

Review

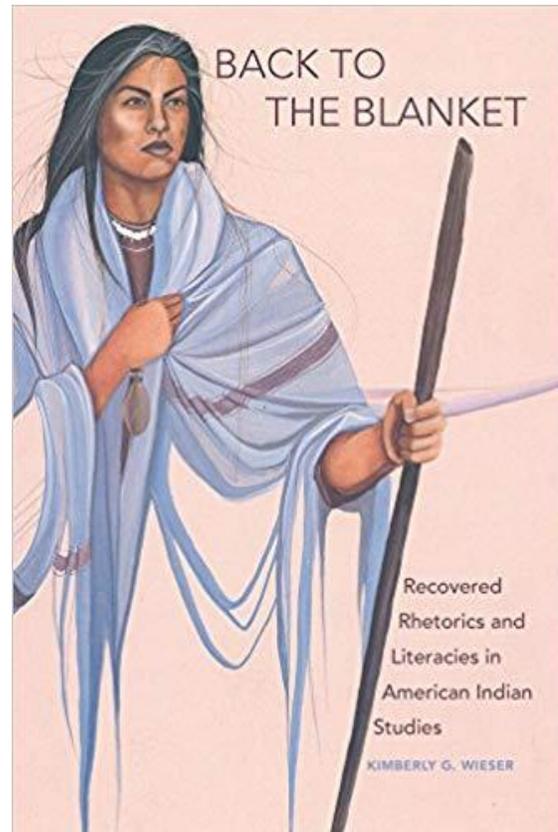
Back to the Blanket: Recovered Rhetorics and Literacies in American Indian Studies

Kimberley G. Wieser

University of Oklahoma Press

Interacting with archival text and stories helps us make meaning of our identities as well as lived experiences as Indigenous people. These understandings help bridge us to others in our communities both culturally and politically. Additionally, they offer those from outside Indigenous communities a way to understand why topics such as sovereignty, tribal enrollment, lands, and many others are central to our conversations. These archival interactions are more than mere readings of documents of the past. They are part of who we are and part of our rememberings. *Back to the Blanket* offers a discussion of the ways in which Indigenous rhetorical practices help us understand our pasts as well as current experiences.

In the preface, Kimberly Wieser discusses the title *Back to the Blanket* in relation to how the term was used historically to refer to Native folk returning to their tribal ways after being “civilized” in a derogatory manner. Yet, she also describes it as her “...own paracolonial refusal of ‘captivity’ by mainstream culture’s tools of empire” (p. x). It is a way to return to deeper



understandings of who we are. Wieser’s double meaning of the phrase refers to Indigenous folk’s journey back to and/or continuation of our ways despite settler colonialism. It is a return to our words, our stories, our rhetorics. While this book uses Indigenous rhetorics to speak to American Indian Studies and Indigenous scholars, it is not limited to this field nor is it limited to Indigenous students.

Back to the Blanket offers what Wieser describes as an intertribal experience. Given the diversity of tribal nations, an intertribal approach helps prevent a homogenous view of what it means to be

Indigenous. Intertribalism is used in a way that is "...seeking commonality that *does not* sacrifice tribal specificity but takes into account relationships that exist across and outside tribal lines" (p. 6). These relationships rely on each other as a way to continue to live as Indigenous people and to be who we are in our own terms. Throughout the text, Wieser offers personal story and experiences to help highlight the nuances of tribal identities as well as cultures. The lens of an unenrolled tribal person is also used throughout to show how experiences and culture are also integral parts of Indigenous identities.

By drawing on the use of Indigenous rhetorical practices of several Indigenous people such as Samson Occom, Leslie Marmon Silko, Ada-gal'kala, and Sylvia Madam, Wieser guides us through speeches, historic texts, and present-day texts, to show the ways in which traditions shaped and shape interactions with Eurocentric societies while still maintaining self-representation. Additionally, the manipulation of these same practices by people such as Johnathan Smith and George W. Bush are shown through their speeches as ways to maintain their political dominance over Indigenous communities. The resulting tension that remains between settler colonial societies and Indigenous societies because of these manipulations help illustrate the ongoing struggles of sovereign nations and other unrecognized Indigenous communities. The richness and depth of material covered alongside Wieser's discussion of it is incredible as is

her humility in building upon the writings and words of other Indigenous rhetorical work.

Kimberly Wieser does an excellent job of pulling together an Indigenous rhetorical analysis with American Indian Studies that offers insight to both fields. *Back to the Blanket* gives readers an opportunity to interact with material in new ways that centers Indigenous voices and representation. Wieser tells us, "Stories, like functional and sturdy baskets, are bearers of our theories and our knowledge" (p. 55). *Back to the Blanket* beautifully shows Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars what exactly this means. This book is recommended for anyone with an interest in Cultural Rhetorics, American Indian Studies, Ethnic Studies, and Women, Gender, & Sexuality Studies, as well as those with an interest in a new approach to interacting with Indigenous based texts and historic documents and/or Indigenous resilience. *Back to the Blanket* shows us how important it is for Indigenous communities to be centered in the academy.

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