have a history with this geography, with these people. I am inside and outside the frame.*

*When I feel I need some sort of reason for my work, I think about my grandfather and justify this effort to myself.*

I have also an uncomfortable awareness that this picture is quite possibly not the proof of Granddaddy's relationship to these two men because the information in this photo includes elements of the souvenir, the "Sure, one of my best friends is an Indian" pictures. *It hurts me to suppose this.*

Barthes insists that the "photographic referent" is "not the *optionally* real thing to which an image or a sign refers but the *necessarily* real thing which has been placed before the lens, without which there would be no photograph...In Photography [we] can never deny that *the thing has been there*" (*Camera Lucida* 76). I have no reason to believe that the picture of my grandfather, Albert Devane, and Billy Bowlegs III is modified. I have the original print, and I have used this photo as "a certificate of [Granddaddy's] presence" with Billy Bowlegs III—I never cared too much about Albert Devane—since I was in kindergarten, nearly 44 years ago. For me, this picture has

been indelible proof of my family's connection to the Seminole people and a physical link to, at the very least, the peripheries of Seminole life. It is a photograph that is real to me, *more real to me*, in memory, calling up my own dad's conversations about Granddaddy and Billy Bowlegs, and I have referenced this picture many times in family conversations. Barthes asserts, "I may know better a photograph I remember than a photograph I am looking at, as if direct vision oriented its language wrongly, engaging it in an effort of description which will always miss its point of effect, the punctum" (*Camera Lucida* 53). But in what sense is this photograph a certificate of Granddaddy's presence, of his relationship to these men—a Florida socialite and a Seminole icon?

Marjorie Perloff poses this question in her essay "What Really Happened: Roland Barthes's Winter Garden/Christian Boltanski's Archives of the Dead." Both Barthes and Boltanski are interested in photos of the ordinary. Both examine the "pure deictic language" of the photo, and both agree that "Death is the eidos of [a] Photograph" (*Camera Lucida* 15). However, Boltanski examines photographic content in light of changing and/or simulated contexts, and he argues that many of the images we embrace as indicative of our own historical *thereness* or our own sense of the *has been* are actually "witnesses to a collective ritual [that sends] us back to our own past" (qtd. in Perloff 247). For Boltanski, the photograph is an object that can evoke only a cultural interpretation based on either historical information or personal decision, and pictures are precisely as authentic as "the set of clichés [viewers] have unconsciously absorbed; indeed they want these pictures to remember those [images] they already know" (qtd. in Perloff 253).

Boltanski's assertion stems from his claim that memory has little to do with his work. Unlike Barthes, who insists that memory can evoke and revitalize the past, Boltanski says he has "very few memories of childhood" and his photographic work, particularly his autobiographical work, is used to "blot out [his] memory and to protect [himself]" (qtd. in Perloff 257). Aside from the inherent irony in Boltanski's statement—remembering to forget—his idea about a pre-imagined, pre-conditioned mode of viewing is interesting, and constitutes a method something like that of re-remembering. Boltanski's work concentrates on photographic ambiguity, which emphasizes and objectifies the subjects' sameness. For Boltanski, there is no punctum, no prick that rescues and revives the object:

We are all so complicated, and then we die. We are a subject one day, with our vanities, our loves, our worries, and then one day, abruptly, we become nothing but an object, an absolutely disgusting pile of shit. We pass very quickly from one stage to the next. It's very bizarre. It will happen to all of us, and fairly soon too. Suddenly we become an object you can handle like a stone, but a stone that was someone. (qtd. in Perloff 262)

Boltanski's view of the subject's photographic sameness erases the individual represented, but it does not eliminate the meaning of the picture. Instead, the "shock of recognition comes when the viewer recognizes the *interchangeability* of human beings—an interchangeability born out of difference, each of us having different desires, agonies, aspirations" (qtd. in Perloff 263). For Boltanski, all human beings live, love, suffer, and die, and one human life can represent another, for it is not individuality that matters most in Boltanski's work, but the human experience that is common to all of us, no matter what our ethnicity or social status.

Boltanski's notion of interchangeability is echoed by John Berger; however, Berger does not equate the subject's ambiguity with death, nor does Berger advocate

the erasure of particularity and peculiarity of the individual and the incident. Instead, Berger's comments speak of life:

How is it possible for appearances to 'give birth' to ideas? Through their specific coherence at a given instant, they articulate a set of *correspondences* which provoke in the viewer a recognition of some past experience. This recognition may remain at the level of a tacit agreement with memory, or it may become conscious. When this happens, it is formulated as an idea.

A photograph which achieves expressiveness thus works dialectically: it preserves the particularity of the event recorded and it chooses an instant when the correspondences of those particular appearances articulate a general idea. (Berger and Mohr, *Another Way* 122)

This idea is more clearly seen in Billy Bowleg's cooking chickee (Fig. 10).



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Fig. 10. Billy Bowleg's III cooking chickee (c. 1940)



### Homecooked

An old man tends a fire (Fig. 10). Straddling a log, palmetto fan in hand, he stares into the distance. His body emerges from the shade and shadows to the foreground of the picture. His age, his beard, and his loosely fitting, lightly colored clothing “are visually present in this event and are particular” (Berger and Mohr, *Another Way* 124). What resonates in this photograph, though, are the various cooking gear and scattered groceries on the ramshackle shelf above his head: frying pan, Maxwell House Coffee, lard can, and Morton Salt, sideways, poised to roll. In the background, a makeshift table leans to the right with the remainder of the old man’s cooking gear sitting atop.

This old man sits in a kitchen, and his presence in the event and in the place “instigates the idea” of kitchen. And the idea, confronting the event urges it to go beyond itself and to represent the generalisation” (Berger and Mohr *Another Way* 124). If the groceries and shelving are removed, the photograph is expressive of something else. A campout, perhaps? Clearly, another idea replaces the kitchen.

Here, we see an old man in a kitchen and seeing him there makes us consider the idea of kitchen, which suggests functional practices like cooking and eating, but also implies emotional attachments like fellowship, family, friendship, conversation, and meeting place—nourishment on many levels of human need. Is he cooking for one? Does he expect company? Is he lonely? If he is cooking for one, he feeds his stomach. If he cooks for two, he feeds his soul.

The idea of kitchen initiates olfactory senses that remind of baked goods or simmering pots, not unlike the iron dutch oven on the wooden coals of the picture. We

think of the center or heart of the household, of warmth, sustenance, and familial moments of memory. The musing does not take us away from the particular of Billy Bowlegs III outdoor cooking chickee or the picture's cultural and ethnic significance; instead, "we think or feel or remember *through the appearances* recorded in the photograph, and *with* the idea of legibility/illegibility which was instigated by them" (Berger and Mohr, *Another Way* 124).

In Patsy West's book, this picture gives visual evidence to historical data: "Most cooking chickees contained shelving for cans of foodstuffs, salt, lard, and coffee, safely sealed away from the south Florida humidity and pests. A work area table [stands] in the shade of a tree." West's caption states that the man is "Billy Bowlegs III . . . in his camp on the Brighton Reservation" (Images 25), and this information or *studium* is as historically accurate as those who collaborated with West decided. Boltanski and Barthes' notion of death as the dominating noesis applies.

Boltanski states, "The thing about pictures of dead people is that they are always alive, all tanned, muscular, and smiling. The photo replaces memory. When someone dies, after a while you can't visualize them anymore, you only remember them through their pictures" (qtd. in Perloff 262), and Barthes concurs, "Death is the *eidos* [the form, idea, immutable, genuine nature] of that Photograph" (*Camera Lucida* 15). Just so. The data is the idea, but the generalization *kitchen* that evokes a multiplicity of feelings and coherences also creates meaning and is a resurrection of the dead. In this way, personal tradition, custom, and affiliation exist as that which transmits and perpetuates culture and meaning.

Here, in the context of kitchen and friendship and fellowship, I participate in the meshing of cultures. I am no more Seminole than Granddaddy is, sitting there with his hand resting affectionately on Billy Bowlegs' shoulder (Fig. 9), but I am part of the communion that makes this pictured moment in time an eternal one, and one with which I identify though find it difficult to articulate. A story of my own develops, but "the correspondences which emerge from this coherence, are too extensive and too interwoven to enumerate very satisfactorily in words. (One cannot take photographs with a dictionary)" (Berger and Mohr, *Another Way* 124-25).

Although pictures have no voice of their own, they are charged with narrative prospects, for each person who views a photograph brings a network of experiences and remembrances to the viewing. Pictures do not speak, but people do, and the variations in each tale "testify to the always slightly surprising range of the possible" (Berger, "The Story Teller" 365). Photographs illustrate and help us understand the stories that we write and tell about ourselves, for "although we attempt to face up to and live by the facts, we carry on the business of living in fiction. We do because we can't help it. Only fiction will accommodate the facts of life," and fiction is not equal to untruth; fiction, like photographs, is the medium for possibilities (Morris 103).

Generalizing the photographic is not equal to rendering meaning simplistic. Instead, this way of reading is appealing because it is not the strict explanatory mode of the rational mind—not yet one more way of unpacking information from a point of view that privileges reason over the senses. Semiotics, then, becomes the toolkit for understanding, not explaining, for "the expectation of meaning is not the same as a desire for explanation" (Berger and Mohr, *Another Way* 117).

Pictures like the one of Billy Bowlegs III in his cooking chickee invite a decisive memory moment akin to Marcel Proust's experience with his mother, the madeline, and his Aunt Leonie's memory—what David Ellison calls “kitchification” (202).

Understanding these unexpected moments, which pictures initiate, becomes the intuitive task of the viewer, and the leap from explanation to interpretation is made via inner vision as well as ocular vision. Berger points out, “An instant photographed can only acquire meaning insofar as the viewer can read into it a duration extending beyond itself” (*Another Way* 89).

The pictures of Granddaddy Cone, Albert Devane, and Billy Bowlegs III and the picture of Billy Bowlegs in his cooking chickee suggest that culture and meaning are not perpetuated in a vacuum, isolated and resistant to relationships outside one's own ethnicity. Culture and meaning work together through interaction and exchange between those who are interested in nourishing others' lives, a breaking of bread of sorts.

### Homemade

While the words *kitchen* and *home* are not synonymous, reasonable agreement exists that one does not often exist without the other. This is so in Seminole tradition, but the home's arrangement is more a functional issue than an aesthetic concern since the kitchen was usually shared by numerous members of the clan.

Brighton Seminole families are still identified by clans, which is a Seminole Indian's traditional extended family unit. Each child who is born of a Seminole mother is born into a clan, which is distinguished by a non-human figure, typically an animal. When a man marries, he must marry outside his clan, and he must move to his new

wife's mother's clan. Frequently, several families of the same clan made their homes together. Until the last thirty years, the families built their chickee homes in cabbage palm hammocks since cabbage palms are the primary component of the structure (Fig. 11). The building task was actually much easier for those who lived near Lake Okeechobee because cabbage palms were, and still are, abundant in the Okeechobee prairies (Fig. 12).



Source: *Images of America: The Seminole and Miccosukee Tribes of Southern Florida* by Patsy West; Alexander Linn Collection. Reprinted with permission and available from the publisher at <[www.arcadiapublishing.com](http://www.arcadiapublishing.com)> or 888-313-2665.

Fig. 11. Creek Seminole Camp (c. 1925)



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Fig. 12. Creek Seminole Camp (c. 1940)

The building process was labor-intensive and could not be accomplished alone. The tighter the weave of fronds on the roof, the more enduring the structure, so collecting fronds was the most demanding of the chickee-building tasks. My friends, Michelle Thomas and her siblings, gathered cabbage palm fans into bundles of twenty-five when they were children, both for building chickees on the reservation and for selling to local Okeechobee residents at Easter time. This occurred in the not-so-distant past. Michelle graduated high school in 1985, and she collected palm fans into her freshman year of high school. Her family sold the fronds exclusively to John Abney, a local builder in Okeechobee, who was particularly fond of the palmetto buds, and who would then sell the fronds to churches for Palm Sunday. Michele's mom, Connie Whidden, told me that the fronds made the difference between *some* groceries and *no*

groceries for her small family. The statement seems incongruous with the dividend income she now receives as a Seminole person.



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Fig. 13. Nearly built chickee

These structures functioned as shelter for the entire clan. Several families in one clan used a single cooking chickee (Fig. 13), but individual families had one or more sleeping chickees of their own. Although the structures had thatched sides that could be lowered, most chickees were left wide open to allow air to circulate during the hot, humid days of Florida summer. Privacy was minimal and familial interaction was the daily custom of all clan members.

## Homespun

Alfred Jackson Hanna and Kathryn Abbey Hanna's book *Lake Okeechobee: Wellspring of the Everglades*, which was published in 1948 as part of The American Lakes Series, describes the Seminole camps:

A camp consisted of a cluster of chikees [sic] sometimes three or four of them, occasionally as many as twenty-five or forty. There was always a fireplace, usually under a covering supported on poles, a water hole and a high table for washing dishes. Pens for drying skins was often part of the equipment. (328)

*I have the Hannas' book in my hand right now, this first edition—old and fragile—because my friend and colleague, the most influential teacher in my academic career, let me borrow it. Hank Raulerson has this book in his library because his brother Bob got it from a friend, who had borrowed it from Claire Z. Raulerson, Hank's great aunt, and Bob let Hank read it as long as he promised to give it back. Hank didn't give it back, and now I have the book along with the stories of his family that he frequently shares with me.*

*Hank's great, great, grandfather, Peter Raulerson, was the first pioneer to settle the northern bend of the lake, which is now the city of Okeechobee, where I live (Hanna and Hanna 188). Peter Raulerson's son, Lewis, opened the first store in Okeechobee, and was the only person in any nearby town who extended the Seminole Indians credit for supplies. Peter Raulerson had been a trusted friend of the tribe, and many of the Natives who walked into town slept on Peter's porch before heading back to their camps. Okeechobee legends speak of both Peter and Lewis Raulerson as local heroes.*

*Hank told me that in the early 1900s, a group of greedy white cowboys ransacked a Cypress tree that was Tom Tiger's grave. Tom was a prestigious Seminole, so the ol' boys stole the bones and sold the remains to the Smithsonian. The Seminoles*



*were outraged, but would not strike back without warning their good friends, Peter and his family. The Seminoles sent a delegation to warn the Raulerson family to flee what was sure to be a violent conflict, but Peter asked the Seminole delegation to allow him three days to negotiate for Tiger's remains.*

*Peter was successful, the Smithsonian returned the body to the Seminole Tribe, and a bloody incident was averted. The Brighton people, young and old alike, speak fondly of the Raulerson family (Raulerson personal interview 25 Feb. 2007).*

Connie Whidden is the Director of Health for the Seminole Tribe and one of the few tribal members who holds a master's degree. Connie tells the story of the tribe's 1957 decision to become a nationally recognized tribe, which changed Seminole history. A meeting was held at her uncle's chickee when Connie was twelve years old, and the elders decided that they would have to convince tribal members to agree to the terms requiring indigenous tribes to become federally recognized. If they did not consent, they risked losing government aid that the people so desperately needed since the Seminole Tribe showed up on the U. S. government's termination list. A serious problem existed: Most of the adult tribal people spoke only Creek or Miccasukee, and they could not be convinced to sign or mark an X on a document they could not understand. Neither language was written then, and the Creek language would not be written until the late 1970s, so the tribe faced a critical dilemma that was solved by twelve-year-old, trilingual Connie, who had been educated in English at Okeechobee County schools and spoke both Creek and Miccasukee.

Connie's uncle took her with him to visit every tribal member on every Florida reservation. There she would read the terms of the agreement in the appropriate

language to each voting person. Once the members decided to agree to the terms of the contract, they would mark an X where their names should be written, and Connie would then write their names in English below the X. These documents still exist in Seminole archives. Everytime Connie Whidden sees a small child translate for her second-language parent at a department store or a grocery store, she thinks to herself, “Little girl, you don’t know what you’re doing. You might possibly save a nation” (personal Interview 12 Feb. 2007).

Connie grew up in the chickee villages of Lake Okeechobee’s Brighton Reservation, and she recalls the shift from the communal chickee structures, where she lived through her teen years, to the walled, private homes, where she now lives. Governmental policy and familial decisions were cast in the open-air structures alongside the daily chores and concerns of any household trying to survive in primitive conditions. A collision of institutions were chickee-ed in the open-air environment so that this space defined the Seminole way of living. Connie is convinced that “aside from Christianity, it was the white man’s housing that was the most significant cause for the breakdown of Seminole culture and tradition” (Whidden personal interview 12 Feb. 2007).

Chickees were arranged in circular-type patterns to allow for the interchange between clan members (Fig. 14). Mothers raised, cared for, and disciplined one another’s children, and the death of a child’s parent, though dark and painful, meant little to the living arrangements of the child. In fact, Connie’s father was a white man who never acknowledged her birth until many years after she was grown, and her mother passed away when she was very small. She was raised in her mother’s clan on

the Reservation, and she stayed in the same place after her mother's death, simply absorbed into the care of the clan. Once traditional chickees were replaced with clapboard houses, the circular layout and clan interaction was traded for linear homes and familial privacy. Within the homes, space was divided again to provide individual kitchen space, separate sleeping arrangements, and private bathroom facilities. Connie said that as the years past, she became more and more distant from her family members, and she wistfully remarked, "They should never have lined us up" (personal interview 12 Feb. 2007).



Source: GPO and Bureau of American Ethnology; Claude C. Matlock, Frances Densmore Collection

Fig. 14. Chickee—view from dirigible



Source: *Images of America: The Seminole and Miccosukee Tribes of Southern Florida* by Patsy West. Reprinted with permission and available from the publisher at <[www.arcadiapublishing.com](http://www.arcadiapublishing.com)> or 888-313-2665.

Fig. 15. Chickee at Brighton Reservation (July 1961)

This type of living situation fostered collective cooperation. Like the chickee in the picture above (Fig. 15), there are no walls to divide one person's life from another. Concentration resides in tasks that must be accomplished and such focus blurs the lines between gender and age. Everyone had a responsibility s/he must do to make the Seminole camp a functional success. In Figure 16 "Ben Wells, an elderly man, tacks a nail in the fan. The next step is to hand the fan to a man on the roof, who will then twist and nail it into place on a beam of the framework" (West, *Images* 21).



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Fig. 16. Preparing cabbage fronds (c. 1960)

### Homebody

The Seminole Tribe is matrilineal, and women still hold a place of honor in the home. In the chickee environment, issues of modesty and roles were figured differently. Consequently, there are many pictures of women working alongside men or doing the same work as men, carrying out the day-to-day chores. Both the housing and the people were open, exposed, and the people saw each other, looked at and through each other. They needed each other because working together meant survival.

In *The Wounded Storyteller*, Arthur W. Frank speaks of the monodic body, or the body that suffers alone and sees itself as separate, and the dyadic body, or the body that shares in the suffering of others and sees itself as integrally linked to the suffering

of others (35-36). The arrangement of the chickee community encouraged a dyadic notion of the personal body, allowing for proximity closeness, which made privacy both personal and communal. The people were literally linked in their private spaces to the community of others (Fig. 17).



Source: *Seminole Music*—GPO and Bureau of American Ethnology; Frances Densmore Collection

Fig. 17. Chickee village

The chickee pictures show the idea of Seminole house and home through time. Each picture, of course, is a discrete moment, but as a series with the builders and the families and the friendships and the stories, they “surely represent a commentary on the

interdependence of appearance and time”—of the interdependence of these people’s lives, not only to one another, but also to the visitors who sat to talk or the settler who offered his porch for a bed (Batchen, *If Each Time* 12). In an environment that did not distinguish the self conscious—privacy initiates privileging the self—the absence of the idea of home as it was then is startling. The chickee series does not carry the emotional, evocative aura of Granddaddy’s picture or Billy Bowlegs’ picture, but “the objects recorded in any photograph (from the most effective to the most commonplace) carry approximately the same weight, the same conviction. What varies is the intensity with which we are made aware of the poles of absence and presence. Between these two poles photography finds its proper meaning” (Berger, “Understanding” 217). Between the chickee life that existed only thirty years ago and the affluence that exists on the Reservation now, something is lost and something is gained. Willie Johns emphasizes the gain.

