

**Stories of Our Living Ephemera: Storytelling Methodologies in the Archives of the Cherokee National Seminaries, 1846–1907.** By Emily Legg. Logan: Utah State University Press, 2023. 260 pages. \$95.00 hardcover; \$35.95 paperback; \$27.95 digital.

Emily Legg's *Stories of Our Living Ephemera* is a timely piece looking at Indigenous methodologies and archives. Legg is a citizen of the Cherokee Nation and an associate professor of composition and rhetoric at Miami University in Ohio. Legg sets the stage by describing her archival research journey, bringing readers along as she navigates incorporating Indigenous methodologies into a Western academic space. Throughout *Stories of Our Living Ephemera*, Legg creates connections among her history, stories from her relatives, stories within the archives, and the Cherokee Male and Female Seminaries, providing a case-study example of how to honor Indigenous storytelling methodologies in research. Generally, *Stories of Our Living Ephemera* gives an important insight about archives: they tell stories, but researchers and others must be intentional about listening. Throughout, Legg provides a great example of pushing back against Western stories and information about the seminaries to retell their stories as powerful acts and exercises of sovereignty on the part of the Cherokee Nation.

Legg weaves Indigenous methodologies into every facet of the book, even laying it out as a journey through the Cherokee ceremony, “the living practice of embodied cultural knowledge” (15). The book “follows a traditional Cherokee path through the cardinal directions in a counterclockwise method” (15), beginning with the east and coming full circle to the south, thereby honoring *duyuk'ta*, or balance. Legg includes a “Map of the Cherokee medicine wheel as a research methodology” (15), immediately providing readers with a reference point for the relationship of the various directions of the Cherokee ceremony with ontology, epistemology, axiology, and praxis, locating *duyuk'ta* in the center.

The Cherokee ceremony begins, like Legg's book, in the east (*kalvǔv*) with making relations. Legg starts “by interrogating [Cherokee] origin stories” (17), thereby beginning her push back against Western histories and research practices that exclude storytelling and do not tell the full or correct history of the seminaries. By telling the founding and history of the seminaries from the Cherokee ceremony and viewpoint, Legg “complicates Eurocentric means of archival work and historiography” by making relations with Cherokee ontologies and traditional stories with the seminaries (15).

Next, moving into the north (*uyvtlv*) to continually seek knowledge through story, Legg establishes “archival research praxis grounded in Cherokee epistemologies to build relations between the archival artifacts from the seminaries and Cherokee traditional storytelling practices” (15). Through the development of these reflective practices, Legg provides an example of her own reflexivity, including her work with basket weaving, to illustrate balance and knowledge-making. Interwoven throughout this discussion, Legg

discusses rhetorical methodologies as related to knowledge-making and storytelling involving the seminaries, continuously keeping the topic in relationship with the Cherokee ceremony.

Moving into the west (*wudeligv*) and keeping the wisdom, Legg deems this section “the heart of this book” (21). Legg looks specifically at storytelling “as a methodological framework in the Cherokee National Seminary archives” (21) and recovers the seminaries’ disciplinary histories. Legg dives into the relationship between oral and written stories with the seminaries’ histories, bringing in specific artifacts found in archives about or produced by the seminaries in order to “recover, reacquaint, and relate [Cherokee] beings and ways of knowing” (21). Legg brings in countless, wonderfully written stories from students along with writing curriculum at the seminaries to directly push back against Western beliefs and stories of the schools. Her explanation with these specific examples underpins her look at how the Cherokee Nation and students at the seminaries navigated between Cherokee and Western spheres, just as Legg has had to do with her research.

Finally, Legg moves to the south (*uganawu*) involving maintaining relations. It is in her discussion of the closing of the Cherokee ceremony that Legg states, “Our pasts and our presents are cyclical and relational, and our ancestors are still with us, teaching us, through story” (23). Legg synthesizes her various discussions and connections between stories and the seminaries’ histories to reflect on current practices of archival work and storytelling. Legg makes connections among Cherokee ancestors, rhetorical history at the seminaries, storytelling, contemporary Indigenous experiences, and pathways for all scholars to enter into an “accomplice-based relationship with Indigenous methodologies” (16). Legg even includes four steps she encourages everyone, as accomplices, to take when approaching archival research. It is in Legg’s short but powerful ending that researchers and academics are given ways to implement and enact Indigenous methodologies, with Legg’s book serving as a specific example.

As an American Indian studies scholar focusing on the intersection between archives and Indigenous data sovereignty, I found this book to be a powerful read. Although it was at times difficult to follow, the end result for the reader is a greater understanding of storytelling methodologies and the use of archives for the promotion of Indigenous peoples’ sovereignty. Occasionally, the author uses complex terminology and phrasing without immediately signaling her application; however, some patience with the text proves fruitful for methodological interventions and insightful engagement in archival materials. This book is not an evaluation of specific archival findings or materials, so those expecting a survey of individual documents or objects will be disappointed. Although artifacts such as the Cherokee newspapers are referenced, they are more a focus for the stories contained rather than as physical objects. This provides a level of power to Legg’s work as it resists Western prioritization of the written word versus oral traditions and storytelling.

I believe any scholar, student, or academic interested in developing Indigenous research methodologies or learning from their real-world application would find this book valuable. As well, information professionals would find this an important read because Legg gives a different perspective on researching within archives as well as on

the information or data they contain. For example, Legg does a great job of explaining her navigation of the research process, providing specific examples of barriers and missteps of researching Indigenous topics within archives. Finally, I believe anyone interested in navigating and storying with information and data found in archives would find this work of value as it provides an example of pursuing Indigenous-focused research within a Western academic sphere. Legg's recommendations for accomplices at the end are a powerful point, expanding the audience that would enjoy this book. For those interested in further readings that would provide companion information to Legg's text, I recommend Linda Tuhiwai Smith's *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* and any work by Christopher B. Teuton, including *Cherokee Earth Dwellers: Stories and Teachings of the Natural World* and *Cherokee Stories of the Turtle Island Liars' Club*. These works will provide a greater context for Legg's discussion of sovereignty and decolonizing research methodologies, as well as a greater understanding of Cherokee stories and beliefs.

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