



Vol. LII, No. 1  
Summer 2020

# The Immigration and Ethnic History Newsletter

## Indigenous Peoples and North American Immigration History: A Historiographical Essay By Brenden W. Rensink

In the summer of 1881, US Army personnel in north-central Montana were struggling to comply with standing orders to prevent Indigenous Crees and other Native groups from crossing the U.S.—Canada border. The landscape was vast, and Crees had generations of geographic knowledge to help them easily evade US forces. Although many Crees had deeper historic ties to Montana than American settlers, the United States vehemently insisted border-crossing Crees did not belong in the state. Orders sent to Fort Assiniboine in August 1881 reveal how the United States viewed the Crees differently from others in Montana: “...send out as strong a force as possible... to notify the *foreign* Indians to return to *their own country*, and to prevent them from driving the game away from the hunting grounds of *our own Indians* [emphasis added].” The Army communique divided Indigenous groups into “foreign” and domestic, some belonging and others not. While controlling Native mobility was part and parcel of the United States’ settler colonial expansion, the proximity of an international border presented new strategies for Native removal: deportation. By classifying Crees as foreign, the United States could reinterpret an Indian policy problem as an immigration problem. This is a peculiar story that complicates a number of supposedly settled historical frameworks. As such, it presents unique opportunities to step out of comfortable historiographies and reinvestigate old topics anew.<sup>1</sup>

As a historian of the North American West, borderlands, and Indigenous peoples, I find Indigenous border-crossing to be a familiar phenomenon. My fields offer rich historiographies into which this 1881 Montana vignette might fit. However, many immigration scholars have greeted me

with puzzled looks as I share these histories. Indigenous peoples are not commonly featured among the many ethnic groups immigration historians consider. Perhaps this is because many Native peoples were already confined to reservations by the time the iconic mass migration of the late-nineteenth century was underway. This perspective assumes, however, that Native peoples ceased to exist outside reservations in the 1890s. It relegates Native histories and experience to a bygone era, with no place in the twentieth-century or present, and reflects broader patterns of Indigenous erasure in American discourse, both public and academic. America is perpetually resistant to reckon with Indigenous peoples in the past and the present. Settler societies have a profound discomfort with the reality that their nations are built upon Indigenous lands—usually acquired by violent or fraudulent means. Continued persistence of sovereign Indigenous peoples challenges the very foundations of American society. By acknowledging these realities, the prospect of searching out Indigenous narratives in immigration history promises to enrich and diversify understandings of what “belonging” has meant and continues to mean in America. However obscure some of these histories may be, they resonate in the present.

Many scholars are publishing on issues of Native border-crossing (into and out of the United States) as well as Native peoples who straddle the national boundaries that have bisected their homelands. These histories range across centuries as boundaries evolved from porous frontier borderlands to heavily monitored international borders that ascribed domestic and foreign identities. This framework, admittedly, privileges the settler states’ conceptions of territoriality, boundaries, and identities, and often ignores the fundamental Indigenous views of territory and identity that predate or exist independent of those imposed upon them. There is a rich body of litera-

1. For broader context of this story, see my brief 2019 piece for Public Radio International: Brenden W. Rensink, “Ignored and Deported, Cree ‘Refugees’ Echo the Crises of Today,” *The World*, January 31, 2019 (online at <https://www.pri.org/stories/2019-01-31/ignored-and-deported-cree-refugees-echo-crises-today>).

## From the IEHS President



Perhaps my favorite responsibility as IEHS president has been to preside over our annual awards dinner at the OAH, where we confer awards celebrating the accomplishments of fellow historians. Although this year's conference was cancelled because of the coronavirus pandemic, the pleasure of announcing these honorees remains.

In 2020, IEHS conferred Lifetime Achievement Awards on Kathleen Conzen and Ronald Bayor for their scholarly leadership and accomplishments. Jesse Hoffnung-Garskof received the Theodore Saloutos Memorial Book Prize for *Racial Migrations: New York City and the Revolutionary Politics of the Spanish Caribbean* (Princeton), and Benjamin Francis-Fallon was an honorable mention for *The Rise of the Latino Vote: A History* (Harvard). Danielle Battisti received the First Book Award for *Whom We Shall Welcome: Italian Americans and Immigration Reform* (Fordham). The Outstanding Dissertation Award went to Matthew Guariglia of the University of Connecticut–Storrs for “The American Problem: Race, Empire, and Policing in New York City, 1840–1930.” Kyle Pruitt of the University of Maryland and his project “Possessing a Nation: Labor, Race, and the Invention of a Gatekeeping Economy, 1882–1924,” along with Karma Palzom of the University of Wisconsin–Madison and “Political Transformations in the Tibetan Freedom Movement: Resettlement and Political Activism in the United States,” received George E. Pozzetta Dissertation Research Awards.