Willie Johns holds a BS degree in History and one in Business, and also an MA in History. He teaches at cultural events for the Brighton Tribe and presents frequently at local and statewide meetings as a cultural and historical expert on the Seminole Tribe. Willie talked about the move from old technologies to new. He hobbled in on crutches, cordial and sore, because he had been thrown from a horse the day before he spoke with me. He was quick to mention that the early Seminole people rapidly became “addicted to tradeware,” but the changes he said, “did more to help than to harm.” He stated, “We have been in survival mode from 1845 to today. We have survived modern technologies from guns to computers. We bought guns for food. We used them to



defend ourselves, but we bought them because we could feed ourselves a lot easier with a gun than we could a bow and arrow” (personal interview 12 Feb. 2007).

Willie also remembered the first homes built on the Reservation, and he said there has never been an experience yet that compares with waking up in the middle of the night and being able to use an indoor toilet. He said that housing changed the way the white people viewed the Seminole, too, especially among the school children. Willie remembered going to school on cold mornings and standing by the chickee fire to keep warm as long as he could. Then, when it was time for the bus to arrive, he would run like “a striped snake” to the bus stop. The smell of woodsmoke was so strong on his body and clothes and on those of his Reservation friends that the school children called them “stinkin’ Indians.”

I frowned, pained by the cruel remark, but Willie corrected me. “Don’t frown, April. We did stink. Bathrooms and running water took care of that.” Then he smiled and leaned back in his chair and said, “Yep, guns were good, but bathrooms were better” (personal interview 12 Feb. 2007).

Along with a visual representation and stories that give a historical account and confirmable information concerning the from and to evolution of Seminole housing, these pictures call to mind Michael de Certeau’s conversation concerning place and space as products of narration since chickees, pictures of chickees, and pictures of anything for that matter occupy the position of both place and space. For de Certeau, place is “a determination through objects that are ultimately reducible to the *being-there* of something dead,” while space is “a determination through *operations* which, when they are attributed to a stone, tree, or human being, specify ‘spaces’ by the actions of

historical *subjects*" (118). The notion of place mirrors Boltanski's discussion of photography, while the perception of space speaks neatly to Berger's convictions about photography. The photograph actually presents a site for both viewpoints evidenced in the way Barthes narrates his experience of the Winter Garden Photograph:

In the daily flood of photographs, in the thousand forms of interest they seem to provoke, it may be that the *noeme* "*that-has-been*" is not repressed . . . but experienced with indifference, as a feature which goes without saying. It is this indifference which the Winter Garden Photograph had just roused me from. According to a paradoxical order—since usually we verify things before declaring them 'true'—under the effect of a new experience, that of intensity, I had induced the truth of the image, the reality of its origin. (*Camera Lucida* 77).

The prick, the *punctum*, that startles Barthes from indifference to interest also creates a narrative about the a little girl who had "proceeded from the imperfect parents who had loved her so badly" (*Camera Lucida* 69). Barthes' narration moves the Winter Garden Photograph from the confines of the picture's place to the possibilities of the picture's space where the photograph like the spoken word "is caught in the ambiguity of an actualization, transformed into a term dependent upon many different conventions, situated as the act of a present (or of a time), and modified by the transformations caused by successive contexts" (de Certeau 117).

The space of the picture contains the space of the chickee which contains the space of a story that transforms itself into a viable, applicable tale of home and the conventions of home. This idea of home transcends cultural boundaries and racial marginalization, allowing room for stories that are meaningful to viewers. In this way, pictures become precisely not what Susan Sontag suggests, simply a way to "acquire something as information (rather than experience)" or a way of "furnishing knowledge dissociated from and independent of experience" ("Image-World" 80). Instead, viewing

pictures becomes a launching pad for personal exploration and connection to the subject, which is akin to Barthes' notion of myth's "double function." The form of Figure 18 is secured in historical context as "Creek Seminole Coffee Gopher (Panther Clan) poses with young Emma" (West, *Images* 4), but the meaning "is *already* complete, it postulates a kind of knowledge, a past, a memory, a comparative order of facts, ideas, decisions" (Barthes, "Myth Today" 55).



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Fig. 18. Creek Seminole father and daughter (c. 1906)

### Homefree

Ernest Walter Histed had photographed the faces of royalty in England and Germany. He was born in Brighton, England, and there must have been some strange

irony even in his own mind as he wandered Okeechobee Brighton Reservation's prairies. Surely, the famous photographer was startled by the simple structure and its two inhabitants. Clearly, Coffee and Emma were aware of Histed and if not surprised, then at least annoyed (Fig. 18). Histed's arrival at their home is an intrusion, an unannounced visit, and whatever his intent, these two family members are disinterested in being or becoming the objects of his curiosity.

This picture of Coffee and Emma in their temporary home speaks to father/daughter relationships and provision. The picture reminds of protection and privacy and even the violation of that privacy. In fact, more than any photo in Patsy West's pictorial anthology, this picture depicts the very small Seminole family as *other*, and this is so on a number of different levels, for the resistance is so plainly seen. Much like the young girls who will be discussed in the next chapter (Fig. 27), these two people, father and daughter, stare back at the camera with indignance, a *none of your damn business* look on their faces. For documentary purposes and for Histed's prestigious collection of photographic faces, this picture serves its turn reluctantly. This rather illustrious Chicago, New York, Palm Beach photographer means little more than a nuisance to this dad and daughter, but a nuisance that keeps Coffee's lounging position a tense one. His legs are poised to stand should he need to protect his small child, whose fierce look speaks simultaneously of her fear and resentment. The cultural, socioeconomic distance between Histed, Coffee and Emma, and this viewer is a chasm, but the universal idea of paternal protection and care speaks across those differences to the very heart of familial ethics of care.

I do not wish to imply the Histed photo portrays the same sort of universality that John Tagg and Roland Barthes indict in the *The Family of Man* exhibit. I am not interested in reading a picture with a view that “leads us to see these ‘families’ and ‘homes’ as participating in certain universal, fundamental truths so that the . . . groups of figures and the . . . settings are effectively removed from history and we are no longer able or inclined to see, question or account for their very differences” (Tagg 161), nor do I condone a visual reading that suppresses “the determining weight of history” in the universal experiences such as birth and death or a universal institution like family (Barthes, “Great Family of Man” 101). I understand that photographs convey power, control, desire, and agency via rhetorical strategies and institutional ideologies that are naturalized simply because they are not questioned.

What I do purport and find useful, though, is a reading that acknowledges the intertextuality of human experience, or reading that constitutes “a relationship between the texts we read and the world in which we act and suffer—a relationship which is itself textualized in the tension among the aesthetic, the rhetorical, and the ethical dimensions of the reading process” (Scholes x). Like Robert Scholes, I posit that readers already carry within their minds a template for reading pictures—and the world—and the apparatus for articulating this kind of reading is present in memory. Reading, then, becomes a process of sifting through the files of our memories and placing a new moment or experience in relationship to the collection of memories and experiences we have already stored (21).

The reading is not a means to over simplify or to be overly sentimental regarding cultural situations, or to deny the differences in socioeconomics and gender privilege, or

even to accentuate cultural sameness. Instead, this visual reading process allows for application of Berger's challenge for pictures to be "an integral part of the process of people making their own history, [so] all photographs . . . re-acquire a living context" (Berger "Uses" 291). Such reading should inspire empathy and sympathy for ourselves and for others, not self-righteous, pompous alienation or conversely, a maudlin version of 1950's family sitcoms.

### Homesick

The chickee photographs are loaded with the idea of home and domesticity, and this idea becomes part of a series of stories passed on throughout generations, not simply to the Seminole family, but also to the viewer. Inside this familial framework, the photograph conveys meaning. Like Roland Barthes' search for "the truth of the face" he had loved, the chickee pictures provide descendants with a confirmation that "this has been," while affirming, to the Seminole viewers and those outside the tribe, the idea that this still is (Barthes 67). Understanding then becomes more of a pursuit of meaningful truth than a quest for explanatory truth, and the meanings evoked are subject to change as time progresses. This is the "sort of umbilical cord [that] links the body of the photographed thing to [the] gaze," and the significance of the meaning is what keeps continuity of purpose and the assurance of connection within the tribe's cultural remembrance as well as the memories of any family unit (Barthes, *Camera Lucida* 81).

*If a million walls separate us culturally, economically, educationally, and institutionally, there is still something to be said for love, and something must be said. There is something to be said for and about family in its myriad of malfunctions and manifestations because family looks like something we recognize, remember, and*

*regard either because we had it, we lost it, or we longed for it. Family is not reckoned by the terms traditional or nuclear (such as in Fig. 19) although families look like that, too. Families look like love.*



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Fig. 19. Seminole family in cyprus dugout canoe

*I knew Thom Hassen in grade school. He grew up in Pleasant Plain Children's Home, always hoping someone would adopt him. No one did. One day at the lunch table he told me, "I don't know exactly what kinda folks I'm lookin' for, but I'll bet I know 'em when I see 'em, and they'll know me, too." It was the first and only time I had ever seen him cry.*

*I hadn't heard from Thom in over thirty years, but he found my contact information on the Internet several months ago, and the first thing he wrote was, "April, I have a family!" He's been married for thirty years, has six kids of his own, and even*

*more grandkids. My e-mailbox is inundated with his family photos—big, ol’ Thom, cigar in his mouth, standing near his wife, who is several years older than he, both near their grown children, grandchildren clinging to legs, all various sizes and colors—looking just like a family. He was right. He knew exactly what he was looking for. From the pictures in my e-mailbox, that dappled group of smiling folks knew Thom, too.*

Seminole life has radically changed over the last thirty years. I’ve been told that there are some folks who still live in their chickees year round, tucked somewhere back in the woods and holding to their old ways, but I do not know that this is so. What I do know is that the chickee’s function has changed and it no longer solely represents the idea of home, but more frequently functions as a gazebo for Seminole families and south Florida residents, a place for grills, picnic tables, and lawn chairs. In fact, a chickee can be built on any Florida property without a building permit, providing the structure meets the zoning qualifications and as long as a Seminole Indian does the building.

For the Seminole, the chickee is a visible relic of their past and a functioning part of their present. During Field Day and other educational events and cultural holidays, the replicated chickee village that stands behind the rodeo stadium becomes more of an interactive museum, hosting visitors interested in Seminole cooking and housing cultural artifacts. One chickee booth offers free samples of frybread, a staple of the Seminole diet, while another offers cups of hot sofkee, a corn drink that is as crucial to many Seminoles’ diets as coffee is to our own. Still, other chickees sell Seminole dolls (Fig. 20) and jewelry, and some sell products like Indian hamburgers, Indian hot dogs, and pumpkin bread—a derivative of frybread (Fig. 21).





Source: personal archive

Fig. 20. Seminole doll chickee booth (February 2007)



Source: personal archive

Fig. 21. Fry bread chickee (February 2007)

The village is a reminder of a life that used to exist, but one that is now vital only in its potential to remind. But to remind whom? Us? The Seminoles themselves? How can this imitation village matter? The Seminoles had made imitation villages at Musa Isle for public spectacle long before the small village in Brighton existed (Fig. 22). Why does this matter?



Source: *Seminole Music*; GPO and Bureau of American Ethnology, Frances Densmore Collection

Fig. 22. Simulated village at Musa Isle

### Homeschooled

Heritage is an act of cultural memory “if we understand cultural memory to be about identity, values, and recollections of the past that serve the needs of the present”

(Moynagh 97). Cultural memory is a tool of the powerful and the disenfranchised, and the stories that endure are those that address and promote the physical, mental, and emotional needs of a people group. This principle is as true in tribal narratives as it is in national chronicles and family tales. In fact, the accounts that all institutions embrace include scripting cultural memory to enhance or to erase history. Oral, literary, and photographic technologies have perpetuated a national, a familial, and in this case, a tribal imaginary. This notion implies that heritage is artifice and performance since memory reveals itself as imagination through retelling in oral, textual, and visual media, making iteration a creative process that promotes a constitutive relationship between orality, textuality, and visuality. In short, our most coveted histories are myths.

According to Roland Barthes, “Myth is a system of communication [. . . and] everything can be a myth provided it is conveyed by a discourse” (“Myth Today” 51). Conversation, documents, photographs, and architecture are conduits of myth, and these technologies are rife with agency, evoking a new ideology as each narrator/viewer speaks, writes, or sees a version of the story.

Barthes also addresses the negotiation between the telling and the told: “For what we grasp is not at all one term after the other, but the correlation which unites them,” which suggests that myths do not happen solely because of events (“Myth Today” 52). Myths happen because of the teller, the listener, and the looker. Fealty to that national, local, familial, or tribal story generates heritage. This idea challenges the desire to anchor meaning to explanation, for the narrative/heritage created is an invention by appropriation. The trace remains, so the story is vaguely recognizable,

discernable, but it is altered. It is both different and the same. It is emptied content and copied form, not a replica, but a representation, much like a picture.

According to Barbara Myerhoff, the re-memory process provides individual and group agency because the revisited, revised memory makes people “active participants in their own history; they provide their own sharp, insistent definitions of themselves, their own explanations for their past and their destiny” (qtd. in Lomawaima xv).

While the process of creating heritage is an ever changing, perpetual story, evidence suggests that the process must be organic. Holding onto culture is impossible in a conscious way, for the minute a person recognizes s/he lives in or has a culture, the culture is objectified and commoditized. Items become priceless—language, customs, traditions, and stories quickly become artifacts. Alice Walker’s story “Everyday Use” exemplifies the tension that exists between cultural innocence, experience, and knowledge in the characters of Maggie, Dee, and Mama.

Maggie, who is unaware of her heritage in a cognizant way, does not need the heirloom quilts her sister, Dee, covets because Maggie “can ’member Grandma Dee without the quilts,” and “Maggie knows how to quilt,” so she can continue making family heirlooms from the fabric of her cultural present (Walker 180). In innocence, perceived as ignorance even by her own mother, Maggie perpetuates her family’s artistic handiwork without guile, without acknowledgment, and without monetary reward. Maggie lives inside her culture, engaging and designing and moving forward from her past. Because Maggie “knows how to make her own quilts,” she can continue revising and reinventing her heritage without losing the vital, living content and value of her past (Walker 180).

Dee, however, is enlightened. She carries a bittersweet understanding of her heritage and turns what she once perceived as her ancestral baggage—her very difficult childhood—into fodder for her own current situation. Capitalizing on the significance of items made for everyday use, Dee plans to “use the chute top as a centerpiece for the alcove table [. . . and find] something artistic to do with the dasher” (Walker 179). She will hang the family’s homemade quilts on a wall and save the Polaroid pictures of her mother, sister, house, and cow to serve as evidence of what exists as artifacts, evidence of coming from a culture.

Dee cannot live inside her culture because she knows too much about her culture. However, she does create a story of her own ethnicity through an anthropological exhumation of her mother and sister’s property. She collects items that will be admired by people who will then admire Dee for possessing the items. Dee is the curator of her own museum, and though she does not have a living culture, she poses as one who is cultured. Once Dee sees that there are things that need to be preserved, the things become a fetish, an idol—things that are representative of culture because they hold to a form of ethnicity, but deny the substance.

Mama’s role is critical because she mediates between Maggie, who is the substance of ethnicity, and Dee, who is the form of ethnicity. Mama understands that heritage changes, even though she cannot adequately articulate the change. She knows that her daughter and her daughter’s boyfriend relegate her life and lifestyle to condescending glances, but she is neither stirred to anger nor moved to action (Walker 178). Instead, she observes and narrates her daughters’ positions without judgment until Dee’s cultural plundering compromises Maggie’s cultural way of life.

Is Mama a possibility? Is it possible to find a place from which to view and evaluate culture? Is it possible to be aware of having a culture and not to objectify it? Can culture be preserved, not commoditized? Is there a place to negotiate between both worlds? Can cultural artifacts both represent and misrepresent culture?

The answers to these questions must be an emphatic yes, for if there is no Mama, no place from where to authentically choose what this culture means, then both Maggie and Dee's worldviews are empty, and there is no meaningful way with which to share experience. Maggie is not enough to draw those who would revere the culture, and Dee is not enough to animate life inside the culture.

If Mama cannot exist, then there is no story, and if there is no story, then there is no cultural fabric to translate into a set of beliefs, to quilt a past, or to build a future. If Mama cannot exist, then there is no organic way to transmit heritage; instead, the past is reduced simply to "information along linguistic circuits," which is not enough to affect the soul or the mind or to perpetuate a way of life (Lomawaima xvi).

Mama, or a self-conscious, engaged relationship to personal culture, Seminole culture, exists in the identifiable and identifiable-ness of the Seminole architecture and artifacts that appear not only in the reconstructed versions of their old chickees, but even more so in the pictures of the people whose images are recorded in photographs. From these pictures, stories will emerge, disperse, and create new stories that will either mummify the tribe's traditions or vitalize the tribe's culture.

Dee begins to take pictures the minute she arrives at Mama and Maggie's home, long before she even says hello. Dee understands the house, the cow, and the large woman she records give visual markers of Dee's great success. She will use the

pictures as an illustration, an explanation, of where she began her life and how she ascended from the depths of poverty. The picture will become the pad from where she will launch her story, which is one that will further marginalize her mother and sister. Maggie also uses the household objects, pictures, quilts, butter churns, and table benches as introductions to stories—a “remember when we did this,” and “this belonged to aunt so-in-so” as memory markers. Maggie’s stories give rise to inclusion, fusing past with the present in an effort to embrace all of her family. For Dee, the items are reminders of where she came from. For Maggie, the items are reminders of who she is. For Mama, the urgent need to live inside the polemic means allowing both simultaneously to exist without privileging one. The stories that accompany photos are functions of memory that recall, retell, and reinvent the instant and the image because our pasts and our identities are integrally linked.

Right now, the Seminoles use their chickee village and their pictures in an attempt to be Mama. They wish their children would remember a culture that is not simply a culture of poverty and wealth or a Cinderella rags to riches story. Their Native culture is one of interdependency. Walls give rise to independence and self-consciousness. If their children never see the people they came from doing the things that inspire them to treasure their past, how can their children know that the past matters? If the chickee village is a point of curiosity, an architectural souvenir, then it is an artifact that serves as a reminder not only to the Reservation’s visitors, but also to the Seminole people who live there. Without physical and cultural touchstones, foundational cornerstones, which represent the notions of nourishment, protection, and familial reliance, who will ever know that the Seminole Indian ever existed?



## CHAPTER THREE BRIGHTON SEMINOLE RELIGION: ALTAR ALTERNATIVES

### The Good Fight of Faith

By 1858, Billy Bowlegs was defeated, and there were fewer than two hundred Seminole people left hiding in the Florida Everglades. Such drastic loss of lives and destruction of property could easily have shattered the tribe's hope of survival, much less their determination to perpetuate a cultural future. However, the Seminole people's intense desire to hold onto their way of life, as well as their land, sparked greater dependency upon the religious significance of the Great Spirit and revived the importance of specific ritual practices including fires, prayers, and medicines. The ferocity with which the tribe fought the United States military was equaled only by the intensity with which they held to their native spiritual practices. While the tribe had lessened significantly in number by the mid-century, it had not diminished at all in its religious and spiritual beliefs. In fact, Seminole historian Brent Richards Weisman states, "It would seem to go against common sense to say that the trauma of the Seminole wars may have in fact revitalized Seminole culture" (60).

While the Seminole Tribe kept their ancient religious traditions vibrant and alive, they "added new elements, some with the purpose of helping them deal with the white man and his ways" (Weisman 60). In other words, the tribe continued to invent and re-invent itself as a means to exist not only in the hostile Everglades environment, but also to survive the onslaught of U.S. artillery and the white man's infiltration into their

traditions. The medicine man's function and the Green Corn Dance ritual also changed to accommodate the needs of the Tribal community.

The picture of Creek Medicine Man Billy Smith was taken by Lorenzo D. Creel, who had been appointed special agent for the Seminole Indians in Florida in 1910 (Fig. 23). For six years, Creel wandered the Florida landscape, taking pictures of Indian life. Billy Smith stands in his corn garden, which "was in a rich hammock that had been cleared by girdling or cutting around the trunks of trees, a typical Seminole agricultural practice" (West *Images* 45). Smith is nearly comedic: standing barefooted, dressed in traditional garb that resembles nightclothes, he poses somewhat unremarkably with a hoe in his right hand and a chicken perched upside down on his head.



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Fig. 23. Creek medicine bundle holder (1911)

I open with this picture because it is funny to me. I could not discern that the object on Smith's head was a chicken until I cropped the picture and enlarged the cropped image, but I was compelled to do it (Fig. 24). I had to see what was on Smith's head. I was not so struck by the fact that Smith wears a chicken in the picture as I was my ardent desire to figure out what it was on his head. Once I recognized Smith's fowl headgear, I was taken by the look on Smith's face. Somewhere between a smile and defiance, Smith sets his gaze to meet Creel's ethnographic picture-taking assignment and locates himself deftly in history as a holder of the very important Creek medicine bundle, and one who wears a chicken on his head.

Did Smith let the chicken sit on his head daily, or did he let the chicken sit there to startle Creel? Did he know that Creel would advise the United States and the Bureau of Indian Affairs to terminate any work on behalf of the Seminoles, discontinue the position of special agent, and hold the lands appropriated by President Taft "against the time when the [Seminole] groups showed an inclination to use them?" (Hanna and Hanna 333). Did he know that Creel was a crook?



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Fig. 24. Billy Smith's chicken hat (cropped and enlarged)

Billy Smith's gaze challenges the viewer, looking back at Creel then and at us now. With his half smile, he withholds information not only about his sacred office and about its profound function in the tribe, but he also denies any insight into his intentional or non-intentional mockery of Creel himself, Creel's work, or those of us who would look at this image nearly one hundred years later.

The headgear mystery solved, I decided this picture belonged to that set of photographs that qualifies for the category Barthes describes as "artifice of the camera angle," or "the deliberate . . . contrast" which "produces no effect in me, except perhaps one of irritation" (*Camera Lucida* 47). Then, I saw the detail that touched me, and "overwhelm[ed] the entirety of my reading" (Barthes *Camera Lucida* 49):



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Fig. 25. Billy Smith's right foot (cropped and enlarged)

The right foot is swollen, somewhat deformed, the big toe dwarfed by the size of the appendage (Fig. 25). Are genetics to blame here? Was Smith snake-bit? Does he wear a chicken on his head to move Creel's eye—my eye—from the physical infirmity of his foot to the physical anomaly on his head?

*When I was five, I lost all of my fingernails and toenails from a fungus that thrived on my nervous, over-achiever, perfectionist personality. Both of my feet looked like Billy Smith's left foot by the time I was twelve.*

*The fissures on my hands and feet wept. I wore white gloves and white socks to cover the ugliness. I was always telling jokes or drawing attention to someone else's strengths to keep my peers from mentioning my own disease. Humor was a means of*

*control: Making my friends laugh at my jokes felt differently than having them laugh at me. Billy can take the chicken off his head; he can do nothing about his foot.*

*I visited a dermatologist once a week for ultraviolet treatments well into my adult life. Mama drove me to Cincinnati and Zanesville for treatments when we lived in Ohio, and she took me to Lexington when we lived in Kentucky. She took me anywhere there was anyone who she thought could help me. Finally, a pediatrician gave me Prednazone, a drug I took for far too long. I nearly bled to death with my first child.*

Berger discusses the “narrative range” of images, asserting that some pictures “through the choice of the instant photographed, may try to persuade the viewer to lend that instant a past and a future” (*Another Way* 119-20). According to Barthes, a flash of light, a “fulguration,” instigates narrativity:

By the mark of *something*, the photograph is no longer ‘anything whatever.’ This something has triggered me, has provoked a tiny shock, a *satori*, the passage of a void. . . . A strange thing: the virtuous gesture which seizes upon ‘docile’ photographs . . . is an idle gesture; on the contrary, the reading of the *punctum* . . . is at once brief and active. . . . What the chemical action develops is undevelopable, an essence (of a wound), what cannot be transformed but only repeated under the instances of insistence (of the insistent gaze). (*Camera Lucida* 49)

My first viewing of Billy Smith’s picture allowed for only a comedic comment—had he packed his lunch?—but the flash of light and the story came when I saw his right foot. The instant I saw the misshapen appendage, after looking at the picture many, many times, I suddenly understood the chicken and the look on Smith’s face, not so much the truth of Billy Smith’s past and future, but my own. I empathized. I recognized the look that seeks to distract, the smile that seeks to soften both persecution and pity. *I saw myself, standing in the hallway of Burgin Public School, limping to class with my*

*hands near my pockets, telling Sandy Hardwick she looked pretty, so she would not mention the stains on my gloves.*

### Keeping the Faith

The medicine bundle carriers are still revered and many Seminoles still believe in the medicine's magic. During times of war, the bundles contained 'Power of War' medicines to protect and enable warriors in battle. The bundles also contained "hunting magic," and some items were considered so powerful and so dangerous that they could not be touched without using "a tweezerlike pair of buzzard wing bones" (Weisman 97). The Seminole religious practices, medicines, and rituals have evolved dynamically, changing as the Seminoles themselves have changed, and there is evidence in the current tribal trend that a resurrection of Seminole spiritual practices is underway.

### The Green Corn Dance

The Green Corn Dance remains one of the Seminole Indians most celebrated social and religious functions. A great deal of secrecy still surrounds the event, so Seminoles are hesitant to speak of the sacred days assigned to this worship service. From 1880-1881, Clay MacCauley was commissioned by the director of the United States Bureau of American Ethnology to "inquire into the condition and to ascertain the number of the Indians commonly known as the Seminole," but his account of the Green Corn Dance is vague, offering little more than hearsay he received from a reluctant informant (MacCauley 475). The length of the ceremony lasted from four to eight days, and the activities varied from tribe to tribe. According to Weisman, the Green Corn ritual "clearly was as complex and diverse as the Southeastern Indians themselves. It

embodied not only the beliefs and practices of the prehistoric mound builders but also the unique histories and cultural circumstances of each tribe” (93). However, a few things are known and are common to the ceremony. Although “the form that any particular Green Corn ceremony took reflected the specifics of time, place, and tradition . . . ., at the core was a unity of ritual concerns,” which included purifying the community with the new fire, purifying the flesh by fasting and scarification, and balancing the “social, natural, and spiritual realms of existence by dancing and atonement” (Weisman 93).

The event’s significance has waned since the introduction of Christianity in the mid 1950s; however, among the Brighton Tribe, a revived interest is growing, especially among those who do not conflate their Christian principles with the ancient tribal ceremony. Clan members still unite around a single campfire in a cooking chickee, and they do not mingle their food with members of other clans. Children gather firewood all day long, and women cook three times per day over blazing fires that burn under the scorching Florida sun. Fasting, scratching ceremonies, initiation races, ball games, and ceremonial dances are still practiced although the ritual particulars are rarely shared with nontribal people.

Signs of backward and forward cultural movement show up in conversations with different members. Some advocate a return to Council justice systems to judge crime and to sanction marriages in tribal courts at the yearly Green Corn Dance, while others see the event as a memorial to their elders and a past they are glad to have escaped. The current landscape is identical to the original site of the Green Corn Dance, but older, original models of chickees set neatly beside the modern chickees as a reminder



that technology and capitalism are part of the sacred ritual. Newer chickees are built complete with paddle fans, comfortable beds and in some cases, with air conditioning and refrigerators. The backward, forward oscillation characterizes the history of this tribe even as it continues to create its own history, control its destiny.

In some families, the practice of familial interaction at the Green Corn Dance has lessened from the affects of economic affluence and/or acculturation into a white community. Some families who participated in the Green Corn Dance in notable ways for many years tend to abstain either for reasons of political marginalization by the Tribal Council or the Tribal Board of Directors. Some families do not attend the Green Corn Dance because their personal Christian convictions do not leave room for the Seminole religious tradition, but more and more the Seminole people seek to keep their ancient traditions meaningful and vibrant.



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Fig. 26. The Green Corn Dance (1938)

In 1938, Charles Ebbets, renowned photographer and friend of the Florida Seminoles, was permitted to attend the Green Corn Dance and photograph some of the week's events (Fig. 26). Among the photographs in his collection is a picture of Charlie Cypress of the Otter clan leading a ceremonial dance on the fourth day of the festival (West, *Images* 40).

This picture strikes me in much the same way Lucy R. Lippard is taken with Mary Schaffer's photo of Samson Beaver, his wife Leah, and his little girl Frances Louise, a Canadian Stoney Indian family. Lippard ponders the "then-present space of the subjects, the then-present but perhaps very different space of the photographer, and the now-present space of the writer in retrospect, as surrogate for contemporary viewers," which are all spaces distanced by ethnicity, geographical boundaries and, for me,

seventy years (343). Lippard wrestles the ambiguity innate in the family's smiling "triple portrait cut loose from all knowledge of the people involved," and admits her "response is not neutral but wholly subjective" (344). I, too, confess to an uneasiness that accompanies being a white woman, reading a photograph of Seminole people, which was taken by a white man. However, unlike Lippard, I do not see the amicable, inviting smiles of the photograph's subjects as their private space is not simply observed, but violated. In fact, the faces in this picture say something quite different to me, even from the many years that distance us.

The distance and the angle of the picture seem to indicate Ebbets's intention was to capture the dancers without his being noticed and that his objective was to capture a scene wherein he has no relationship to the people photographed (Fig. 26). Such a shot would help to authenticate to others his experience at the Green Corn Dance. If Ebbets meant to be discrete, then his effort clearly failed because the first, third, and fifth dancers, all children, stare directly into the lens or, at least, into the direction of the photographer. The cropped, edited, and enlarged version of Ebbets's photo clearly shows there was no surprise shot here (Fig. 27).



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Fig. 27. The Green Corn Dance (1938) (cropped and enlarged)

Assuming Ebbets desired simply to photograph one of the many dances performed during the Green Corn Dance, recording the activity for historical purposes, the faces looking into the lens certainly betray his presence. If the photographer's intention matters and his intent is spoiled, who then is speaking in this picture? If the picture does not say what Ebbets meant for it to say about the Seminole's sacred ritual, does it say anything at all about the Seminole people?

Charles Martin's "Autobio-Photography: Beauty and the 'I' of the Beholder" poses the question of intention and the relevance of intention, citing two similar theoretical views regarding photographers and subjects: 1. that photographer and subject are in collaboration with each other, and / or 2. that the respondents determine photographic

intention entirely apart from the photographer's purpose. These notions fall in line with John Berger and Jean Mohr's *Another Way of Telling* since both authors argue that the story of French peasants in this book offers "the most profound sense of [the peasants'] life's work" (Berger and Mohr, *Another Way* 7). Martin argues that Berger and Mohr go to great lengths to "assure the reader—or to persuade the reader?—that these stories are truly those of the folk . . . so that we should not identify this as an exploitative project," claiming that despite Berger and Mohr's declaration of disinterested observation and reportage, "it is Mohr who organizes [the peasants'] thoughts" (NP). What happens, though, when the subject is neither complicitous nor oppositional as in the Ebbets's photo? What does a photo mean when the subject catches the photographer unaware instead of the other way around?

The three little girls in the Ebbets's picture indicate that they are aware of the photographer because they stare directly into the lens, and the photo becomes all the more interesting because of their confrontational gaze. Their stare does not hinder the historical validity of the occasion; in fact, their stare is nearly unnoticed without the zoom function in Microsoft Office Picture Manager. But the cropped and enlarged version makes it clear that the girls stare back at the colonial—*predatory?*—gaze of Ebbets and his camera, and the children appear to hold a secret that they do not intend to share with their white visitor. See Figs. 28, 29, and 30.



Fig. 28. Child 1



Fig. 29. Child 2



Fig. 30. Child 3

There is little question that the event did occur and the people pictured dancing in a circle were there. There is evidence that the photographer and the children see each other, “and through that act of recognition, such as perhaps they have never experienced before, each hopes to take away an image of the other which will withstand anything that may happen. An image that nothing can efface” (Berger and Mohr, *Another Way* 109): Ebbets walks away with the memory of a sacred dance; the girls return with the memory of a white photographer whose mission to record their privacy was, quite likely, spoiled.

Even the rhetorical message of the picture is consistent with the perpetuation of “Seminoleness” and iconic Native American traditions. The circle, the fire, the garb, the chickee, and the landscape persuade the viewer that this is a genuine, historical event, albeit there is something that occurs in the distancing of the photo that creates an almost artificial account of the moment—as though the figures pose as cartoon versions of themselves.

*My friend, who is half-Seminole and half-white, says the landscape in this photo is identical to the place where the dance is held, but there are no dances that occur in*

*the daytime. She argues that no matter what West's book says about Ebbets's getting inside looks, the truth is that "the dance had to have been staged because the people who dance need to fast and work all day in the hot sun to cleanse themselves. It's sort of a spiritual thing." My friend says, "There's no way this is real, and those kids know it, too"* (personal communication 2 Dec. 2007).

Nevertheless, the "studium," or Barthes' explanation of "that very wide field of unconcerned desire, of various interest, of inconsequential taste . . . the same sort of vague, slippery, irresponsible interest one takes in the people, the entertainments, the books, the clothes one finds 'all right'" offers a visual document commensurate with non-native expectations of an indigenous ceremonial practice (*Camera Lucida* 27). But the girls' insistent look into the lens challenges any cultural function the picture might serve for an audience in terms of a genuine view of a Seminole Green Corn dance and the possibility for this picture relaying information of Seminole culture to those outside Seminole culture.

The girls know they are being watched so posturing is not just a possibility, but it is an inevitability. The authenticity of the audience's experience is compromised because Ebbets is detected. We cannot ignore the eyes of the three little girls whose inquisitive looks keep the Green Corn Dance a secret not only from the photographer who tried to seize their moment of worship, but also from the audience who would view the picture nearly seventy years later. The children unwittingly become cultural custodians, and the subjects determine meaning despite the photographer's intent. In this picture, the subjects do speak in much the same way as Barthes asserts in *Camera Lucida*:



It can happen that I am observed without knowing it, and again I cannot speak of this experience since I have determined to be guided by the consciousness of my feelings. But very often (too often, to my taste) I have been photographed and knew it. Now, once I feel myself observed by the lens, everything changes: I constitute myself in the process of 'posing,' I instantaneously make another body for myself, I transform myself in advance into an image. (10)

For Barthes, this posing equals an affectation that compromises the validity of the photograph. Here, however, in Ebbets's picture of the Green Corn Dance, the girls' pose and gaze speak directly to the hallowed nature of their cultural practice and the view posterity knows of their yearly event remains obscured. Ebbets's photograph becomes a "subversive" shroud for Seminole culture because "it is pensive . . . it thinks" (Barthes, *Camera Lucida* 38).

Catherine Lutz and Jane Collins point out that while the subjects' look into the camera does acknowledge the presence of the photographer and by extension, the reader, there is some controversy over exactly what the look does. Some theorists assert that the look into the camera "short circuits the voyeurism identified as an important component of most photography . . . . Others, however, have argued that this look, while acknowledging the viewer, simply implies more open voyeurism . . . and may in fact be read as the subject's assent to being watched" (359). Lutz and Collins go on to discuss the importance of the subjects' facial expressions and body positioning in determining complicity, and each concludes that "photographers commonly view the frontal shot as a device for cutting across language barriers and allowing for intercultural communication" (359). These assertions are, of course, the thoughts of late twentieth century theorists and were not necessarily in the mind of Ebbets as he photographed the Green Corn Dance in 1938. However, it is worth noting that of the three girls, who are clearly aware of Ebbets's presence, only one girl faces forward and her body is

obscured by a taller child who is looking in a direction away from the photographer and away from the dance line. While the first two girls do not look as severely into the camera as the third child, neither girl smiles with a sincerity that indicates she has made a decision to be studied.

In his discussion of photography as a technology that helps enforce and uphold ideological state apparatuses, John Tagg asserts that the subjects' bodies "turned full face [are] subjected to an unreturnable gaze," but this is not so with Ebbets's photo (64). Something is unsettling about the three girls' look into the camera, something that refuses the invisibility and intimacy between themselves, the photographer, and the viewers. The picture's narrative becomes neither a story about the Seminole Green Corn Dance nor a story of the Seminole Indians. Instead, the story told is one that more clearly states the tribal reticence regarding a thriving culture, one for which the photographer and the viewers are not privy. Ebbets's photo certainly does not carry the same weight, the same sense of *Seminoleness* or authenticity as Frances Densmore's picture, taken during her 1936 ethnological visit to the Florida Seminole Tribe (Fig. 31). While her written document admits to learning very little information concerning the components of the Green Corn Dance, her picture gives a voyeuristic image viewers expect from a tribal ritual.



Source: *Seminole Music*—GPO and Bureau of American Ethnology, Frances Densmore Collection

Fig. 31. Densmore's Green Corn Dance

Christian Metz asserts, a photograph is “an instantaneous abduction of the object out of the world into another world, into another kind of time” (140), but this is not so in Ebbets’s picture. The little girls’ bodies will not admit Ebbets’s voyeurism, and their refusal halts “one of the hegemonic devices of colonialism . . . [which] has been to isolate the Other in another time, a time that also becomes another place—The Past—even when the chronological time is the present” (Lippard 346). The little girls’ gazes keep their tribal secret securely fixed in a nondescript Florida landscape and their Green Corn Dance steadily set in an enduring tradition. Refusing to be a sideshow or a site-seeing show, the little girls’ gazes keep their tribe’s holy ceremony a secret, both then and now.

### To the Green Corn Dance

Thirty years before Charles Ebbets photographed the Green Corn Dance ceremony, noted ornithologist Charles Cory Barney made yearly visits to Florida each winter, studying the state's fauna for a book eventually published as *Hunting and Fishing in Florida* (1896). Barney's affection for Florida and its natural beauty is documented in Wilfred H. Osgood's "In Memoriam," written for readers of *The Auk: A Quarterly Journal of Ornithology*:

In the fall of 1884, [Cory] went to Dakota and Montana shooting ducks and geese with his friends . . . , and the following winter he rediscovered Florida, fell thoroughly in love with it and adopted it as his own. For the next twenty years without a break he spent all or part of every winter in this state. . . . Florida suited him exactly and likewise he suited Florida. He traveled through it from end to end, he camped in the Everglades, he boated on the lakes and streams, he yachted on the coasts, and he luxuriated at the resorts. He was known to everyone who went to Palm Beach and throughout the state his name was almost as familiar as that of Henry M. Flagler. (156)

Doubtless, the snapshot of the "Creek Seminoles on horseback and in ox carts journey[ing] to the Green Corn Dance" (Fig. 32) occurred during one of those fortuitous moments when Cory was bird watching or panther hunting (West, *Images* 35) although Cory did spend time with the Creek Seminoles during his time in Florida. The picture does not offer a clear view of the faces and unlike Ebbets's photo, there is not even the clarity of body form, so gender is nearly indistinguishable, which would hardly matter if Ebbets's photo (Fig. 26) were not so clearly and so notably written and guarded by female bodies.



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Fig. 32. Traveling to the Green Corn Dance (late 1890s)

The picture offers a sense of spontaneity as if both Cory and the Seminole people were caught unaware, and there is something more authentic, or at least not posed about this photo. In fact, it is possible that the person riding the horse didn't know Cory was there. Is the person in the foreground, the one looking in Cory's direction, a woman? Who is the person in the cart? Who rides the horse? Is this a picture of a family? Besides Patsy West's brief description beneath the photo, there is no information regarding who these people are or even why the picture was taken; in truth, I would not even know the people were Seminole if the caption did not tell me so. Are the two people in or near the cart posed? Were they caught aware? Are there yet more people outside the frame of Cory's picture? If so, why did he choose just these people?

There is far more ambiguity regarding Cory's intent in this picture than there is in Ebbets's, yet I have a very peculiar connection to this picture, more intimate and more intense than that I have for Ebbets's. Does this matter, and if so, then what does the intimacy suggest about perpetuating culture, particularly Seminole culture? What marks the significant difference between these two photos?

John Berger claims, "A photograph arrests the flow of time in which the event photographed once existed. All photographs are of the past, yet in them an instant of the past is arrested so that, unlike a lived past, it can never lead to the present" (*Another Way* 86). But Berger goes on to say, "When we find a photograph meaningful, we are lending it a past and a future." He insists, "Meaning is not instantaneous. Meaning is discovered in what connects, and cannot exist without development. Without a story, without an unfolding, there is no meaning" (*Another Way* 89).