IEHS reinstated offering travel grant awards in the fall of 2019 to support junior scholars to present their work at the OAH. Application deadlines fall on December 1 of each year—procedures are listed at <https://iehs.org/travel-grants/>. This year's recipients, Hannah Greene (PhD candidate, Skirball Department of Hebrew and Judaic Studies, New York University) and Daniel Morales (Assistant Professor, Department of History, James Madison University), will be able to receive their funding for the next OAH at which they are scheduled to present. My thanks to the Travel Awards Committee which implemented this program, Maddalena Marinari (chair), Jane Hong, and Simeon Man, and policy committee members Tyler Anbinder and Rosina Lozano for developing guidelines.

Another key ritual associated with the OAH is the opportunity to thank outgoing board members, this year, Mari-

lynn Johnson (Boston College), Rosina Lozano (Princeton), and K. Scott Wong (Williams) and welcome incoming board members Jane Hong (Occidental), Anna Law (CUNY Brooklyn College), and Natalia Molina (USC).

As so many of us are now accustomed to doing, the IEHS board met courtesy of Zoom to finish discussions and vote on a Professional Ethics Policy. This policy has passed and will be posted to the IEHS website and disseminated through our social media venues. Starting this fall, IEHS members and participants in our programs will be expected to abide by its terms, which uphold core values of IEHS “to maintain an environment that allows persons in the historical profession to flourish by encouraging respectful, inclusive, and equitable treatment of all who participate in IEHS activities.” To accomplish this end, the policy bars “harassment, discrimination, and retaliation by any means, based on sex, gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation,” noting that “[s]exual harassment creates a hostile environment that impedes the advancement of historical knowledge by marginalizing individuals and communities. It also damages productivity and career growth, and prevents the healthy exchange of ideas.” In enacting this policy, IEHS affirms its commitment to “providing a safe, productive, and welcoming environment for all participants of IEHS events and programs.”

The board also heard reports from the Digital Projects Committee, which is working on expanding IEHS online programs and services, including a Digital Projects Award to support IEHS members in their work in this area. Our new Digital Programs Officer, Heather Lee, will be sending out a survey soliciting information about your digital projects activities and how IEHS might provide support for work that enhances general understanding of immigration and ethnic history.

In these extraordinary times, which have transformed perspectives on the flows of migration and globalization that are so central to our scholarship and teaching, I hope each of you manages to stay well and remain safe.

Madeline Y. Hsu

## IEHS Historians on the Pandemic

**Hoffman, Beatrix.** “Pandemic Reading: 10 Books on Health and Immigration History.” *Immigration and Ethnic History Society Blog*, May 29, 2020. Available online at <https://iehs.org/pandemic-reading-list/>.

**Kraut, Alan M.** “The Other Pandemic.” *History News Network*, April 16, 2020. Available online at <https://historynewsnetwork.org/article/174977>.

## IEHS 2020 AWARDS

### Lifetime Achievement Awards



#### Ronald H. Baylor, Professor of History emeritus, Georgia Tech

Throughout his over forty-year career as a specialist in immigration and ethnic history, Ron has produced distinguished scholarship as both an author and an editor. His monographs include *Neighbors in Conflict: The Irish, Germans, Jews and Italians of New York City, 1929–1941* (1988), *Fiorello La Guardia: Ethnicity and Reform* (1993, rev. 2nd ed. 2017), *Race and the Shaping of Twentieth-Century Atlanta* (1996), and *Encountering Ellis Island: How European Immigrants Entered America* (2014) which, despite its title, devotes considerable attention to the experiences of Asians arriving at Angel Island on the West Coast. In addition, Ron has authored sixteen book chapters and sixteen journal articles, as well as editing or co-editing seven volumes that focus mainly on immigration, ethnicity, and race in urban America.