The most discernible attribute of this photo is the setting, and this matters because the landscape connects Cory's picture (Fig 32) "To the Green Corn Dance" with Ebbets's picture "The Green Corn Dance" (Fig. 26), where the landscape is far more incidental. The tall, slim Florida pine trees, the wild grasses, and the diffused sunlight are familiar sites to those of us who have trekked the forests between Lake Okeechobee and Ft. Pierce. When I look at Cory's photo, I read it as an eerily familiar personal marker, a sort of reincarnation of a now I used to know when I was much younger—*an afternoon with a former lover and a walk I took at fourteen when I kept saying to myself, "I am, I am, I am." A time when I, too, was looking for a spiritual connection to something, someone.* For Berger, this relationship to a picture constitutes a "confirmation of the *thereness* of the world . . . which nourishes our sense of Being"

(*Another Way* 87). For Barthes, it is “*advenience* or even *adventure* . . . an *animation*.” It is what “animates me . . . a wound” (*Camera Lucida* 20-21).

For me, the moment of aha! or the inexplicable gasp occurs at the instance of nostalgia, or a longing to return home. I see that in the same place where once these very much alive Seminole people traveled to attend their worship ceremony, Charles Barney Cory happened upon—I *say happened, perhaps because I sense a collision, a fortunate accident. And why not? Cory, born extraordinarily wealthy, devoted his life to the sheer exhilaration of exploring and learning. I suppose that which is absent or I, at the very least, question the possibilities about what is missing—these very much alive folks. All this in the same place where I have stopped, photographed, picnicked, made love . . . and I live again in the linguistic world of the shifter now, which is never now, for the minute that the word is spoken, now is over.*

This picture evokes for me Marcel Proust’s notion of involuntary memory, *A Remembrance of Things Past* or *In Search of Lost Time*. Christopher Bollas calls such an experience “the aesthetic moment.” This moment includes what he calls “the spirit of the place,” or an “evocative resurrection of an early ego condition often brought on by a sudden and uncanny rapport with an object, a moment when the subject is captured in an intense illusion of being selected by the environment for some deeply reverential experience” (39).

Cory’s picture differs in purpose and affect from Ebbets’s picture. Essentially, Charles Ebbets’s photo (Fig. 26) marks what Roy H. Quan terms anthropological, which occurs when “the photograph serves to provide some insight, truth, confirmation about particular subject matter or particular events” (6). While the picture does not necessarily

convey Ebbets's personal intention, it does reveal to the viewer something of the Seminole Tribe. Ebbets's photo marginalizes the audience and by doing so, the tribe reveals its communal pact concerning secrecy and exclusion. The subjects do not remain merely objects because the subjects relay interpretive agency, but this is not so in Cory's picture. Charles Barney Cory's photo (Fig. 32) displays in part what Quan calls normative, which "acts as a mirror onto the lives of the viewers. Photography as normative investigation reveals the similarities we hold in common more than the differences" (8), and perhaps this is what Sarah Kember expresses when she talks about "the truth status of photography," which is "placed in a real located ultimately in our own interior worlds rather than in an exterior one" (215). Photography, or at least pictures like Cory's, carries a truth that transcends rational explanation. Instead, the picture's truth is experienced. The irony, of course, is that Ebbets was supposed to be seizing a secret, but he did not. Cory was simply capturing a coincidence and for me, the picture becomes a transformational object that evokes an aesthetic moment (Bollas 17). For me, the picture is a window from a past, into my past, which occurs at the instant of sight:

The photograph works to transcend the passage of time and the rules of space, thrusting the vision of the past under the viewing eyes of the present in its absolute unshakeable there-ness. It is a magical, paradoxical union of absence and presence and, as such, it offers power. The power to repossess what has once undeniably been, but what is now irretrievably lost, the power to 'know' a moment in time, to master it in a way that experience in its transience is unable to. In these ways, the photo is representation as presentation, a form of perfect illustration supposedly free from rhetorical and pictorial codes, but full nevertheless, of significance and insight. (Best 174)

The Florida scenery both recalls and represents and presents the pristine, pastoral panorama of a not-so-long-ago that slowly and sadly changes as I-70 East



widens and 441 North urbanizes. It is a touchstone of familiarity, one that connects me, a twenty-first century viewer, to Charles Barney Cory, a 19<sup>th</sup> century ornithologist, and also to an unidentifiable group of Native Seminoles who were startled by the flash of Cory's camera.

Meaning emerges via several axes—spatial, temporal, cultural, and individual—and Berger's comment concerning meaning, development, story, and unfolding is far more than a singularly referential event. My experience in these woods, in these same woods, makes me part of the history of this place. This picture confirms my *thereness* and consequently, my Being (Mohr and Berger, *Another Way* 89). This picture touches me, and according to Berger, "A photograph is effective when the chosen moment which it records contains a quantum of truth which is generally applicable, which is as revealing about what is absent from the photograph as about what is present in it" ("Understanding" 217).

The picture evokes a narrative, while initiating a sense of homesickness—a longing for the place and the people depicted in the past—that instigates a "search for the location in which the self is 'at home'" (George 3). The group reminds of the idea "family," which in turn reminds that I am an extension of a group, a genealogy, a collection of people "whose members love one another" (Barthes, *Camera Lucida* 74). The photo encourages the idea of family not only with the group's presence, but also with the absence of individually distinct features. The human figures stand nearly ghostlike in the filtered sunlight. What is missing serves to perpetuate part of the photo's intrigue, and it does not matter whether the absence results from the camera's omission

or from the subject's death. In fact, "the most popular use of the photograph is as a memento of the absent" (Berger, "Understanding a Photograph 180).

Of course, nostalgia manifests not only in a longing for a past, but often for an idealized version of the past, desired in lieu of the complexity of the present. This idea deserves attention in the wake of the Seminole Tribe's technological progress and financial success. There is a curious disconnect between then and now as tribal members gather to experience religious ceremonies, particularly at the Green Corn Dance. The merger of old and new is peculiar as tribal members now arrive at the designated holy site, driving Escalades, Navigators, Jaguars, and sports cars. Younger people carry iPods and Bluetooth technology to scratching ceremonies. Transportation via ox carts and horseback is memorialized in Cory's photo, but desire for the sincerity and simplicity of the Green Corn Dance's original meaning and purpose is a revision process that requires negotiating the highest and the holiest Seminole ideals with Christianity and capitalism's doctrine and allure.

Cory's picture carries the aura of the pastoral. It represents an idyllic version of a spiritual journey. In this picture, there is a harkening back to a purer time, while simultaneously alluding to the exotic and unknown. Unlike Ebbets's photograph where I am marginalized, here in Cory's picture, I am embraced. In Cory's picture, I identify.

Seminole custom makes no allowance for land ownership, and the indiscernible faces and bodies serve as symbolic *Everyman*. The power of absence and omission becomes significantly rhetorical and historical in this picture. The experience reminds me of what Barthes might have encountered when he found the picture of his mother in the Winter Garden: "What I see has been here in this place which extends between

infinity and the subject (*orator* or *spectator*); it has been here, and yet immediately separated; it has been absolutely, irrefutably present, and yet already deferred” (77).

In Cory’s picture, I understand Barthes’ identification with his mother as a moment best described as an “unthought known” (Bollas 4). For me, this picture evokes a moment when experience becomes the wisdom that surpasses knowledge, or a site where existential understanding supersedes representational knowing. I have experienced this place, these woods, these trees, this silence, and this moment. This picture evokes for me metonymy: These are Seminole Indians on their way to the Green Corn Dance, not this is an image of Seminole Indians on their way to the Green Corn Dance. More important, the picture leads me to narration: This is a forest where these Seminole Indians traveled, is the same place where I used to walk with my first boyfriend. I see a story when I look at this picture. I can lend it a past and a present, and “time is undone by being remembered but also by the living of certain moments which defy the passing of time, not so much by becoming unforgettable but because, within the experience of such moments there is an imperviousness to time” (Berger and Mohr *Another Way* 106).



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Fig. 33. Josie Billie with scarifier

### Faithful Observance

The Green Corn Dance incorporates a number of rituals peculiar to Seminole tribal superstitions, including initiation rites, healing practices, and disciplinary procedures. Scratchers or “scarifiers” are made from turkey quills and used for “ceremonial purification at the Corn Dance (Fig. 33). The turkey quills are bent into rectangles and studded on one side with four needles (West *Images* 41). The rectangle serves as a firm handle for the bundle carrier to use on tribal boys and men.

During the Green Corn Dance, scratching is not used as a punishment, but it is “done to promote good health by letting out bad blood’ (Weisman 101). Today, however,

a good number of Seminole parents use the scratching rite as a disciplinary tool for their children, and there have been several confrontations between parents and public school officials regarding the marks on some Seminole children's bodies.

The suspicion that surrounds the scratching practice today and the curiosity about this disciplinary/bloodletting ritual is not new. Patsy West relays an interesting story of a non-tribal response to a description of scratching practices, which occurred at the Chicago Century of Progress in 1933, where the Seminole Indian lifestyle and tribal community were exhibited for the public:

When Alan W. Davis lectured in Chicago on the life-style of the Seminole, he usually asked two adults and the village children to stand with him. In this era of hype, the audience was skeptical of his assessment of the life-style. When Davis was discussing the rituals of the Green Corn Dance, their major religious event, he described the 'scratching' of all the males with needles. A professor from a local university spoke up and said, 'Mister, that was done maybe a good many years ago, but why try and fool us by telling us that they do that today?' As it so happened Josie Billie was on this tour. Several weeks before, he had conducted an abbreviated Corn Dance for the [Creek] at the Chicago event. Davis asked Josie Jumper, the alligator wrestler, to remove his shirt. There were the long scratch marks, made by needles, healing on this body. (West, *Enduring* 67-68)

Josie Billie, the Creek medicine bundle carrier who performed the scratching ceremonial practice on Josie Jumper, holds the scarifiers in Fig. 33.

The relationship of the picture to the story makes me care about what this picture tells me. Because I know that Josie Billie was in Chicago performing the Green Corn Dance rite just weeks before the Seminole ceremony was being discussed, I am intrigued. The connection I made between the picture in Patsy West's *Images of America* and the story in her book *Enduring Seminoles* happened as a fortunate accident. *A remembrance. That's what I love about research. I trip over knowledge. Studying and writing make fumbling seem natural. "Yikes!" becomes "Aha!"*

Josie Billie, who became one of the most influential bundle carriers, or medicine men, is surely telling the photographer about the method he uses to produce the scarifiers, or maybe he is even telling the Chicago story to the camera operator. I can nearly hear William Boehmer say, “Hold that up there, Josie, and let me get a picture of those things.” Of course, I cannot know this. I can only suppose. The picture has documentary qualities, informative in its presentation of materials for scarifiers. Josie Billie’s body and the facts about the scratchers exist for me in “the appearances of a disconnected instant,” but “meaning is discovered in what connects, and cannot exist without development. Without a story, without unfolding, there is no meaning” (Berger, *Another Way* 89).

What strikes me about the picture alone, what moves me and makes me wonder are Josie Billie’s hands. I have seen these hands before, and the remembrance evokes in me a narrative of work, but not just hard work, works of art that require hard work at the hands of workers who work hard. A disconnected instance becomes a moment that is intrinsic to the relation/imagination time” (Berger and Mohr, *Another Way* 106). The appearances cohere at the very level of human experience, my own human experience, for I know these hands; they are my mother’s (Fig. 34) and Josie’s (Fig. 35).

*They are my mother’s hands. Today, when I was writing this chapter, she brought to me a cup of coffee, then a grilled pimento cheese sandwich, and tonight, another cup of coffee and a pat of reassurance. She cooks. She cooks to make pain go away, to soothe my little girl’s sickness, to ease the aching loneliness she feels since my dad died. To compensate for not being able to help me write this dissertation.*

Her hands look like this. Hard, worn, and comforting.



Source: personal archive

Fig. 34. Mama's hands



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Fig. 35. Josie Billie's hands

For me, these photos become “less about the detailed recall of appearance and more about the extended act of remembrance, more about a state of reverie.” These pictures represent an idea that evokes in me the sense of work that is identified with integrity and satisfaction, work that is utilitarian and beautiful, or art that is infused with purpose (Batchen, *Forget Me Not* 14).

These hands do not demonstrate the equation between resemblance and identity, which to Barthes is “an absurd, purely legal, even penal affair.” They are akin to ideas and essences, or that which makes me think and respond. Consequently, Barthes finds “the splendor of [his mother’s] truth” in the one photograph that “does not look ‘like’ her, the photograph of a child [he] never knew” (*Camera Lucida* 102-03). The picture of these hands touches me in much the same way Barthes is moved by his mother’s picture in the Winter Garden.

Here, the picture of Josie Billy’s hands creates an image, and an image “is the result of an act of consciousness . . . part of a mental process, the result of an interaction between photographs and viewing subjects” (Burnett NP). An image is different from a photograph. This viewing/image process eludes clock time, operating more as a loop that privileges memory and experience over documented events. The picture of Billy’s hands becomes part of my personal history. Josie Billy’s picture is not de-contextualized out of Seminole history, but instead it is revitalized and placed inside a reading that permits meaning across the cultural divide.

Scarifiers are still used in the Green Corn Dance rituals. Bloodletting is essential to the Seminole experience and can loosely be compared to healing, forgiveness, and purging in other religious traditions. Some members, mostly men and boys, carry deeply grooved marks on their arms, shoulders, and backs—marks earned from initiation rites at the Green Corn Dance. These handmade artifacts, which are used to introduce boys to manhood and to prick and wound the Seminole sick, disobedient, and unrepentant are also objects that pierce and injure me by way of this picture. In this photo, at this moment of personal identification, time is undone. The picture is a site of a memory



moment that is not a product of 1933, 2008, or Seminole tradition. Instead, it is a site that resists the conflagration of history and time, becoming a forever moment (Berger and Mohr, *Another Way* 108).

*Josie Billie's hands that create and wound are my mother's hands that cook, soothe, and rub my back when the day's burdens are more than I can bear alone.*

### Breaking Faith

Before tax-free cigarettes, Bingo, and casino gambling, conversions to Christianity caused the most significant breakdown in traditional leadership and ritual practices. Christianity divided those who lived on the reservation, and slowly infiltrated the religious ceremonies, including the Green Corn Dance. Christian tribal members have typically abstained from the Green Corn Dance, citing the practice as a pagan ritual and particularly rejecting the later introduction of alcohol at the ceremony. Even Josie Billie converted to Christianity and passed the medicine bundle to his brother, Ingraham Billie, who also converted to Christianity several years later (West, *Images* 96).

Today, a few claim to know the medicinal recipes because there was some effort in the 1950s to record them. Some claim to participate in the Black Drink ceremony, a purification practice that induces vomiting, and many more claim to participate in the scratching ceremony. However, the designated bundle carrier functions more as a title than a role, and even the most ardent Green Corn Dance attendees admit to a significant evolution in the ceremonial purpose. For some, the change is sad, but for others the change is a result of Christian conversions and the inevitable negotiation or blending of ideologies.

It is no small thing that the first Christian Seminole service occurred on Christmas Day, one of the two most hallowed days in Christendom. The traditional members of the Brighton Tribe refused to allow the few who followed Christian beliefs to build a church on the Reservation property, so the Lykes Brothers Corporation donated a plot of land next to the reservation for Seminole converts to build a church (West *Images* 97).



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Fig. 36. Brighton Reservation Baptist Church, Christmas Day (1956)

The traditional church pews are situated linearly on a rise that hinders the vision of those who sit in the back rows (Fig. 36). To the left side of the picture, two women and some young children engage in an activity that appears to have little to do with the church service. Only the small girl nearest the camera and the two women in this group

acknowledge the photographer's presence. The second woman looks into the lens, and the first, the lovelier one, turns her face away (Fig. 37). Those in the center pew face forward, but the man sitting cross-legged at the end of the pew looks down (Fig. 38). Of the four men in the back, only the light-skinned man appears to notice the service. The other three look in different directions, clearly distracted by something besides the church service (Fig. 39). The traditional chickee and Seminole garb contrast sharply with the modern vehicles and religious pews, and this juxtaposition serves as a visual marker for the religious paradigm shift that would soon dilute conventional practices at ceremonies like the Green Corn Dance: The community turns their backs on the chickee and their faces toward the unknown.



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Fig. 37. Church children



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Fig. 38. Church adults and pews



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Fig. 39. Church men

In recent interviews with tribal members, the conversation concerning the Green Corn Dance and a family's attendance hinges on the individual's commitment to Christianity, and each person's ability to negotiate ecclesiastical doctrine with tribal religious practices. Members desire to embrace the old ways, to make them

understandable and communicable. Perhaps the struggle to explain comes from so many Brighton members' inability to communicate their belief system in a language created to speak their convictions. If so, then this would give practicable reason to learn a language that will be unknown anywhere else but on the Brighton Reservation. Perhaps the struggle is the same as that wrestled by anyone who longs to substantiate a subjective feeling, while fixed inside a vocabulary that privileges objectivity over subjectivity and knowledge over experience.

The multiple gazes are metaphorically appropriate for expressing the Brighton Seminole religious experience contextualized in a rudimentary, yet clearly hegemonic Christian setting. The Seminole people pictured here are a congregation, not a tribe. They look at the camera, at each other, to each side, and to the rear. Simultaneously, they look enthralled, distracted, engrossed, and disinterested. On December 25, 1956, this group of people would lead the way from traditional Seminole worship to a religion that would lead them away from their foundational beliefs, affecting not only their spiritual convictions, but also their understanding of home.

## CHAPTER FOUR BRIGHTON SEMINOLE EDUCATION: FROM CHICKEE TO ACADEMY

### Before School

By the end of the nineteenth century, Native Americans were a conquered people, and the dilemma confronting the white populace was how to acculturate the subjugated population. As a response to the need, Captain Richard Pratt established the Carlisle Indian School in 1879, the prototype for schools to follow. Education became the predominant excuse for steadily removing Native American parents' rights to teach their own children as well as an effective way to eliminate Native Americans' ability to perpetuate their own culture. Children were forcibly removed from their families and placed in "a site where U.S. government policy directly influenced ideological production," with a view towards "exterminat[ing] the indigenous culture and replac[ing] it with the disciplines, habits, language, religion and practices of the dominant one" (Margolis 73-74). The pedagogical premise for separation was to erase tribal identity by separating Indian children from Indian adults.

Lawsuits as current as April 2003 have been filed against the Bureau of Indian Affairs for the atrocities that occurred in the boarding schools, and charges of physical and sexual abuse, left unchecked by school officials, have been prosecuted far into the late 1980s (Dakota-Lakota-Nakota Human Rights Advocacy Coalition).

Native American ethnocide is both old and new news, and the recovery of culture lost is no longer as important as perpetuation of culture now. Located in the remotest

parts of Florida, the Brighton Tribe saw little or none of the United States' kidnapping debacle. Besides, the Brighton people have always been leaders among the Florida Seminoles in terms of education. They could see early on that their physical and cultural survival depended on a working knowledge of the white world. By the early twentieth century, the Brighton Tribe moved from the sole importance of tribal teachings to an emphasis on English education. From the day school began in 1938, through the Brighton children's integration into public schools, and to the beginning of Friday Pull Out Day, Brighton Seminoles have eagerly sought ways to lay hold of modern white world ways without letting go of the traditional Seminole practices.

Now, the tribe focuses on an amalgamation of both English and Creek education through the new charter school, Pemayetv Emahakv, which opened in August 2007. Their grappling for balance in both cultural worlds demonstrates a unified and an unwavering decision to teach their children not only the academics necessary to negotiate their way through the Anglo world, but also the cultural heritage essential to perpetuate their own identity. Their own history of educational triumphs is evidence of their personal investment in this effort, and their reservation landscape is a backdrop for their scholastic enthusiasm (Fig. 40).



Source: personal archive

Fig. 40. Sign on main road of Brighton Reservation (May 2007)

In 1938, William D. and Edith Boehmer opened the first Seminole Day School on the Brighton Reservation. Alfred and Kathryn Hanna's historical account indicate that at one time, there was some resistance to the white man's version of education; however, by the time the Boehmers' opened their schoolroom doors to the Brighton Tribe, there were as many adults attending school at night as there were children attending during the day. Once students reached the third grade, they could choose to attend the Cherokee Boarding School in North Carolina, and several did (Hanna and Hanna 335).





Source: *Images of America: The Seminole and Miccosukee Tribes of Southern Florida* by Patsy West; photographers William D. and Edith Boehmer. Reprinted with permission and available from the publisher at <[www.arcadiapublishing.com](http://www.arcadiapublishing.com)> or 888-313-2665.

Fig. 41. Brighton Day School (1938)

The Boehmers were good friends to the Brighton Tribe. Everyone at Brighton speaks fondly of them. In fact, I was with Howard Micco, an elderly man who arrived at Brighton Headquarters on a motorcycle, and he bragged about attending the Boehmer's 1938 Day School in the first classroom on the Reservation. He is in the picture (Fig. 41).

"Yep, Boehmers was good to me. Taught me how to write and read and cipher—how to brush my teeth and comb my hair." Then, without cracking a smile, he said, "One day I'm gonna git a helicopter."

"NO YOU'RE NOT, HOWARD!" a disembodied voice warned and chastised.

"I'll just have to make one then."

*Howard is a gadget aficionado.*

Seminole children's parents understood the need to communicate in English as both a tool of acculturation and resistance, and so in tribal homes a concentrated effort began to speak English instead of Creek. In fact, some parents refused to allow their children to speak their native language. Consequently, many of this generation's parents are unable to speak or understand Creek , and many Seminole people fear the language will be lost. To combat this possibility and to perpetuate cultural values, the Brighton Tribe began a Friday Pull Out Program in 2002.

### Friday School

Both the Seminole educators and the children called Friday school Pull-Out Day. Native American children who were documented Seminole descendents were legally excused from any class work in the Okeechobee or Glades County public school systems on Friday to attend a 6 ½ hour school day on the Brighton Reservation. There, students studied the Creek language, ate traditional Seminole food, and spent several hours with the grandmas and storytellers from their tribe.

Brighton Reservation Friday School enrolled approximately 80 children, but only 55-58 students attended regularly. The idea for the school began when a Seminole fifth grader, who was pulled out for gifted classes, asked her mother if she could be pulled out of class to learn her native language. The mother and child presented the idea to the Seminole elders and then to Phoebe Raulerson, Superintendent of Okeechobee Schools, and Brighton Reservation Friday Pull-Out School was established. The immediate goals were to publicly acknowledge the value of Seminole heritage and make Seminole students more aware of their own culture, but the long-term goals were equally ambitious. The high school dropout rate for Seminole students at Okeechobee

High School was excessive. The Okeechobee School Board hoped that the Friday School effort would arrest the Seminole attrition by generating ethnic pride among the younger children, teaching the children to revere their traditions, while encouraging the tribe to foster a sense of ethnic pride in their youth (Phoebe Raulerson 02/19/2007).

A typical school day began at 8:00 AM when the students arrived via parents' cars or a bus, which serviced only the reservation. The children gathered in the recreation room where a 52" screen TV played *Fairly Odd Parents* from the *Cartoon Network*. Attendance was taken and children were dismissed to follow their homeroom teachers. The students rotated to five classrooms to learn Language, History and Story Telling, Arts and Crafts, Physical Education, and Vocational Skills.

I attended the school three times, and two consecutive weeks' lessons were identical. Students discussed "The Garden." An unexpected interruption occurred on the reservation the first week I attended. Three members of the tribe passed away within two weeks. Seminole culture does not discuss death in any situation, academic, casual, or formal; however, they do have strict guidelines for ceremonial practices, and their burial rites last at least two weeks; as a result, Cultural Day was postponed. However, there was little communication between the school administration and the children's families, so some children came to school dressed in their Seminole attire, and some children came dressed in QuikSilver, Nike, and Tommy Hilfiger. The contrast was conspicuous; however, the most striking example of cultural dissonance occurred in Language class.

### Language Class

Creek language and identity are tethered so that most of the tribe agrees losing a speaking knowledge of Creek is the equivalent of losing tribal distinctiveness. Lorene Gopher, Cultural Education and Program Director for the new charter school, stated what is and has been the primary focus of the Seminole educational mission in a recent *Seminole Tribune* article: “Maintaining our language has been my priority . . . . Without the knowledge of our language we have no identity. My dream and vision are that the young children learn to speak their language. We strive for that each day” (Extabarria [seminoletribe.com/tribune/08/apr25/4.shtml](http://seminoletribe.com/tribune/08/apr25/4.shtml)).

In every grade, language class began the same way: First, the Pledge to the flag of the Seminole Tribe of Florida, which the children presented in Creek (Fig. 42). The Seminole flag first appeared in 1927, when the Miami Chamber of Commerce held a media spectacle called “Forward to the Soil.” Tony Tommie, an educated Seminole leader, cooperated with the Chamber and the media as part of Miami’s land reclamation project. The event was a publicity stunt to promote the sale of land that had been submerged in water. However, the production was initiated without consulting the Seminole Council, so Ingraham Billie and Josie Billie (Fig. 33), both high-ranking Council members, refuted Tommie as “a full fledged fakir.” According to Patsy West, no documents indicate the Seminole flag existed before this event. With its yellow, red, black and white horizontal stripes, representing the four directions, which are also known as medicine colors, the Seminole flag is a product of one Seminole man’s deviance from tradition coupled with American capitalistic enterprise (West *Enduring Seminoles* 70-75).



Source: personal archive

Fig. 42. Seminole Pledge in Creek language (January 2007)

The second school activity included reciting the alphabet: A (ah), C (chee), E (ih); and third, the numbers: 1-10: (Hum-kin), 2 (Ho-ko-lin), 3 (Too-chin). The teacher/grandma wrote five words on the board: Garden- cvpofv (chupova), Corn- vce (ah-che), Beans- tvlako (dalago), and Sweet potato- aha cvmpv (aha chumpa), and raised enlarged versions of glossy black and white photographs while the children recited the Creek words for the vegetables. The grandma then handed out four black and white print outs with a vegetable on each, told the children to color the pictures, and to write the Creek word for the vegetable at the bottom of the page. Since the children had done the same exercise the week before, they did not pay attention. Some scribbled hurriedly, while others talked and colored. The teacher and her assistant both chided the children in English and Creek: “Don’t you want to know your language? Don’t you want to know your language?”

None of the five grandmas who instructed the children had any formal training in education, other than their own personal experience with their mother tongue. The language has been written only since the late 1970s, and the first dictionary of the Creek and Miccosukee language was sitting at the press, waiting for publication. The women all spoke fluent Creek, and they were all old enough to remember the reservation before the tribe's affluence, but they did not understand the linguistic nuances of their own language, and they struggled to communicate a very old language to a very modern group of Seminole children.

The most striking observation in Language class came from the nine fifth grade students who had attended Friday school since it began. These students' knowledge of the alphabet, numbers, and vocabulary was no better than the kindergarten and first grade students observed earlier that day. The children mumbled the pledge, were prompted on nine of the eighteen letters in the Seminole alphabet, and counted only to five. Additionally, the six boys were deviously violent: hitting and spitting, while the grandmas were engaged in conversation with each other. The girls colored, but spoke of boys—some whom they liked, and some whom they hated—seated at the table beside them and in their public school classrooms.

The children's lack of interest could be relegated to the repetitive, age-inappropriate exercise, but their collective response raises more interesting questions about the role of pictures in education. What can be learned by going in search of a picture's contexts? What can be learned by what the children refuse to see in the picture? What can be learned by watching children reject what they see? What can be learned by an outsider's view of the Seminole pictures? What happens to interpretation

when we view pictures associated with the institution of religion and family through the institutional lens of education? What changes? What stays the same?



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Fig. 43. The Green Corn Dance (1938)

### Dancing School

In Chapter Three, I discussed the Green Corn Dance picture (Fig. 26; reproduced here as Fig. 43) in terms of the three little girls' gazes, which act as a deterrent to Ebbets and to those voyeurs who would peer into the sacred and secret ceremony of the Green Corn Dance. There are other ways to consider this picture. The horizontal lines of the fabric raise questions concerning not only possible meaning

inherent in the design, but also inquiries relating to method. Only Charlie Cyprus wears dress-type clothing. Why? Is this typical clothing for a bundle carrier? What are we to make of the isolated geography, and how should we consider the juxtaposition of a dilapidated chickee and a pickup truck? What is the significance of the fire? The circle? Or, is it a line? Perhaps even more important, how do we know this is a dance? Would we recognize this picture as dance if the heading did not say so? How does the picture of Charlie Cyprus and the Green Corn Dance matter for a Seminole child's education? When do these questions end, and where do these questions lead?

While the questions above burn with the post-modern tendency to find no conclusion, which might get in the way of inspecting phenomena, there is a basis for judging some answers as better than other answers. Some better possibilities exist, even if meaning derives from what we know the picture is not. It is not a picture of a disco. It is not *Dancing with the Stars* or *So You Think You Can Dance*. It is not a game of "Follow the Leader" or "Ring Around the Rosy." From the confines of the frame, the picture includes a group of costumed people of various ages, moving counter-clockwise in a semi-circular pattern around a fire in the middle of nowhere.

The Green Corn Dance picture is not quite as believable-looking as Frances Densmore's photo from *Seminole Music* (Fig. 44), which draws its authenticity from its yellowed condition, its smoky background, its desolate geography, and its apparently unobservant subjects. It is certainly not a picture commensurate with organized Christianity and the Christmas Day photograph on the Brighton Reservation, which aligns itself with a Foucauldian arrangement of institutional power, complete with pews and a disinterested congregation. In fact, the Green Corn Dance picture has attributes



of the postcard, somewhat staged in an iconic version of itself, one that, perhaps, the reader recognizes and identifies. Maybe even a look that makes an outsider's reading more meaningful.

The Green Corn Dance photograph is not this (Fig. 44):



Source: *Seminole Music*—GPO and Bureau of American Ethnology, Frances Densmore Collection

Fig. 44. Densmore's Green Corn Dance

And it is certainly not this (Fig. 45):



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Fig. 45. Brighton Reservation Baptist Church

We cannot discern the authenticity of the moment in Ebbets' photo. In fact, the discussion in chapter three challenges the specious claim of authenticity. However, we can know that this picture depicts a ceremony, a practice, a mystical moment if not for the subjects then, perhaps, for the viewers. For the Seminole child, the picture is interpreted through the grandmas' stories and teachings. It is an ancestral ritual, a part of cultural heritage, and/or a connection to the Great Spirit. The Seminole child may even recognize a family member amidst the group, and the relationship to the picture becomes more intimate: my uncle, my grandmother, my mother as a little girl. The picture moves from a religious category to an educational tool to a familial moment.

But what can I see or learn or know as a person outside the frame, outside the tribe? Berger insists, “If we are looking at an image from the past and we want to relate it to ourselves, we need to know something of the history of that past.” Chapter three details this historical information, including some of the ritualistic practices of the Green Corn Dance.

Berger goes on to say that within the frame of some pictures, a reading that “cannot be limited to the historical” exists, and that this reading “concerns a resistance to history: an opposition” (*Another Way* 102-03). For Berger, this opposition comes from the imagination’s ability to transcend the historical by way of not only memory, but also by means of “the living of certain moments which defy the passing of time” (*Another Way* 106).

For me, the Green Corn Dance picture is a glimpse of corporate worship. It is an intimate moment shared among many, when a group of people acknowledges a need so great that only a higher power’s intervention can rescue. It is sitting around the dinner table with the people I love, holding hands in gratitude, not only for the food or for the strength to earn a living, but also for someone else’s hand to hold. It is the recognition that I am small and there is something or someone greater than I am, and it is being comfortable enough with that knowledge to publicly separate a moment and honor that which otherwise might make me uncomfortable, particularly in an educational setting.

The Green Corn Dance picture evokes more than a memory moment; it initiates an experience that is “[impervious] to time” (Berger and Mohr, *Another Way* 106). The Green Corn Dance picture elicits not religious platitudes or strictly Christian ideology.

The photo reminds of my place in the cosmos, my role in the universe. If the Ebbets's photograph looks forced or fake, then it looks much like the habit of many whose worship obligations arouse them from bed to attend church, tabernacle, or mosque when they would rather sleep.

### Revelation and Imagination

My experience of reading their pictures and telling my life with the Green Corn Dance picture means nothing to the Seminole people and adds little to their body of knowledge if I cannot admit that there exists something called the imagination, and that imagination is part of a universal experience. When exercised, imagination allows us to wind up in a world of mysticism where we participate in contexts outside ourselves. Modernists and scientists dismiss the idea as superstition and silliness, but the Seminole people do not. They are historic people who believe that their culture matters and an important part of their culture includes a spiritual premise. To suppose that Seminoleness matters is to acknowledge transcendence and to admit that human beings have "summit moments and they are intrinsic to the relation imagination/time" (Berger and Mohr, *Another Way* 106). The spiritual element of Seminoleness is of greater importance to the Seminole than it is to me, and that is my loss. What I can know, though, hinges on my ability to imagine myself inside their lives, to look for comparisons and contrasts with a view towards finding the result of the unseen and unrealized portions of myself.

Without imagination, we can educate from only an objective point of view, relaying only historical information about the three women in Figure 46:

On the Brighton Reservation, Creek Seminoles Mary Huff and Mahala and Leona Smith (Bird clan) cut up hearts of palm to make 'Swamp cabbage,' which will be boiled with pork rind, while Leona Smith looks on. Palm hearts, a gourmet delicacy in city markets, were commercially cut at the Brighton Reservation and sold to canneries. (West *Images* 47)



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Fig. 46. Seminole women prepare palm hearts

However, the “social function of subjectivity” makes room for “social conscience” (Berger and Mohr, *Another Way* 100). When I read my life into Figure 46, I participate in the fellowship of these women and their work. I understand the measure of satisfaction that comes from working hard with other women who are working hard because I know what it means to labor alongside the women in my own family and with my closest friends, and I know what it means to teach the younger women a skill. I have tasted swamp cabbage that has cooked slowly with pork belly. I know how to cut the hearts

myself, I know how to cook the hearts, and I have shown my eldest daughter how to fix this Everglades' delicacy because my mama and my aunts showed me how to do it many years ago in a cabin on Lake Okeechobee's rim canal. I am and have been these women. The picture is not just educational; it looks like learning. And not just learning, but learning that is specifically feminine and occurs only in the presence of love, nurture, and purpose.

This picture is certainly about the three Seminole women and the Seminole Indians' cannery enterprise, but it is not about this solely. What I give through my associations to the Seminole pictures is precisely what I gain by others who look at me: I can see me, but I cannot recognize me. I cannot understand myself because I am my own set of assumptions. I can see me, but I can learn more about me from others. I cannot study me, but I can often times see me by looking at someone else. By looking at the Seminole women who are not like me, I can see what I had forgotten about myself: I am a complex combination of defined memory moments, some of which originated in Aunt Milly and Aunt Dot's kitchens and continued in Mama's and my own home.

Berger says, "Experiences which prompt the term *for ever* have now to be assumed alone and privately. Their role has been changed: instead of transcending they isolate" (*Another Way* 108). Berger also says, "Revelation does not easily lend itself to verbalization" (*Another Way* 118), and Barthes speaks of the French historian, Jules Michelet as one who "conceived of History as love's Protest: to perpetuate not only life but also what he called, in his vocabulary so outdated today, the Good, Justice, Unity, etc." (*Camera Lucida* 94). Admittedly, this approach to reading pictures requires a

measure of vulnerability, especially inside scholarly studies and educational institutions that promote relativity and are noncommittal to universal ideas like truth, love, God, reality and an objective external world. But the root word of revelation is *reveal*, and I can see no other way to make meaning out of pictures that would otherwise be artifact. I can see no other way actually to do what Berger and Barthes discuss than to read my life and my convictions into these pictures, and meaningful application is the focus of my work.

### Friday School and the Creek Culture/Language Dilemma

Without a revival of interest in the Seminole culture, the Creek language is moribund. Alan Huff, former Land Use Director for the Seminole Tribe of Florida, estimates “there are less than 500 Seminole Indians in Florida who can speak their own language.” Huff admits, “The outlook is pretty scary. Most people quit using the language about ten years ago, and there’s a whole generation of us who don’t know the language well and another one that doesn’t know the language at all. Our children know about our culture, but they don’t know our culture for themselves” (11 March 2005). To address this issue, Creek teachers demonstrated traditional practices during school days, specifically whittling for the boys (Fig. 47) and making fry bread for the girls (Fig. 48).



Source: personal archive

Fig. 47. Wood cutting (whittling), Cultural Day 2007



Source: personal archive

Fig. 48. Making frybread, Cultural Day (2007)

Vine Deloria, Jr. and Daniel Wildcat call for experiential education, and this call is restated in many of Henry A. Giroux' essays from *Border Crossings: Cultural Workers and the Politics of Education*. Giroux discusses the value of language to determine pedagogical ideologies that include, reject, or even erase the value systems of those



who have no voice or no say in the construction of language for principles of methods and instruction. Specifically, Giroux purports that “schooling is about somebody’s story, somebody’s history, somebody’s set of memories, a particular set of experiences [so] it is clear that just one logic will not suffice” (14). He calls for teachers to become “transformative intellectuals” who do not choose to separate facts from values, “understand the nature of their own self-formation, have some vision of the future, see the importance of education as a public discourse, and have a sense of mission in providing students what they need to become critical citizens” (15). Essentially, Giroux calls for a new language pedagogy that privileges all voices and develops in students a sense of “civic courage” (18). Giroux’s pedagogical emphasis corresponds neatly with the idea that our lives are a compilation of our own stories and the stories of others.

The plight of the Creek language can be attributed to a number of causes, including the pressure to assimilate into the dominant culture. However, even Seminole leaders do not ignore the debilitating effect that money has had on the tribe. The overwhelming success of Seminole Casinos and Hard Rock Cafes initiated a deluge of money into the lives of a community that lived in chickees and cooked over outdoor fires less than thirty years ago. Money brings new technologies, and the technologies bring new worldviews, including consumerism and individualism—Anglo ideas. But the Friday School Pull Out teachers tried hard to model Seminole culture every week, and they did give the children an opportunity to participate in the practice of Seminoleness.

Unfortunately, the group of children that the grandmas faced in Friday School did not and could not feel the same desperation to rescue their dying language or to engage in the tribe’s cultural practices. Perhaps one significant hindrance hinged on

the Seminole tradition, which advocates learning through immersion. For a Seminole, learning is a lived experience, vital, active, and practiced. Alan Huff remembers, “Parents used to teach our ways to their children. Kids used to learn at home, but now our parents don’t know our ways or they’ve found other things they’d rather do. That’s why we have Friday school. Hopefully, the grandmas can teach the young ones the right way” (Personal communication, 11 March 2007).

Seminole tradition does not encourage the children to ask questions, for the answers to questions “must be demonstrated, not summarized in words” (Personal communication, 11 March 2007). This lived notion of heritage was displaced in the interactive, artificial language classroom provided in Friday school, and the Seminole children knew it. In fact, a fifth grade girl grinned at me and whispered, “Welcome to the grandma show.”

Friday school was an offspring of Anglo culture, and its haunting resemblance to the 19<sup>th</sup> century boarding schools was disturbing. While the Seminole instructors most certainly did not abuse the children, they deliberately separated the children from their current culture with a vision to erase the students’ culturally blended view of the world with a Seminole view of the world, but the grandmas’ messages were mixed, both with message and motive.

The classrooms were set up in western format, with tables and desks for the children, blackboards and a lectern at the front of the room, and a list of rules in the entry way (Fig. 49). The form of educating collided with the content of education, and the result was greater than the students’ lack of retention or even their bad behavior: The result was apathy and a disengaged view of Seminole culture. Moreover, some

Seminole students' actions mirrored the responses of many 19<sup>th</sup> century boarding school students' reactions to forced acculturation. Like the students from the Chilocco Boarding School of Oklahoma established in 1884, the Friday Pull Out Day instructors "mobilized and strengthened Indian resistance, expressed as loyalty to fellow students as well as by covert and overt rule-breaking" (Lomawaima xiii). These children were not willing to abandon their white world benefits for a synthetic representation of themselves and consciously or unconsciously, the students knew that the grandmas and the children's own parents were not willing to do so, either.