As the founding editor of the Society's *Journal of American Ethnic History*, which he shepherded for a quarter century from 1980 to 2004, Ron worked diligently to move the field from its traditional focus on European immigrants and ethnics to an inclusive scope encompassing the experiences of non-white peoples. He actively encouraged junior scholars to contribute to *JAEH* and recruited female and minority scholars to the *JAEH* Editorial Board. In 1992, midway through his time as *JAEH* editor, Ron received the Society's Distinguished Service Award, but his work as the journal's editor continued at a brisk pace for a dozen years thereafter. In his ongoing effort to broaden the range of our field, Ron also served as Senior Advisor and Editor for "The New Americans" series, sixteen volumes published by Greenwood Press that focused on immigrant groups arriving in substantial numbers after changes to US immigration law in 1965. Under his editorship, two additional Greenwood Press series, "Contemporary Ethnic Issues" and "Race Relations in Twentieth Century America," brought nine more books

to publication.

Ron's lifetime of achievement must also include his rescue of the Society from almost certain collapse and financial bankruptcy. During his term as the Society's president from 2006–2009, Ron challenged the threatened sale of the *JAEH* by its longtime publisher, Transaction. To combat this threat, Ron spent countless hours in conference calls with the three other members of the Society's ad hoc committee charged with confronting the crisis—Elliott Barkan, John Bukowczyk, and Barbara Posadas—and with the Society's attorneys at Jenner and Block in Chicago. Ron's leadership ultimately forced Transaction to recognize IEHS's ownership of the journal and to pay the society a substantial monetary settlement that ensured the journal's continued publication and made IEHS financially independent for the first time in its history.

For all of these reasons, and for the civic consciousness and the personal integrity that he has demonstrated through his career, Ronald H. Baylor is a fitting and deserving recipient of the Immigration and Ethnic History Society's Lifetime Achievement Award.

— Barbara M. Posadas, CLAS Distinguished Professor of History *emerita*, Northern Illinois University

#### Kathleen Conzen, Thomas E. Donnelley Professor emerita, University of Chicago

It is a very special honor for me to present the Immigration and Ethnic History Society Lifetime Achievement Award to Kathy Conzen. Let the record show that only a pandemic of unprecedented proportion could prevent me from having the pleasure of placing it in her hands personally.

I first met Kathy in the 1970s when I was a newly minted PhD. We chatted and got to know one another at Immigration History Society (as it was then called) dinners and business meetings. She was already one of the outstanding young scholars in our field with an array of publications and the reputation of being an inspiring classroom teacher. However, I would get to know Kathy even better in the years to come because in the 1980s, we found ourselves colleagues on the Statue of Liberty-Ellis Island Foundation's History Advisory Committee (HAC), then chaired by Rudolph Vecoli. Together with the other members of the committee we worked to make certain that the restoration of Ellis Island's immigration depot and the exhibits in the island's museum reflected state-of-the-art scholarship. Throughout the following decades we continued to work together on the HAC and Kathy's career blos-

somed even further, characterized by rich scholarship, outstanding teaching, and leadership roles in scholarly and professional organizations.

Though many know Kathy as an immigration historian, her intellectual range and scholarly influence has been even broader. She has focused her research interests on the social and political history of the nineteenth-century United States and, in addition to immigration, she has published on community formation, ethnicity, religion, western expansion, urban development, and the integration of minorities into our broader national community. Her lens for examining these important topics throughout her career has often been the German immigrant experience, and remains so. One current project is the role of German immigrants in the emergence of California's nineteenth-century wine industry and of German American efforts to develop and defend a theory of pluralistic nationalism.

Kathy's first book, *Immigrant Milwaukee, 1836–1860*, published in 1976, established her as a pioneer of the new urban history, as well as a major contributor to immigration history. Kathy's other publications include *Making Their Own America: Assimilation Theory and the German Peasant Pioneer* in 1990 and *Germans in Minnesota* in 2003. Kathy was selected to write the main entry on Germans in the *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups* in 1980. Methodologically, her volumes and the dozens of important articles she has published reflect her commitment to social scientific theory without the jargon, but also to the humanity of the individuals upon whom her narrative is focused. Kathy's insightful work illuminates the lives and life-experiences of ordinary people, especially those who settled in the upper Midwest.