Source: personal archive

Fig. 49. Friday School rules in Creek language (January 2007)

### Pemayetv Emahakv Charter

The Seminoles' dilemma concerning cultural values and education was not veiled. Both the elders and the children understood the pecuniary value of straddling both the Seminole and the white world. What they had to address was the danger the ambiguous position posed to their ethnic future. For by acculturating western educational ideology into a culture that is supposed to be a living thing, the Seminole elders and grandmothers encouraged the children to reject and rebel against their most meaningful traditions. Paradoxically, by isolating their children from the white culture where they learned and played four days a week, the Seminole leaders turned their culture into artifice. The Seminole leadership had to reach a place of agreement concerning their own desire to perpetuate culture and their need to educate their children in both worlds. How could they maintain their priorities and pursue their aspirations?

The Pemayetv Emahakv Charter School (pema-YA-ta ema-HAG-ah) was the brainchild of the Seminole Tribe's Education Director Louise Gopher, the first Brighton Seminole woman to graduate from college. She has been a leader in the cause for education and remains a credible and respected liaison between the Seminole reservations and the Anglo world. The Brighton Reservation Charter School opened in August of 2007 with 146 students, and the attendance has increased with the beginning of a new school year.

Brighton Council Representative Roger Smith announced the significance of Pemayetv Emahakv as "the first Tribal charter school in the [Eastern] United States," an honor that earned the tribe recognition among other indigenous groups in the United

States. Florida School Board Representative Phoebe Raulerson declared, “In this United States, all the tribes are going to be looking at this school because all of them will lose their language if their children do not learn it. . . .And if they lose their language there is no more tribe. It is extremely important . . . for this community and extremely important for our nation” (Etxebarria [seminoletribe.com/tribune/07/nov2/1.shtml](http://seminoletribe.com/tribune/07/nov2/1.shtml)).

### Language and Identity

With great respect and admiration for the Pemayetv Emahakv creators and educators and with the utmost regard for Phoebe Raulerson, who is one of the finest women I know, I humbly broach the subject of language and identity. Language is associated with ethnicity. It cannot determine identity. For instance, I can still be a member of the black—African—people without speaking one word of Swahili or any other dialect from which my ancestors descend. Moreover, Hitler could identify Jews for extermination even though almost none of them spoke a single word of Hebrew. The Jew’s language existed only in written texts and had a place only in religious practice among the Orthodox. Even there, it was a textual item, like Latin among Catholics before the Second Vatican Council.

Language is helpful when trying to distinguish Seminoles from Cherokees or even from their close relatives the Miccosukee; in this case, a different tongue might help. Language may help people find ethnic divisions, but language is insufficient as a mark of a separate ethnic identity. In other words, it is not only possible, but also probable for the Brighton Seminoles to maintain Seminole tribal identity without perpetuating their language. However, questions and issues of language, ethnicity, and

identity are not as important to this work as the perpetuation of those markers and the method required to do so.

Actually, Seminole languages point out the problem of trying to identify ethnicity with language. The Creek language is only one of two Seminole languages. The other language is a Hitchiti tongue, which is not even decipherable to a trained speaker of the Creek language. If language determines ethnicity, then one-half of the Seminole Tribe never was Seminole. Moreover, perhaps adopting the Creek language exclusively is a denial of one's Seminole roots. Maybe the modern Seminole Nation could be accused of consciously abandoning the language that makes Seminoles Seminoles.

Obviously, this is not so. Therefore, the divided languages, historically viewed, should give pause to Seminoles about trying to make a particular language the primary marker, or the sign of being Seminole.

Language and culture are not self-perpetuating. Frequently, outsiders transmit educational and cultural values. Recent history brings to light this idea. In 1948, Israel became a nation and made Hebrew the national language, even though most Israelis had little knowledge of their foundational language and most spoke English. To accommodate the populace, English-speaking instructors began to teach Hebrew. At first, there were few Hebrew speakers, eventually there was a large population of bilingual speakers, and now a visitor to Israel will testify that Hebrew is the national language. The transition from English to Hebrew was not natural, mystical, or sudden: Outsiders mediated the Hebrew language, bringing it to the Israeli people and helping them to see themselves.

The same is true of the Seminole Tribe and the instruction that occurs at Pemayetv Emahakv. Creek-speaking instructors bring language lessons to the children via English. The lesson plans and the children's studies are mediated through laptops and iPods, the functions of which are taught by the white teachers who hold B.A. degrees in Education and who also teach the children educational and leadership fundamentals. This observation does not minimize the language's value or negate the wonderful Creek culture, but it does highlight the role of outsiders to assist those who suffer from cultural amnesia.

If I tell to a group something of whom they are, and the information sparks self-recognition or historical identity, or even a memory, then I am bringing back something they would have lost. I am part, even the instigator, of a cultural renaissance. I am outsider, not enemy. To say that *others* cannot look at *others* is to assume common color, common language, and common experience among an entire people group! Such thinking throws out the idea of imagination and revelation, allowing for thoughts solely about myself, for I am left with only the possibility that I can deny you, but I cannot deny me. I can offer nothing then to anyone, and I can spend my thinking time only in self-preoccupied consumption.

Of course, revelation and imagination regarding pictures can be a bit embarrassing. Our clothing, our hairstyles, and our age do not always fit into the current cultural milieu. Allowing others to look at others or ourselves requires a humanistic leap, acknowledging that friendliness is possible, and admitting that friendliness can transcend the cultural divide. If I am to understand myself, then I must concede the possibility that others can look at my pictures and show me what I cannot see, and by

extension, I can understand and appreciate another culture, Seminole culture, by taking pieces of my own life to understand Seminoleness. Zora Neale Hurston demonstrates this comparison/contrast identification practice in her Florida novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, which chronicles the life of a young woman whose mother was African American and whose father was a white man.

In the second chapter of the novel, six-year-old Janie Crawford sees a picture of herself, and she makes a startling discovery: “So when we looked at de picture and everybody got pointed out there wasn’t nobody left except a real dark little girl with long hair standing by Eleanor. Dat’s where Ah wuz s’posed to be, but Ah couldn’t recognize dat dark chile as me. So Ah ast, ‘where is me? Ah don’t see me.’” . . .

“Dat’s you, Alphabet, don’t you know yo’ ownself?” . . .

“Ah looked at de picture a long time and seen it was mah dress and mah hair so Ah said: Aw, aw! Ah’m colored!” (9).

Hurston was an anthropologist herself, who worked closely with Franz Boas. Hurston’s Janie is not stupid or naive, even at six, and Hurston does not think her readers are slow to understand—of course, the child can see her own arms and legs, and she knows she is of color!

Hurston’s point is that Janie does not know herself, understand herself, until she is looking at others. Interestingly, Janie Crawford sits with her close friend, Phoeby, relaying the story of her life and “full of that oldest human longing—self revelation” (7). Janie tells her own life against the backdrop of the people she has loved and the people who have both loved and hated her because the revelation of her own distinctiveness is best seen by looking at others.



My looking at the Seminole pictures, at the Seminole Tribe, is not only advantageous for the Brighton Seminole Tribe; my looking is also an opportunity for me to understand myself better.



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Fig. 50. Reading in a Brighton chickee (c. 1940)

I love this picture (Fig. 50), and I love it not because the child is beautiful, or because the ceiling is composed of the clothing of daily life, or even because the child's seat is a boxspring for a mattress. I notice the boy's feet and the white band around the neck of his shirt, his raised, naked knee—poverty's effect—his pants too short, too tight, and his arms resting on the top of his legs. I see the lantern on the table, and I notice the shades of light and dark and the dirt, which is the floor of a chickee. I see the

newspaper in his hands, and I know he is reading English or another language besides his own because Creek was not written until the very late 1970s.

By the late 1940s, Seminole children were accepted into public school systems, but the children's living conditions stayed the same for many years afterward. Most children continued to live in open chickees with "no source of lighting or plumbing; just a pump, primitive shower, and latrine by a tree" (West, *Images* 103).

What really strikes me, though, moves me with emotion, is what this picture says collectively: This picture looks like Education. As a teacher, this picture is the culmination, the pinnacle, the emblem of my work.

*During the summer when I was eight-years-old and going into third grade, I distinctly remember an afternoon when Mama called for me. I was playing in the three and one half acres of forest where I roamed barefooted with my brother and our neighbor friend, Diana. The urgency in Mama's voice frightened me, so I ran the woods and the additional three acres of prairie to get to her. When I arrived, she bent toward me, her short brown hair gleaming, green eyes brimming with tears, a note in her trembling hand.*

*"April, I just got your room assignment for school in the fall. Your teacher is Mrs. Gregory. April, do you know how lucky you are? Mrs. Gregory is the only teacher in our town with a master's degree."*

*I had no idea what a Master's degree was back then, nor did I understand the significance of a woman who had achieved such an academic feat in 1966. What I did know, though, standing there with Mama, both of us breathless, is that there on the sidewalk of 6865 Shiloh Road in Goshen, Ohio, my mother looked like Education.*

*I had this same experience just recently when Emma Rose came rushing through the door after school one day. She grabbed a five ounce Dixie cup from the pantry cabinet and her dad's bowl of coins from his dresser drawer, and called me to the kitchen table. Her voice was eerily similar to my mother's nearly forty years ago.*

*"Mama, watch this." She proceeded to put coins in an already filled-to-the-brim-cup of water. "Seventy-nine, eighty, eighty-one," and the water spilled, but not until the brim exceeded nearly one-eighth inch over the top of the cup.*

*Emma Rose began to write, "At exactly eighty-one coins, molecules no longer adhere."*

*"Emma Rose, that's cool, but why does it matter?"*

*"Why does it matter? My god, Mama, why does it matter? It matters because it means that magic is possible!"*

*At that moment, Emma Rose, like my mother forty years ago, looked like Education.*

When I look at photographs of the little boy in Figure 48, I participate in a "disconnected instant" that is simultaneously "meaning and mystery" (*Another Way* 89). I understand Barthes' "new punctum," which is no longer of form but of intensity . . . Time, the lacerating emphasis of the *noeme*." For me, the experience is not only "*This will be and this has been*" but also, I have been this. I have seen this. This is I (*Camera Lucida* 96).

When I look at photographs with my own life and my own experiences, I assume transcendence as an interpreter, and I become both subject and object. The standard is no longer simply I alone; consequently, I no longer know only myself.

This is not so in works like Edward Said's *After the Last Sky*, which professes to "to deny the habitually simple, even harmful representations of Palestinians, and to replace them with something more capable of capturing the complex reality of their experience." Said reneges his claim almost immediately, even on the same page, admitting that his deepest "intention [is] to show Palestinians through Palestinian eyes without minimizing the extent to which even to themselves they feel different or 'other'" (6). For Said to make the claim of "other," he must first define himself and/or the Palestinians against some universal of the ideal. Since he makes the claim, but does not make a commitment to any standard, he is left only with a sad commentary on the state of an incredibly rich cultural heritage. In essence, his commentary cannibalizes the Palestinian story.

Thursday will be Nakba or the day that marks the Palestinian catastrophe. What might happen if Said were to let an "other" look at Palestinian people? What might he learn? What might we learn?

### Seminole Culture, Everyday Use, and Desire to Survive

Once again, Alice Walker's comment concerning African American culture in "Everyday Use" is relevant to Native American culture as the Brighton Seminole Indians struggle to instill their language, religion, and practices into elementary age Seminole children whose lives are spent negotiating an MTV charged home and the charter school.

The future of Seminole culture relies on revisiting their legends, their myths, and their beliefs about themselves. The stories remind them "not only how to survive in a difficult world, but also how to live honorably and harmoniously in their world" (Jumper

11). Culture is not something to be done once a week. Twenty-first century Seminole culture is not simply a recipe for fry bread or sofkee or even solely a language. Seminole culture now includes making and eating those food items, while *Nick at Night* resounds on a wide screen TV. Seminole culture is not a beaded necklace or a leather hide, but it is the making, wearing, and preparing of this artwork while Beyonce moans from an MP3 player. Seminole culture is not a vocabulary test and a coloring page, but it is a living experience, which allows speakers to communicate among themselves and to themselves with others.

Somewhere along the way, Brighton Seminoles Indians understood that cultural perpetuation could not come from a legislated curriculum that exalted Seminole heritage against an Anglo culture that is as much part of their children's make up as their Native American blood. Respect for Seminole culture comes from the lessons that are lived by Seminole adults in front of Seminole children as well as from the education provided by paid instructors who use Anglo pedagogy to teach. Learning and knowing comes from a culture committed to its own values, as a tribe and a people and a language, but Seminole culture is best understood as it is related to and examined by others.

Living a culture requires innocence, and it is too late for the Seminole Tribe of Florida to return to Maggie's way of life although they know there is much in their past to be valued. They cannot unknow the outside world with its luxuries and entertainment, and they would not choose to do so. However, they resist embracing Dee's exchange of knowledge for artifice, and they cannot effectually resist without finding the place where Mama is: A place to negotiate the past and the present, a place to preserve and promote agency and pride for a waning tribal culture while forging ahead toward new

opportunities. This conciliation requires a holistic view, the fusion of history/visionary and insider/outsider, a totality. High culture needs interaction with other cultures to achieve self-awareness. Like Mama, the ideal is to know ourselves and to know the other.

## CHAPTER FIVE BRIGHTON SEMINOLE ENTERTAINMENT: FROM POVERTY TO PROSPERITY

The Seminole people, once poor and losing their prospects for independent survival, used the burgeoning entertainment industry to revive the Nation. They no longer live their lives as Seminoles in simulated villages like Musa Isle or sell their arts and crafts along the Tamiami Trail to survive; instead, they are inundated by people who want not only to see Seminoleness as a native people or as a cultural attraction, but by people who also want to be Seminole themselves. The tide may have turned as the tribe exploits the outsiders, making entertainment an immensely profitable labor for the Seminole people. In fact, entertainment and work is nearly the same thing for the Seminole people.

### The New Deal

In 1933, John Collier was appointed Commissioner of Indian Affairs by Franklin D. Roosevelt. Collier's work confronted and contested a widely held conviction concerning Indian assimilation into white culture. Instead of insisting the Native person become like the white person, Collier's policies advocated Indian self-government and perpetuation of Indian traditions. Collier also supported returning stolen Indian lands and providing monies for land development. While Collier's New Deal programs were problematic for some of America's indigenous people, the Brighton Seminoles took

great advantage of the essential aids provided by the government program, and much of the tribe's wealth can be traced to this moment in history. Harry A. Kersey argues that the New Deal policies significantly influenced a restructuring effort among the Seminole Indians, which ultimately “regenerate[d] tribal unity” (97). In fact, the Brighton Reservation is a result of the New Deal and a media-frenzied meeting in West Palm, which incurred the wrath of the Seminole Council and spokespersons.



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Fig. 51. Sam Tommie (c. 1935)

According to Patsy West's account, Sam Tommie (Fig. 51) represented the Creeks in a meeting with John Collier and Secretary of the Interior, Harold Ickes. This assembly marked the first official meeting held after the last Seminole War. Since Sam



Tommie represented the “first Florida Seminoles to establish relations with the government and ask for concessions,” the meeting caused uproar among the Councilmen and other tribal members, inciting threats of death upon anyone who signed a New Deal document. The media had heralded the meeting as the Seminole Tribe’s official desire for peace, and the Council responded immediately with an article in the *American Eagle* titled “Big Cypress Indians Aroused”:

We, the chiefs, leaders, medicine men, being the duly constituted authority to speak for and on behalf of the true Seminole Indians who live . . . in the southern portion of the State of Florida, desiring to voice the protest of our people and, after consultation with the members of our tribes, desire to call attention of the Indian Commissioner to the fact that the Seminoles are not at peace and have never signed any peace treaty with the United States of America. (West, *Enduring Seminoles* 78-79)

In spite of the hostile disapproval from the tribe, the government approved the Brighton Reservation lands as well as a few concessions, but the Brighton Reservation’s landscape has drastically changed. In 1936, a herd of half-starved cattle arrived at the Brighton Reservation “as part of Collier’s New Deal to the Seminoles.” Surviving cattle became the nucleus for the very successful Seminole enterprise that is now an international force (West, *Images* 85). By 1940, the tribe had established a well-organized method for inventorying their cattle, and their careful methodology has made them exemplars in the cattle industry (Fig. 52).



Source: *Images of America: The Seminole and Miccosukee Tribes of Southern Florida* by Patsy West. Reprinted with permission and available from the publisher at <[www.arcadiapublishing.com](http://www.arcadiapublishing.com)> or 888-313-2665.

Fig. 52. Brighton's first herd (c. 1940s)

The Seminole Tribe that began its cattle endeavor with starved animals is the same tribe that hosted *The Washington Post* and a TV magazine on March 30, 2005. Alan Huff, past Land Use Director for the Brighton Seminole Tribe of Florida, led a federally sponsored experiment to label cattle with a computer chip so that the beef origins are readily available and unmistakable. This effort to erase Mad Cow Disease has numerous advantages, but the governmental priority is to restore the beef trade with Japan (Alan Huff, personal interview 11 Mar. 2007). Consequently, the reservation has changed its physical landscape, and the geography has changed the population. Now, Anglo cattlemen come to Brighton Reservation to learn the technological advances that will potentially save their economic lives.



Source: *Images of America: The Seminole and Miccosukee Tribes of Southern Florida* by Patsy West; photographer Joseph Janney Steinmentz. Reprinted with permission and available from the publisher at <[www.arcadiapublishing.com](http://www.arcadiapublishing.com)> or 888-313-2665.

Fig. 53. Seminole cowboys (1940s)

### A New Dream

It must have seemed amazing back then. The whole idea of ownership of anything must have felt like ice in their brains— cold, sharp, deliciously dangerous. Their bodies aching from working cows and their heads aching from possibilities, they stood on the brink of the capitalist dream, straddling their very real and metaphorical fence.

Look at their bodies (Fig. 53), especially the fourth man. He crouches like an athlete ready for a race, poised for the explosion that will send him toward his future. Vision animates every man's face, except for the third man, whose look says, "I know

exactly what I'm gonna do with my share." Everyone has a different dream, but there is material inside the fence that will allow him to do something with his dream.

Even the children share the excitement. Their bodies cannot quite articulate the expectations, yet they know they are surely on the brink of something new (Fig. 54).



Source: *Images of America: The Seminole and Miccosukee Tribes of Southern Florida* by Patsy West; photographer Joseph Janney Steinmentz. Reprinted with permission and available from the publisher at <[www.arcadiapublishing.com](http://www.arcadiapublishing.com)> or 888-313-2665.

Fig. 54. Seminole cowboys (cropped and enlarged)

These pictures of the Brighton beginnings are more than historical reference, and they are more than a documentary element about the Seminole cattle industry. They are the opening to a story that reveals the feeling, the intensity, the glimmer of vision that a small group of very, very poor indigenous people once understood as their day-to-day life. Collectively, these pictures speak of possibilities, and more important, they speak of hope. They are the material that make dreams practicable, like in 1998, when my little family was wonderfully poor enough to qualify for a Farmer's Home Loan, and we purchased our first house. Or, when I was hired at Indian River Community College, and

we suddenly had enough money to send our big kids to college. Or now, early Saturday mornings when my husband and I sit on our back porch and talk about pools and playgrounds and sand boxes for our grandchildren.

These pictures present a story about a future not only for ourselves, but about ourselves with others, ourselves in relationship with and to others. If these pictures speak to the material, then they speak in a way that simultaneously answers to sharing with and working for those we love.



Source: *Images of America: The Seminole and Miccosukee Tribes of Southern Florida* by Patsy West; photographer William D. Boehmer. Reprinted with permission and available from the publisher at <[www.arcadiapublishing.com](http://www.arcadiapublishing.com)> or 888-313-2665.

Fig. 55. Brighton cattlemen with branding irons (c. 1950)

Easily enough, the branding irons scream “MINE!” But look at how uneasily these men wear their ownership (Fig. 55). Their sense of proprietorship will come much more

readily only a few years later, but the “superimposition here: of reality and of the past” (Barthes, *Camera Lucida* 76) and of lack and of abundance “instigate the stroke dividing” visions/dreams, fear/hope, servitude/power.” Berger says, “Such a division is a universal adult experience” (*Another Way* 128).

What instigates a dream? Every person needs some “thing” to turn a dream into a possibility—even the opportunity to fail is something to start with. A dream and no substance is despair. Even a lottery ticket is something to work with, at least until the drawing. My little piece of paper in hand, I can say, “Hey, don’t count me out yet!”

Dreaming is a universal function of hope. Dreaming is better than knowing. Beginnings are better than middles and ends. I suppose that is why I never went to a fortuneteller. I want to live my dreams, not to know them ahead of time.

My sister, Joan, and I both had two children about the same time, a girl and a boy each. My two kids are smart, albeit pains in my ass now and again, but they work hard and they manage to make lives for themselves. My sister’s boy has done well, too. Then, there is my sister’s girl, Samantha. Samantha is twenty-two, profoundly mentally retarded, with Cerebral Palsy and a seizure disorder. I also have an eight-year-old, but Samantha—like a photo— is forever the baby of the family.

I will never forget the day Joan, Sam, and I were in a hospital elevator, and a woman stood uncomfortably beside us because Sam makes normal people uneasy in their own skin. The woman said, “Bless her heart. I suppose the only good news is that those children don’t have a very long lifespan.”

My sister instantly responded, “The day someone tries to put my baby in a grave, it ‘ll take an army of men to keep me from hurling myself into the hole with her.”

Joan and I both had mother's dreams. Sam offered Joan a different possibility, far different from my own, but Joan is not disappointed. Sam is Joan's heart and joy—the reason Joan chooses to live.

The men standing on the Brighton Reservation fence nearly seventy years ago could not know that their little herd of scrawny cows would make them one of the leading cattle producers in the world anymore than John Collier could have known the United States' puny cattle contribution would be the catalyst. But those bony bovines became the substance of hope and hope turned to vision and vision to enterprise.



Source: personal archive

Fig. 56. Brighton cattle (2007)

Now, just a short drive from my own home, I can see sprawling fields dotted with herds of fat cattle, grazing the lush green pastures of Seminole property (Figs. 56 and

57). The Seminoles have good relationships with nations less friendly to Americans. Consequently, their cattle industry has forged even richer possibilities, not only for themselves, but also for the United States.



Source: personal archive

Fig. 57. Brighton pastures (2007)

How can a seventy-year-old picture of Seminole men clinging to a fence lead me to my sister and her special needs' baby, except the picture harkens back to universals? Can we see human things in other human beings? Are there points of contact, or does our society, education, history, and class make us unique? Perhaps these are not mutually exclusive. Is dreaming of better or more solely American in origin? Is it possible the plains Indians who hunted for subsistence- living could recognize a bad season: too many wolves, too few deer, too many bears? Could they not dream of



better hunting seasons to come? Could they not envision a type of heaven being a perfect hunting ground? Could they not imagine a positive future?

There are common human feelings, common human concerns, and common human thought patterns. If I see an Indian holding his head in his two hands, then I can imagine that he has a headache. If I cannot, then there is no point in trying to understand Indians or look at pictures. While I can imagine being wrong, differences do exist, and holding one's head in one's hands could be a religious action, there is little reason to believe that human beings are very different because they have a few different physical features, or their belief system incorporates some doctrinal differences. Cautiously, I speculate about what I see and hear, based on my own life, my own readings, and my own relationship with others. I can even use history, which is sort of cheating when thinking about people who depend on non-written, oral tradition.

However, my tools can bring facts and ideas, which might otherwise not be available. Therefore, I speculate and see where it takes me. If I am occasionally corrected by tribal knowledge, that is to be expected. Nevertheless, a sympathetic observer from outside *should* see different things. That is the major point of critics such as Said. We are different, so we see things differently. I concede that point for a moment. Does that mean I should not look? No, in fact it suggests that some things cannot be seen from within! Our deeply held, unquestioned assumptions color our view. Therefore, we depend on outsiders to reveal some things, things we could not see otherwise. Personally, then, I see a justification for looking either way.

### Field Day

The Seminoles' cattle business precipitated the Brighton Seminole Field Day & PRCA Rodeo, which is an annual event. Mr. and Mrs. William Boehmer, Seminole friends and teachers who began the Reservation's Day School, also began Field Day as a Seminole participant only occasion, but the non-Indian friends from the local surrounding area began to attend, and the reservation community decided to start charging admission, selling food and arts and crafts. Today, the program includes both Native and non-Native participants.

# Serving The Area Since 1933



*Gilbert Culbreth, Sr. - Founder of Gilbert Chevrolet - donated this car for a drawing during the first Brighton Field Day in 1938. Here he congratulates the lucky winner, Goby Micco Tiger.*



*Goby Tiger and her daughter, Rosie Billie 1988 Winner of Snapper Riding mower donated by Gil Culbreth.*

3550 Hwy. 441 South  
Okeechobee

**763-3154**

**Gilbert**  
**CHEVROLET**  
 **Oldsmobile**

A member of the  
Everglades Chevy  
Dealer Association.

Source: personal archive

Fig. 58. Field Day brochure (1983)

The first Field Day was held in November of 1938, and Gilbert Culbreth, Sr. of Okeechobee donated a Chevrolet to raffle. The winner was Goby Micco Tiger, and there is a picture of Goby, holding her sleeping two-year-old little girl, and standing in front of her new car and beside Gil. Goby's grinning husband stands near the

passenger side of the new car. Ironically, fifty years later at the 1988 Field Day, Gilbert Culbreth, Jr. donated a Snapper lawnmower to raffle. The winner that year was Goby's daughter, who was then 52 years old (Fig. 58).

For the Brighton Tribe, cars quickly became more than vehicles for transportation to town. They soon became one means of bringing town to the reservation, and automobiles rapidly marked the end of intimate relationships exclusively among Seminoles. This technology not only drove the people to town, but it has also driven the tribe to moribund status since the Seminoles base inclusion on blood quantum, and the population at Brighton Reservation now includes Anglo-Seminoles, Black-Seminoles, and Hispanic-Seminoles, whose children are increasingly removed from blood quantum status. Such issues have sent Brighton Reservation leaders to conferences like Emergent Trends in Tribal Enrollment, held in Las Vegas, Nevada, in 2006. Blood quantum means even more than tribal status as the dividends from casino enterprises reach beyond \$7,000.00 per month per person. It is little wonder that Seminole parents and grandparents encourage their children to marry a tribal person. In fact, many Okeechobee and Glades County residents encourage their children to marry a Seminole. This fact has caused pain to many tribal members, who have worked hard to negotiate a place between the white world and the Seminole world. One young woman told me, "People used to see us as stinkin' Indians, and now they see us as a paycheck. We've never been seen as just people."

Fifty years later, the lawnmower would speak to a foreign set of capitalistic notions, assaulting the Seminoles' defiance of land ownership and offering instead, a lawn beautification mechanism reminiscent of a *keep up with the Joneses* ideal that

helped catapult the Brighton Seminoles squarely in the throes of the white world. Ms. Goby Micco Tiger and her smiling husband's new car made them vehicles to a new world, and their little girl's lawnmower reaffirmed the move. The Tiger family and the tribe were arguably blessed or cursed by a raffle.



Source: personal archive

Fig. 59. Doll-making chickee (2007)

Still, Field Day is fun and exciting for both the tribe and the surrounding communities. Besides the rodeo, food, and alligator wrestling, the Seminole men and women demonstrate their traditional crafts, making jewelry, baskets, and dolls (Figs. 59 and 60).



Source: personal archive

Fig. 60. Jewelry-making chickee (2007)

The Seminole people charge admission to the Field Day events, sell their wares, and pose for pictures. Visitors come from all over the nation and schools from surrounding districts send buses filled with children to see how the Seminoles used to live, making money for simply being who they are and who they were. The tribe has successfully made the trades that once determined their physical survival (Figs. 61 and 62) into crafts that now determine their cultural existence. Work and play mesh. The Seminole people's tribal life and the white world mesh, too.



Source: *Images of America: The Seminole and Miccosukee Tribes of Southern Florida* by Patsy West; photographer Frank A. Robinson. Reprinted with permission and available from the publisher at <[www.arcadiapublishing.com](http://www.arcadiapublishing.com)> or 888-313-2665.

Fig. 61. Alice Jim with treadle Singer sewing machine (c. 1925)



Source: *Images of America: The Seminole and Miccosukee Tribes of Southern Florida* by Patsy West. Reprinted with permission and available from the publisher at <[www.arcadiapublishing.com](http://www.arcadiapublishing.com)> or 888-313-2665.

Fig. 62. Abraham Lincoln Clay (c. 1920)

## What Is Lost?



Source: *Images of America: The Seminole and Miccosukee Tribes of Southern Florida* by Patsy West; photographer William D. Boehmer. Reprinted with permission and available from the publisher at <[www.arcadiapublishing.com](http://www.arcadiapublishing.com)> or 888-313-2665.

Fig. 63. Alice Micco at Harney Pond (c. 1942)

Maybe nothing is lost in the move from rags to riches or, at least, nothing more valuable than the memory of the way the world used to be. Surely, however, there is something in that memory that merits paying attention, and conceivably that is why the Seminoles have field day and cultural day and a new school right on their reservation.

Perhaps an element of peace is lost, too, if for no other reason than remembrance fixes our brains so that we cannot unknow something. Long before money and all the stuff, a thrill came from fishing and hunting. Now, there is a greater thrill that comes from having stuff--and I understand that and I believe that is cultural survival, too.



No Seminole wants to return to those days of desperate need, but Alice Micco's picture certainly resonates with the value inherent in simplicity (Fig. 63). She probably was not fishing solely for pleasure here. In fact, she was probably fishing for supper. But her body does not show the signs of wear that my own does, and even from a photographer's distance, her face does not bear the signs of fatigue that I can see on my own. In this picture, I can see peace, and I can remember a time in my life when I had far less stuff and far more peace.

I think the Seminole person feels the same sort of sadness about his or her past that I do when I look back at my kids' baby pictures. I do not want to go back to that time, but I wish I would have paid more attention. I wish, when I tell my kids stories about themselves, they could see what I say and remember with the same intensity and joy I feel when I tell them their stories. The older I get, the more time meshes. Sometimes, I want to tell my kids about incidents that happened to me when I was in my twenties. For a brief moment, I think they were there, and they will recall those moments. I forget they were not even in my imagination then.

I think this way of remembering is good. In this way, history is not on a time line, and the stories that emerge from pictures become a way of (an attempt at least) transmitting a lived moment to the people who will never live that moment. In some ways, that is the literary equivalent of the scop or the bard. Then, photos become a way to recover time and memory if not for the next generation, then for the ones who lived the moment. Maybe perpetuation of culture is inevitable in the present, but never forward. Perhaps Alice Micco's picture (Fig. 63) is a "glimpse through the window which

looked across history towards that which was outside of time” (Berger, *Another Way* 108).



Source: personal archive

Fig. 64. Brighton Casino entrance sign

Aggressive development and self-reliance should be a mantra to the latest generation of Seminoles because the casino on the Brighton Reservation has changed the physical and cultural landscape like no other enterprise, and the consequence of this endeavor is a significant monetary figure per tribal member (Fig. 64). This financial transformation has not been without its problems, but the tribe is dedicated to addressing the issues that great wealth in a short time period can bring. Many of the older men and women gave ominous warnings about mingling Seminole business with

Anglo consumerism and, interestingly, many Seminole tribal members refer to the dividend payday as “D-Day.” The implications of the name are daunting, and the aftermath of economic success shows the nickname is more than an inference. Alan Huff said he vividly remembers the day in 1999 when Seminole Bingo and Gaming opened at Brighton Reservation. He said his mother threw herself to the floor of her chickee, wailing in her traditional Creek language, “The beginning of the end! The beginning of the end!”(Personal communication, 11 March 2007). Grandma Huff was right. The gaming industry did change the Seminole world, but the changes are not nearly as interesting as the conversations that change evokes.

The Seminole people’s incredible shift from lack to affluence makes the fuss about moving away from Tribal identity or losing their language or diluting their culture rather moot, having successfully managed to take remnant opportunities, leftovers from other tribes or government agencies, to create an empire that rivals Fortune 500 companies in America. The very fact that they still care about their cultural heritage is a testimony to enduring values among the people. The truth is this: The Brighton Seminole people are ingenious and genius.

### Seminoles, Photos, Theory, and Me

Photographs raise questions, and that fact is what hooked me to the technology in the first place. It is difficult to glance even casually at a picture without uttering the words, “I wonder what...” and then a series of possible questions. Looking at Seminole pictures certainly leaves me wondering about the tribe’s choices and opportunities. If they could change it, mold it, form it into whatever they desired, what would the ideal Seminole community look like? What would the community’s members be doing for

work? Where would they be living? What would they be living in? What would their religious observances look like? What would their education and their children's education be like? How would they entertain themselves?

The Seminole world is being imagined differently in the twenty-first century. In the last two years, I have watched a guarded and gated Seminole community develop on I-70 East, near Ft. Pierce, Florida. The Seminole Tribal office has moved into the strip mall near Indian River Community College, and the tribe became sole owners of the Hard Rock franchise. The Seminole people, once poor and losing their prospects for independent survival because of the declining replacement rate, used the burgeoning entertainment industry to revive the Nation.

Certainly, there is a stark contrast between the bad old days of declining population, poverty, and alcoholism with the good new days of work, wealth, and Seminole popularity. Bad is not all bad, and good is not all good. However, it is easy to mistake poverty and tribal stagnation with preservation of culture. Is a dying culture perpetuating itself? Can a frozen culture exist more successfully than a frozen man or woman? What is progress? Was cattle production progress? Do the pictures suggest a successful Seminole story, or does raising cattle emasculate the Seminoles, making them traitors to their culture? Or, are the casinos and cows simply weapons in the hands of Seminole warriors fighting for their future and the future of the Seminole nation?

It is foolish to consider culture as stationary. Moreover, the biggest threat to all people is contentment (stagnation). When we stop moving we die. A dead person stops moving, causing us to check for a pulse. People who have income without effort tend to

stop moving. Will gambling revenues still the pulse of the Seminole Nation? What is the possibility? What kind of work is likely to become the norm? What inertia is likely to occur?

Ultimately, the question for the tribe is not just one of existence. The tribe must ask itself—in the form of the tribal members—if the direction it is going is taking it closer to the ideal or farther away. Then specifically, which areas of tribal identity are most threatened and which areas seem to be thriving. Are there any readily visible cures evident to a sympathetic casual observer? Of course, this means others must have an opportunity to look, and the Seminoles have been open to this idea.

Closed societies die. The Brighton Seminoles thrive because they have a history of sharing their lives with others, and others have brought much to Seminole lives. Clay MacCauley, Frances Densmore, and Alfred and Kathryn Hanna's accounts tell us that even during times of great duress, the Seminole Tribe shared their stories. Now, more than ever, the Seminole stories need to be told to a generation that has been raised on ease. The grandmothers tell the historical accounts, the familial heritage, and the indigenous myths that their pictures evoke. This is good. However, more is possible. The idea that universal experiences exist makes analogous possibilities and creative connections a very real prospect. Barbara Stafford reminds image lovers to take heart because it is a "neurological fact that we share our image-based concept of the world with other human beings who make comparable images and so permit us to imagine ourselves into their lives" (203).

Imagination gives us all the power to identify. Once we identify, we can choose to explore the *others'* worlds on a premise of friendliness and kindness. Of course, this

does not mean that differences will not exist and that confrontations will go away. However, grown up people should behave themselves, whatever their cultural background. This approach requires humility, not so much thinking less of ourselves, but thinking about ourselves less. It should not require a huge idealistic or moral leap for human beings, particularly academicians, to operate in deference toward and preference for others.

### Pictures as Private Property

While the Seminole Nation has every right to both own and possess the photographs that signify the existence of Seminole ancestry in Florida, these photographs are the rightful property of the Seminole people and they belong to the people in a special way, a way in which mere material goods do not. The tribe might buy and sell cattle with Florida ranchers, and it is nobody's business, except to settle accounts and ensure that tribal monies are properly used. Nobody should protest a Seminole cow falling into the hands of non-Seminole ranchers, for example. Nobody should question a rightful owner's decisions about private property. Conversely, one cannot sell the property of somebody else without the specific permission and legal authority to do so. That is why courts of law have shrouded the power of attorney in a great deal of protective precedent. Especially in cases when death occurs, mere possession by certain living ancestors does not entitle the possessor to legal ownership. Moreover, some goods are public treasures, and they can rightfully pass into public hands only when the original possessor forfeits them. In the case of tribal photographs of national significance, they become the property of the Seminole people collectively.

Private property needs to be given the greatest possible respect. Confiscation by eager officials needs to be discouraged, and individual right of ownership should be supported wherever practicable. Nevertheless, some things may move from personal treasures to public treasures through the passage of time. G. K. Chesterton addresses this issue in “Art as Private Property”: “There are certain central masterpieces which cannot in their nature be private property... A man may privately own that which is unique and is the object of a private affection. But he must not own that which is unique and the object of a public affection (*Collected Works* 28:349).

To fail to acknowledge this is to misunderstand and to damage the very idea of private property. For example, should I possess it, I should not be allowed to sell the U.S. Declaration of Independence to some private collector. What is more, just because a nation has not created sufficiently extensive national archives or a national museum does not mean that similarly important national treasures are somehow private property.

The photographic record of the Seminole Nation is public property, and public property of a special kind. The photographic record of the Seminole people belongs to the Seminole people. In fact, it belongs to the Seminole people in a unique way, a way in which the heritage or art of a people are special. If a tribal council sells cattle, there should be no cause for concern, provided the sale meets normal requisites: uncoerced buyers and sellers, and no sweetheart deals to transfer tribal monies to family or friends. Aside from such normal legal standards, no concern need arise from customary business. In fact, the Hard Rock businesses might be sold and nobody could question

the tribal authority to do so. The Hard Rock businesses were bought with little tribal consultation.

Nevertheless, if tribal officials were to put the photographic record of the Seminole people up for sale, the tribe and the public would correctly question the rightful ownership of this common heritage. Furthermore, tribal officials cannot simply assume that they fully possess inherent rights of ownership over materials representing the common tribal heritage. One cannot bury the tribal art or photographs in inaccessible storage vaults and claim that such stored goods are being rightfully kept on behalf of the Seminole Nation. Only a public venue for national treasures can fully respect the rightful property of the Seminole people.

### Theoretical Musings

In *Orthodoxy*, G. K. Chesterton makes the following observation:

The materialist, like the madman, is in prison; in the prison of one thought. These people seemed to think it singularly inspiring to keep on saying that the prison was very large. The size of this scientific universe gave one no novelty, no relief. The cosmos went on forever, but not in its wildest constellation could there be anything really interesting; anything, for instance, such as forgiveness or free will. The grandeur or infinity of the secret of its cosmos added nothing to it. It was like telling a prisoner in Reading gaol that he would be glad to hear that the gaol now covered half the county. The warder would have nothing to show the man except more and more long corridors of stone lit by ghastly lights and empty of all that is human. So these expanders of the universe had nothing to show us except more and more infinite corridors of space lit by ghastly suns and empty of all that is divine. (62)

This has been my own experience with most theory as I have wandered aimlessly through the Foucauldian and Derridian dark corridors, which emphasize discontinuities instead of analogous connections. John Berger and Roland Barthes encourage correspondences and operate on the premise that people can differentiate



and integrate perceptions through creative associations. They actually believe it is within the human capacity to make such connections with empathy and without violating the subject because these theorists operate on the premise that there are experiences and feelings common to all. Berger and Barthes offer light and air from the suffocating confines of theories with “infinite corridors lit by ghastly suns and empty of all that is divine” (Chesterton, *Orthodoxy* 67).

In a world gone mad, virtues like love and kindness and friendliness seem childlike and more appropriate to the world of magic and miracles than to the academic or political realms. Nevertheless, a miracle, a revelation, and an imaginative invention are exactly what the Seminole people need and exactly what we all need to assure posterity is secure in their own skin and in their own world. Childlike curiosity and vocabulary might be precisely the means to instigate a miracle: “You show me yours, and I’ll show you mine.” Such behavior requires looking and the possibilities for aha! and eureka! become as likely as a caterpillar becoming a butterfly, a seed becoming a plant, and an act of love becoming a child. The Surrealists’ notion of the daily marvelous is a prospect when I can look at others and see not only their color, their gender, their sexual orientation, and their cultural practices, but also their soul. Berger and Barthes give me hope that this approach to looking and learning and loving can be done.