A native of Minneapolis, Kathy's own ethnic heritage, Prussian Lutheran and Luxembourger Catholic, has given her special insight into the religious lives of her subjects and some of her articles deal with the German Catholic experience. Of especially enduring significance is Kathy's rich analysis of the evolution of ethnic identity in the United States as described in her oft-quoted 1992 article, "The Invention of Ethnicity," co-authored with David Gerber, Ewa Morawska, George E. Pozetta, and Rudolph J. Vecoli and published in our own *Journal of American Ethnic History*.

In addition to her remarkable scholarly contributions, Kathy has been recognized as an outstanding teacher. In 2011, she was honored with the American Historical Association's Eugene Asher Award for Distinguished Post-Secondary Teaching. Literally thousands of undergradu-

ates have benefitted from her compelling performance in the classroom and lecture hall. She has also been the beloved mentor to many graduate students, serving on almost a hundred dissertation committees, including over twenty dissertations that she supervised as doctoral committee chair.

Her scholarly and professional colleagues have recognized Kathy's importance in our field and her organizational prowess by electing her to leadership roles in various organizations. In addition to her presidency of the Immigration History Society from 1985 to 1988, Kathy served as President of the Urban History Association in 2004 and Second Vice President of the American Catholic Historical Association in 2006. From 1990 to 1992, she served on the Executive Committee of the Agricultural History Society and from 1982 to 1985 on the Executive Board of the Organization of American Historians.

By every measure, Kathy Conzen has been a guiding influence upon the evolution of immigration and ethnic scholarship in the United States and is most appropriately a recipient of the society's Lifetime Achievement Award.

— Alan M. Kraut, Distinguished Professor of History, American University, Washington, DC

#### **Theodore Saloutos Book Award**

Jesse Hoffnung-Garskof, *Racial Migrations: New York City and the Revolutionary Politics of the Spanish Caribbean* (Princeton).

Honorable Mention: Benjamin Francis-Fallon, *The Rise of the Latino Vote* (Harvard).

#### **First Book Award**

Danielle Battisti, *Whom We Shall Welcome: Italian Americans and Immigration Reform* (Fordham).

#### **Outstanding Dissertation Award**

Matthew Guariglia, University of Connecticut, "The American Problem: Race, Empire, and Policing in New York City, 1840–1930."

#### **George E. Pozetta Dissertation Awards**

Kyle Pruitt, University of Maryland, "Possessing a Nation: Labor, Race, and the Invention of a Gatekeeping Economy, 1882–1924."

Karma Palzom, University of Wisconsin-Madison, "Political Transformations in the Tibetan Freedom Movement: Resettlement and Political Activism in the United States."

#### **Travel Grants**

Hannah Greene (PhD candidate, New York University).

Daniel Morales (Assistant Professor, Department of History, James Madison University).

## NEW MEMBER PUBLICATIONS

**Alexander, Benjamin F.** "Divided Diaspora: Armenian-American Responses to the Republic." *Armenian Review* 57, nos. 1-2 (2020): 25–41.

**Andersson, Rani-Henrik, Francis Flavin, and Saara Kekki.** "Sugar Island Finns: Introducing Historical Network Analysis to Study an American Immigrant Community." *American Studies in Scandinavia* 52, no. 1 (2020): 3–32.

**Bauman, Mark K.** *A New Vision of Southern Jewish History: Studies in Institution Building, Leadership, Interaction, and Mobility*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2019.

**Bauman, Mark K.** "Jews and the Fur Trade along the Southern British Colonial Borderlands: The Intertwining of Economic and Social History." *American Jewish History* 102 (2019): 195–220.

**Bauman, Mark K. and Leah Burnham.** "The Atlanta Federal Penitentiary and Area Jews: A Social Service Case Study." *Southern Jewish History* 21 (2019): 1-60.

**Burrage, Melissa D.** *The Karl Muck Scandal: Classical Music and Xenophobia in World War I America*. Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2019.

**Cadava, Geraldo.** *The Hispanic Republican: The Shaping of an American Political Identity from Nixon to Trump*. New York City: HarperCollins, 2020.

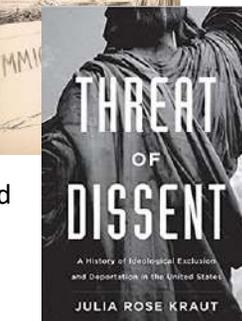
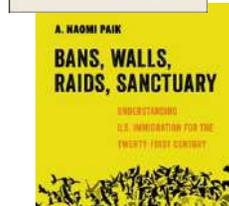
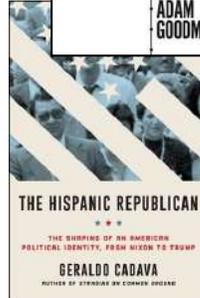
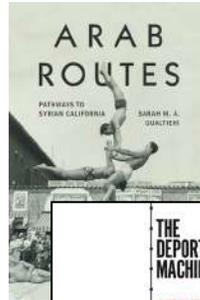
**Chariton, Jesse.** "Black Lutheranism." In *Race and Ethnicity in the United States: From Pre-Contact to the Present*, edited by Russell Lawson. Santa Barbara, California: Greenwood, 2019, 38–40.

**D'Aquila, Vincenzo.** *Io, pacifista in trincea: Un italoamericano nella Grande guerra*. Rome: Donzelli, 2019.

**Efford, Alison C.** "Civil War–Era Immigration and the Imperial United States." *The Journal of the Civil War Era* 10 (2020): 233–53.

**Fur, Gunlög.** *Painting Nature, Painting Culture: Stephen Mopope, Oscar Jacobson, and the Development of Indian Art in Oklahoma*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2019.

**Goodman, Adam.** *The Deportation Machine: America's Long History of Expelling Immigrants*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020.



**Gualtieri, Sarah M. A.** *Arab Routes: Pathways to Syrian California*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019.

**Hoffman, Beatrix.** "¡Viva la Clínica! The United Farm Workers' Fight for Medical Care." *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 93, no. 4 (2019): 518–49.

**Kamphoefner, Walter D.** "Language and Loyalty among German Americans in World War I." *Journal of Austrian American History* 3, no. 1 (2019): 1–25.

**Kamphoefner, Walter D.** "What's New About the New Immigration? A Historian's Perspective over Two Centuries." *Studia Migracyjne: Przegląd Polonijny* 45, no. 3 (2019): 7–17.

**Kanter, Deborah E.** *Chicago Católico: Making Catholic Parishes Mexican*. Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2019.

**Kraut, Julia R.** *Threat of Dissent: A History of Ideological Exclusion and Deportation in the United States*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2020.

**Marinari, Maddalena.** *Unwanted: Italian and Jewish Mobilization against Restrictive Immigration Laws, 1882-1965*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2020.

**Paik, A. Naomi.** *Bans, Walls, Raids, Sanctuary: Understanding U.S. Immigration in the Twenty-First Century*. Oakland: University of California Press, 2020.

**Radzilowski, John and Ann Hetzel Gunkel.** *Poles in Illinois*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2020.

**Stanger-Ross, Jordan, ed.** *Landscapes of Injustice: A New Perspective on the Internment and Dispossession of Japanese Canadians*. Montreal: McGill-Queens Press, 2020.

**Vecchio, Diane.** "Max Moses Heller: Patron Saint of Greenville's Renaissance." In *Doing Business in America: A Jewish History*, edited by Ross, Diner, and Ansell. West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2018, 181–206.

**Winston, Bryan.** "Mexican Migrants in Urban Missouri: Social Welfare Institutions and Racial Boundaries in Kansas City and St. Louis, 1915–1940." *Missouri Historical Review* 113, no. 4 (2019): 269–83.

**Winston, Bryan.** "Mexican Community Formation in Nebraska, 1910–1950." *Nebraska History* 100, no. 1 (2019): 3–19.

**(INDIDENOUS continued from page 1)**

ture in Indigenous Studies that is beginning to reframe stories by using Native, rather than Euro-American settler, geographies, but that is an expansive topic perhaps worthy of its own overview essay. The recent [“AHR Exchange: Historians and Native American and Indigenous Studies”](#) provides an exceptional introduction to current challenges of integrating Indigenous Studies into intersecting historical fields (*American Historical Review* 125, no. 2 [April 2020]: 517-551). For the moment, let me offer a few examples of ways in which immigration historians can think about Indigenous peoples and a handful of texts to reference. Any brief historiographic overview must adopt a somewhat scattershot approach, but this essay will hopefully raise new questions and point interested scholars down productive paths.