*Memories and Milestones: The Brighton Seminole Tribe of Florida and the Digitization of Culture* is my own attempt to demonstrate Berger and Barthes’s theories in a practicable and near-to-my-heart space in South Central Florida, where I live. The dissertation works at showing how theory and pictures and Seminoles and I illuminate

one another. The work is not a reader response theory gone wild. The frame of the work is as real as the frame of the picture, so there are boundaries.

I have tried to make choices about my theoretical and personal connections that make sense. If I speak through a theory and the theory speaks through the pictures, then there is a cohesive whole, hopefully, a photographic narrative. In the process of creation, self-awareness happens reflectively and reflexively: I see myself, but I realize I am not the subject. I bring things and I take things. Consequently, I am able to bring more to my task as seer, or as the “oracle” (Berger, *Another Way* 118). The reality outside Plato’s Cave can exist because my mind and my reason help me to imagine what is outside the cave. I make contact with ideals, and I know there is a reality because I can see substance in shadows and representations. Their ghosts are my ghosts, too.

Lives told in summary are always sad. Lives need and deserve the intricacies of details and plots to remind us of their relevance, to remind us that people matter. Certainly, our stories are our own, but others tell some of the best stories about us. I cannot know what the Seminole people and I might have learned from a closer look at those pictures in the vault, but I am willing to wager that there are moments in this work that would move the Seminole reader and remind him or her of part of a past which is buried or forgotten.

## AFTERWORD

Since this project emphasizes the importance of reflection, it seems good to revisit my claims in this paper, and even to explain again or better explain those areas that are fuzzy—some blurred by the significance of rejection and some clouded by the substance of retaliation. Some insights and clarifications are simply the result of learning and understanding over time, which alone makes a dissertation project successful. More important, I do not want to walk away sounding as if I am angry. I am not angry. Actually, I am moved and touched and changed, and I owe much of these effects to the grueling dissertation process and to the reluctance of the Seminole people.

First of all, I see a tendency on my own part to move so forcefully toward the universal that I tend to obscure the particular. That is not fair. The Brighton Seminole people are uniquely and wonderfully their own culture, individual in their familial circumstance, noteworthy in their religious adherence, distinct in their educational pursuits, and extraordinary in their enterprise. If this sounds like a romanticized account, then one need only visit the Brighton Reservation and speak with its people. The proof of their cultural endurance and resistance to white hegemony is evident not only in their stories, but also in their landscape.

My effort is not to minimize the Seminole people's cultural distinctiveness, but instead to emphasize their human connectedness to much that is universal to us all: love, joy, peace, hope, dreams, visions—possibilities. If I essentialize and err, then my

errors are hopeful errors, blunders of forbearance and charity. Any deep look at the human condition is a means for connection and possibilities. I used to apologize for eagerly looking for attributes of hope, but I do not anymore. I am convinced more now than ever, if the smartest people in the world are not interested in those very universal needs of humankind, then some God help us. Some God help us anyway.

After nearly two years of waiting for the promised Seminole pictures, my request was denied by a woman—not herself a member of the tribe, but in a position to act as the tribe’s gatekeeper—who said, “What can you possibly give us that we don’t already have? We already have our own pictures.” The question hurt me, but it was and is a fair question, and one I feel ready to answer now.

I justify my outsider’s gaze, this outsider who has a far greater chance of misinterpreting, with the argument that photographs are not without agency. Photographs are texts that say something and while they may say different things through various lenses, there are limits to interpretation. If a text can say anything and everything, then eventually it says nothing. My gaze offers the Seminoles another lens with which to see themselves and the fact that they are not interested in my view does not change the value or the sovereignty of the great Seminole Nation. The digital history project I proposed can go forward anyway, and I understand it is going forward, interpreted via the Seminoles’ own anthropological experts.

Still, I think they miss something by not including me. The offense of my misinterpretation can be gauged and censored by the Seminole people, and nothing is lost. However, the act of not looking and analyzing and storytelling and meaning making is a greater loss to the Tribe than the harm my potential errors might cause. In

truth, the resistance is rooted in fear. I understand that, though. When the woman spoke to me concerning the pictures, she alluded to times when the Seminole people's generosity caused the Tribe harm although I am not sure if there was ever an incident regarding Seminole pictures and exploitation.

I know now the rejection was not personal and as it turned out, the dissertation moved along much faster based on the irony of what I could not see. There is no way to know what I missed. By the same token, there is no way to know what the Brighton Seminole Tribe missed by not giving me their pictures. I do know this, though: Had they granted access to their pictures, I would have given them more stories to share.

However, fear makes us look more at our differences and react in irrational ways. Looking for our sameness, our similarities, our analogous relationships may help us move away from fear and toward imagining a positive future. From my way of thinking, the risks of sharing are worth taking if staying safe means holding Seminole photographs in a vault where no one can see them. It seems to me the fear of *something* happening to the photos is superseded by the fear that *nothing* will happen to the photos.

APPENDIX A  
IMAGE PERMISSION LETTER

2140 NE 39<sup>th</sup> Blvd.  
Okeechobee, FL 34972

August 3, 2007

Arcadia Publishing  
420 Wando Park Blvd.  
Mount Pleasant, SC 29464

Dear PJ Norlander:

This letter will confirm our recent email conversation, 08/03/2007. I am completing a doctoral dissertation at the University of Central Florida entitled "Memories and Milestones: The Brighton Seminole Tribe of Florida and the Digitization of Culture." I would like your permission to reprint in my dissertation photographs from the following:

West, Patsy. *Images of American: The Seminole and Miccosukee Tribes of Southern Florida.*

SC: Arcadia, ~~2004~~ March 2003 <sup>8/15</sup>

The photographs to be reproduced are the following:

Billy Bowlegs	2	Thatched shelter	37
Coffee Gopher and Emma	4	Fred Smith	38B
Charlotte Tommie and Pricilla	6	Green Corn Dance	40
Tallahassee	10B	Scarifiers	41T
Lucy Fewell	11T	Women pounding corn	42B
Bird Clan Women	11B	Mary Osceola Huff	43T
Jumper family	12T	Emma Micco	43B
Billy Bowlegs III	15T	Mary Osceola Huff	44B
Ruby Tiger tail	15B	Billy Smith	45B
Polly Parker	16	Swamp cabbage	47T
Sally Cypress	19T	Alice Micco	47B
Creek Seminole Camp c. 1925	20T	Abraham Lincoln Clay	54T
Creek Seminole Camp c. 1940	20B	Drying raccoon skin	54B
Chickee	21T	Jane Tiger Motlow	70T
Ben Wells	21B	Alice Jim	70B
Chickee	22T	Tiger family	71B
Billy Bowlegs III	25T	Totem pole	72B
Creeks to Green Corn Dance	35T	Ivy C. Stranahan	82T
Robert Osceola's wagon	36T	Creek Seminole Missionaries	83T

Sam Tommie	84B	Hurricane and cattle	93T
Cattle branding	85T	Baptist congregation	97B
Cowboys	85B	Frank Shore	98
Cowboys on fence	86T	Clothing for Seminoles	102B
Brighton Classroom	87B	Arlene Johns palm sprays	103T
Annie Tiger	88	Boy in chickee	103B
Recording Songs	90B	Princess contest	106T
Hurricane 1948	92B		

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If these arrangements meet with your approval, please sign this letter where indicated below and return it to me in the enclosed return envelope. Thank you for your attention in this matter.

Sincerely,



April Van Camp

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PERMISSION GRANTED FOR THE USE REQUESTED ABOVE:

By: Mrs P.J. Norlander 8/15/07  
P.J. Norlander

Date: 8/15/2007



## APPENDIX B IRB DOCUMENTS



Office of Research & Commercialization

December 8, 2006

April Cone Van Camp  
c/o Karla Saari Kitalong, Ph.D.  
University of Central Florida  
Department of English  
CNH 301C  
Orlando, FL 32816-1346

Dear Mrs. Van Camp:

With reference to your protocol #06-4006 entitled, "Memories and Milestones: The Brighton Seminole Tribe of Florida and the Digitization of Culture," I am enclosing for your records the approved, expedited document of the UCFIRB Form you had submitted to our office. **This study was approved on 12/7/06. The expiration date for this study will be 12/6/2007.** Should there be a need to extend this study, a Continuing Review form must be submitted to the IRB Office for review by the Chairman or full IRB at least one month prior to the expiration date. This is the responsibility of the investigator.

Please be advised that this approval is given for one year. Should there be any addendums or administrative changes to the already approved protocol, they must also be submitted to the Board through use of the Addendum/Modification Request form. Changes should not be initiated until written IRB approval is received. Adverse events should be reported to the IRB as they occur.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call me at 407-823-2901.

Please accept our best wishes for the success of your endeavors.

Cordially,

Barbara Ward, BS, CIM  
(FWA00000351 Exp: 5/13/07, IRB00001138)

Copies: IRB File  
Mark Westberry

JM:jt

12201 Research Parkway • Suite 501 • Orlando, FL 32826-3246 • 407-823-3778 • Fax 407-823-3290

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THE UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA  
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB)

*IRB Committee Approval Form*

#06-4006

**PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR(S):** April Cone Van Camp, Mark Westberry  
(Supervisor – Karla Saari Kitalong)

**PROJECT TITLE:** Memories and Milestones: The Brighton Seminole Tribe of Florida and the Digitization of Culture

- ☒ New project submission      ☐ Resubmission of lapsed project #  
☐ Continuing review of lapsed project #      ☐ Continuing review of #  
☐ Study expires      ☐ Initial submission was approved by expedited review  
☐ Initial submission was approved by full board review but continuing review can be expedited  
☐ Suspension of enrollment email sent to PI, entered on spreadsheet, administration notified \_\_\_\_\_

**Chair**

☒ Expedited Approval

Dated: 12/7/06

Cite how qualifies for expedited review: minimal risk and 6, 7

☐ Exempt

Dated: \_\_\_\_\_

Cite how qualifies for exempt status: minimal risk and \_\_\_\_\_

4 Expiration

Date: 12/6/07

**IRB Reviewers:**

Signed: Tracy Dietz  
Dr. Tracy Dietz, Chair

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Craig Van Slyke, Vice-Chair

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Sophia Dziegielewski, Vice-Chair

**Complete reverse side of expedited or exempt form**

- ☐ Waiver of documentation of consent approved  
☐ Waiver of consent approved  
☐ Waiver of HIPAA Authorization approved

**NOTES FROM IRB CHAIR (IF APPLICABLE):** \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_



## *Informed Consent*

I am at least 18 years of age and completing this survey constitutes my informed consent.

October 28, 2006

Dear Brighton Seminole Tribe Member:

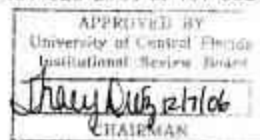
I am a graduate student at the University of Central Florida. As part of my research and dissertation work titled *Memories and Milestones: The Brighton Seminole Tribe of Florida and the Digitization of Culture*, I am producing a digital scrapbook, the purpose of which is to preserve the stories of the bilingual members of the Brighton Seminole Tribe, considering the historical, educational, and rhetorical importance of preserving memory in digital media.

I am asking you to participate in this photographed and video recorded interview because you have been identified as a bilingual member whose memories of Tribal history are of historical value and need to be documented. Interviewees will be asked to participate in an interview lasting no longer than 60 minutes. The schedule of questions is enclosed with this letter. You will not have to answer any question you do not wish to answer, and you may write your answers ahead of time, so you can read them or consult them during your interview.

Your interview will be conducted in person at the Culture Camp located at the Brighton Fairgrounds after I have received a copy of this signed consent form from Ms. Michelle Thomas, Executive Administrative Assistant to Councilman Andrew J. Bower, Jr. ESQ. You and she will determine the best date for your taped interview, and Mark Westberry and I will video your interview.

There are no anticipated risks, compensation, or other direct benefits to you as a participant in this interview. You are free to withdraw your consent to participate and may discontinue your participation in the interview at any time without consequence. You must be 18 years of age or older to participate. Mr. Bowers, Ms. Thomas, Mark Westberry, and I will have access to your recorded interview, but the completed video project, including all interviews, will be viewed by the public, and your identity will not be kept confidential since it is your personal stories and your special contributions that the Tribe wants to preserve.

If you have any questions about this research project, please contact me at (863)357-2536 or [avancamp@ircc.edu](mailto:avancamp@ircc.edu). My faculty supervisor, Dr. Karla Kitalong, may be contacted at 407-823-5416 or by email at [Kitalong@mail.ucf.edu](mailto:Kitalong@mail.ucf.edu). Research at the University of Central Florida involving human participants is carried out under the oversight of the Institutional Review Board (IRB). Questions or concerns about research participants' rights may be directed to UCF Institutional Review Board Office at the University of Central Florida, Office of Research & Commercialization, 12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501, Orlando, FL 32826-3246. The phone numbers are 407-823-2901 or 407-882-2276.





Van Camp  
Appendix 3

Please check the agreement statements below, sign the Participant line at the end of this letter, and return this copy in the enclosed envelope to the following address:

Ms. D. Michelle Thomas, Executive Administrative Assistant  
Route 6, Box 666  
Okeechobee, FL 34974  
dmthomas@seminoletribe.com

A second copy is provided for your records. By signing this letter, you give me permission to digitally record and report your responses in the final written and digital manuscript to be submitted to the Brighton Seminole Tribe and to my faculty supervisor as part of my dissertation work.

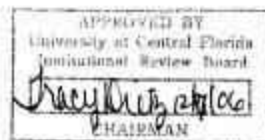
Sincerely,

April Van Camp, MA English

Doctoral Candidate, Texts and Technology

- ☐ I have read the procedure described above for the Brighton Seminole Tribe's Digital Scrapbook
- ☐ I voluntarily agree to participate in the interview.
- ☐ I agree to be videotaped and photographed during the interview.
- ☐ I do not agree to be videotaped or photographed during the interview.

_____ /	_____
<b>Participant</b>	<b>Date</b>
<u>April Van Camp</u>	<u>/ 10/28/2006</u>
<b>Principal Investigator</b>	<b>Date</b>



**Memories and Milestones:  
The Brighton Seminole Tribe of Florida and the Digitization of Culture**

**Principal Investigator:** April Van Camp, MA, English Professor, IRCC  
**Doctoral Candidate, Ph.D Texts and Technology, UCF**  
**Videographer and Co-Investigator:** Mark Westberry

**Supervisor and Dissertation Director:** Dr. Karla Kitalong, English Professor, UCF

**Directions:**

The questions for the video recorded interview are below. You have them ahead of time so you are not surprised by the questions and so you have time to prepare. That way, you will feel more comfortable in front of the camera.

The purpose of this interview is to record your memories, your thoughts, your joys, and your concerns about the Brighton Tribe over the last 45 years to the present. There are three very broad-based questions below so that you can fill in with your own stories. You decide what to answer and what to tell and what you want the Tribe to remember. You are free to answer all or none of the questions below. Feel free to write your answers down and bring them with you to the interview.

**Interview Questions**

1. What was the Brighton Reservation like **before** the Tribe had wealth? Please include both positive and negative aspects of your life then. Please include **stories** that speak to personal values like family, education, religion, and entertainment. What do you remember about that time that is special and needs to be recorded for your children and grandchildren?
2. What was the Brighton Reservation like **after** the Tribe had wealth? Please include both positive and negative aspects of your life then and now. Please include **stories** that speak to personal values like family, education, religion, and entertainment. What do you remember about this time that is special and needs to be recorded for your children and grandchildren?
3. If you could leave only three or four memories to your people, what would you want your Tribe to remember? How does your Creek language matter to your memory? What advice, encouragement, or warning would you give?

*Commitment Statement of an Individual Investigator, Not Covered  
by an Institutional Federalwide Assurance, to UCF Institutional  
Human Subject Protection Policies and IRB Oversight*



**UCF IRB Individual Investigator Agreement**

Name of Institution with the Federalwide Assurance (FWA): University of Central Florida

Applicable FWA #: 00000351

Individual Investigator's Name (Non-UCF): Mark S. Westberry

Specify Research Covered by this Agreement: Interviewing and rating Service Interview

- (1) The above-named Individual Investigator has reviewed: 1) *The Belmont Report: Ethical Principles and Guidelines for the Protection of Human Subjects of Research* [or other internationally recognized equivalent; see section B.1. of the Terms of the Federalwide Assurance (FWA) for International (Non-U.S.) Institutions]; 2) the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) regulations for the protection of human subjects at 45 CFR part 46 [or other procedural standards; see section B.3. of the Terms of the FWA for International (Non-U.S.) Institutions]; 3) the FWA and applicable Terms of the FWA for the institution referenced above; and 4) the relevant institutional policies and procedures for the protection of human subjects.
- (2) The Investigator understands and hereby accepts the responsibility to comply with the standards and requirements stipulated in the above documents and to protect the rights and welfare of human subjects involved in research conducted under this Agreement.
- (3) The Investigator will comply with all other applicable federal, international, state, and local laws, regulations, and policies that may provide additional protection for human subjects participating in research conducted under this agreement.
- (4) The Investigator will abide by all determinations of the University of Central Florida Institutional Review Board (UCF IRB) designated under the above FWA and will accept the final authority and decisions of the UCF IRB, including but not limited to directives to terminate participation in designated research activities.
- (5) The Investigator will complete any educational training required by the UCF IRB prior to initiating research covered under this Agreement.
- (6) The Investigator will report promptly to the UCF IRB any proposed changes in the research conducted under this Agreement. The investigator will not initiate changes in the research without prior UCF IRB review and approval, except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to subjects.

- (7) The Investigator will report immediately to the UCF IRB any unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others in research covered under this Agreement.
- (8) The Investigator, when responsible for enrolling subjects, will obtain, document, and maintain records of informed consent for each such subject or each subject's legally authorized representative as required under HHS regulations at 45 CFR part 46 and stipulated by the UCF IRB.
- (9) The Investigator acknowledges and agrees to cooperate in the UCF IRB's responsibility for initial and continuing review, record keeping, reporting, and certification for the research referenced above. The Investigator will provide all information requested by the IRB in a timely fashion.
- (10) The Investigator will not enroll subjects in research under this Agreement prior to its review and approval by the UCF IRB.
- (11) Emergency medical care may be delivered without UCF IRB review and approval to the extent permitted under applicable federal regulations and state law, but the Investigator shall notify the UCF IRB within 5 working days of the administration of such care.
- (12) This Agreement does not preclude the Investigator from taking part in research not covered by this Agreement.
- (13) The Investigator acknowledges that he/she is primarily responsible for safeguarding the rights and welfare of each research subject, and that the subject's rights and welfare must take precedence over the goals and requirements of the research.

Investigator Signature: Mark S. Westberry Date: 11/2/06  
 Name: Westberry Mark S. Degree(s): B.A.  
 (Last) (First) (Middle Initial)  
 Address: 2685 Whipperwill Lane phone #: 772 216-8838  
Vero Beach FL 32960  
 (City) (State/Province) (Zip/Country)

UCF FWA Official (or Designee) Signature: Thomas P. O'Neal Date: 11/4/06  
 Name: O'Neal Thomas P. Institutional Title: Associate Vice-President for Research  
 (Last) (First) (M.I.)  
 Address: UCF Office of Research & Commercialization, 12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501  
 phone #: 407-823-2901  
Orlando FL USA  
 (City) (State/Province) (Zip/Country)



# SEMINOLE TRIBE OF FLORIDA

ANDREW J. BOWERS, JR., ESQ.  
Brighton Council Representative

Rt. 6, Box 666  
Okeechobee, FL 34974

Telephone  
(863) 763-4128  
Fax  
(863) 763-0402



Tribal Officers:

MITCHELL CYPRESS  
Chairman

MOSES B. OSCEOLA  
Vice Chairman

PRISCILLA D. SAYEN  
Secretary

MICHAEL D. TIGER  
Treasurer

June 21, 2006

Internal Review Board  
RE: April Van Camp Project

To Whom It May Concern:

April Van Camp has been granted permission by the Seminole Tribe of Florida to visit and interview Seminole Tribal members for the purposes of creating a digital scrapbook for work on her dissertation "Texts and Technology" at the University of Central Florida. This project will include taped interviews, photos, video tape of consenting tribal members and their families.

We welcome Mrs. Van Camp and look forward to working with her on her project. Please feel free to contact our office at any time for information regarding this matter.

Respectfully,

D. Michele Thomas  
Executive Assistant  
Brighton Council Office

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