As the topic of my own expertise, let me start by offering the broader context of the opening Montana vignette as a sample case study in how unfamiliar Indigenous narratives can ask new questions of immigration history. The material comes from my monograph, [Native but Foreign: Indigenous Immigrants and Refugees in the North American Borderlands](#), which compares the experiences of Crees and Chippewas in Montana and Yaquis in Arizona who crossed *into* the United States as “foreign” Indians from Canada and Mexico. Among other things, it asks how their histories change our understanding of US immigration and American Indian policies, how local powers influenced border issues, what the role of labor markets was, and what the differences between the northern and southern border regimes were. In the mid- to late-nineteenth century, both Indigenous groups were welcomed across international boundaries when they were deemed economic assets for Montana and Arizona, but later rejected for a variety of reasons. In the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, the United States accepted and granted asylum to refugee immigrant waves from both groups, but proceeded thereafter to harass, deport, or simply ignore the struggling Indigenous refugees. Their “foreign” designation denied them “American” Indian status and left them abandoned for decades to navigate legal ambiguities, economic hardship, and cultural stressors.

Eventually, both groups successfully fought political battles for federal tribal recognition and transitioned from being labeled as “foreign” and “immigrant” to belonging as American Indians. After thirty-six years landless and wandering, Crees were granted reservation lands and federal tribal recognition with a group of Chippewas as the

Chippewa-Cree Tribe of the Rocky Boy Reservation. For Yaquis, the sojourn as “foreign” Indians lasted nearly 100 years, with federal recognition in 1978 as the Pascua Yaqui Tribe. Their histories reveal blind-spots in American immigration policy and a historical unwillingness by policy-makers to consider solutions for Indigenous peoples who crossed borders. North American West, borderlands, and Native American historians have recognized how these histories run counter to many established historiographies but welcome their new perspective. Immigration historians might follow suit and seek out similarly unconventional, unfamiliar, and unique historical examples that do not fit familiar molds. I am convinced that the unfamiliar has powerful potential to problematize and enrich related histories.

In contrast to my book’s study of Native crossing *into* the United States, the related historiography features Native peoples leaving the United States. For example, Nez Perce, Dakotas, Lakotas, and others in the nineteenth century used the U.S.–Canada border as a means of escape. David McCrady’s [Living with Strangers: The Nineteenth-Century Sioux and the Canadian-American Borderlands](#) (2009) and Jerome A. Greene’s [Beyond Bear’s Paw: The Nez Perce Indians in Canada](#) (2010) explore these histories and open a broad field of inquiry that merits further investigation. Along the U.S.–Mexico border, multiple Native groups made similar intentional crossings to escape conditions in the United States. Groups of Lenapes (Delawares or Shawnees) from the Northeast, Kickapoos from the upper-Midwest, and multiracial Seminoles from the Southeast all made continental treks to eventually migrate to northern Mexico in the nineteenth century. Sami Lakomäki’s [Gathering Together: The Shawnee People through Diaspora and Nationhood, 1600–1870](#) (2014) masterfully ties the broad Shawnee geographies together to show the circumstances under which some stayed, others left, and some returned across the U.S.–Mexico border. Jeffrey Schulze’s [Are We not Foreigners Here? Indigenous Nationalism in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands](#) (2018) features similarly expansive geographies for portions on Kickapoos. James David Nichols offers a more localized example of Cherokees and Caddos utilizing the evolving U.S.–Mexico boundary to their advantage in [The Limits of Liberty: Mobility and the Making of the Eastern U.S.-Mexico Border](#) (2018). In all of these, immigration historians can ask, how did the United States view out- and immigration of Indigenous peoples? The overlap of federal Indian and immigration policies in these cases creates unique wrinkles and unique avenues for new immigration history research.

Several studies also consider cross-border Native activities that in the twenty-first century would be “illegal” but unfolded before exclusionary laws or modern conceptions of “illegal immigration” developed. How might the histories of United States policy toward, and actions against, transnational Native movements considered dangerous or illicit inform broader immigration narratives? Examples abound on both the northern and southern borders. Consider Truett’s [Fugitive Landscapes: The Forgotten History of the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands](#) (2006), Brian DeLay’s [War of a Thousand Deserts: Indian Raids and the U.S.-Mexican War](#) (2009), or Andrew Graybill’s [Policing the Great Plains: Rangers, Mounties, and the North American Frontier, 1875–1910](#) (2007). These works confront immigration scholars with landscapes of war and violence, where Indigenous action and power continually challenged American, Canadian, and Mexican efforts to police boundaries, control frontier mobility, and define legitimacy and belonging of different borderland residents. The relevance of these histories endured as their nineteenth-century state policing of Native peoples across and along borders directly informed later border-enforcement regimes. Direct lines can be drawn from Native immigration and border histories in books such as Rachel St. John’s [Line in the Sand: A History of the Western U.S.-Mexico Border](#) (2012) to histories like Kelly Lytle Hernández’s [Migra! A History of the U.S. Border Patrol](#) (2010) and Julian Lim’s [Porous Borders: Multiracial Migrations and the Law in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands](#) (2018).

Offering yet another perspective, some scholars have considered Native peoples who straddle international boundaries in ways that do not fit in mobile/migration or border/policing frameworks. One of the most intriguing recent examples is Joshua Reid’s [The Sea is My Country: The Maritime Worlds of the Makahs](#) (2015), which pushes our view to borderlands seascapes. Reid presents Indigenous Makahs negotiating trade and power across settler state boundaries and asserting their presence transnationally. Lissa K. Wadewitz’s [The Nature of Borders: Salmon, Boundaries, and Bandits on the Salish Sea](#) (2012) expands Pacific Northwest stories to other Indigenous peoples operating across and from both sides of the international border. In similar veins, Métis in Michel Hogue’s [Metis and the Medicine Line: Creating a Border and Dividing a People](#) (2015), Blackfoot in Ryan Hall’s new [Beneath the Backbone of the World: Blackfoot People and the North American Borderlands, 1720–1877](#) (2020), and Yaquis, Kickapoos, and Tohono O’Odham in Jeffrey Schulze’s aforementioned [Are We not Foreigners Here?](#) all negotiate sovereignty, trade, and culture that straddle imposed settler

boundaries. These kinds of histories echo the colloquial refrain, “We didn’t cross the border, the border crossed us”—but with a twist. Without moving themselves, these Indigenous peoples were transformed into “transnational” populations by borders being drawn through their homelands.

These works represent but a portion of a growing field of scholarship that intersects Indigenous, borderlands, and immigration histories. The new field they represent certainly intersects with multiple subfields of immigration history. They also draw attention to a troubling phenomenon with contemporary urgency: the ongoing erasure or invisibility of Indigenous peoples. As highlighted in 2019 by the [Tribal Border Alliance](#)’s public call for reform to address long-ignored crises that Indigenous peoples face along international borders, Native peoples are not relics of the past and their unique troubles with borders and immigration continue. Consider the Mohawk Nation at Akwesasne or the Tohono O’odham Nation, whose contiguous territories and communities are directly bisected by international boundaries. Questions of sovereignty and citizenship abound in their lives. More tragically, recent news reports of Indigenous peoples [falling through the cracks](#) of US immigration courts, or [suffering and dying in US custody](#) due to [lack of interpreters](#), demonstrate the real-world consequence of American ignorance of, or indifference towards, unique cross-border Indigenous circumstances. Taking a moment to search for Indigenous stories in immigration histories can help us build sensitivity to see and address unique crises in the present—not only for Indigenous peoples, but any number of unique populations who do not fit familiar molds or policy frameworks.



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# The Immigration and Ethnic History Newsletter

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**Vol. LII, No. 1**  
**Summer 2020**

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Special thanks to Jolene Kreisler, Melanie Lorenz,  
and Andy Schafer for help their with this issue.



**New Publications? Awards? Conferences  
planned? Research projects? Let us know! Email  
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letter's return address.**

## Membership

All rates include membership in the Immigration and Ethnic History Society, the quarterly *Journal of American Ethnic History*, and the biannual *Immigration and Ethnic History Newsletter*.

### Individuals (1 Year):

Print or online: \$45; Both: \$55

### Students (1 Year):

Print or online: \$25; Both: \$35

### Institutions (1 Year):

Print or online: \$257; Both: \$310

Non-U.S. postage (Canada/Mexico): + \$10

Other non-U.S. locations: + \$35

### Single Issues of the *JAEH*:

Individuals: \$20; Institutions: \$50

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