

Stitching Osage Governance into the Future [Abstract]

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The writers of the 2006 Osage Constitution had to work against processes of settler colonialism which attempt to deny Indigenous peoples a political future. The Constitution provides a foundation, but much work still remains in order to build a strong Osage Nation that can truly serve its people. This paper uses the metaphor of Osage ribbon work to envision such a future for Osage governance, moving away from the binaries that underwrite colonialism. Ribbon work reminds us that it is possible to create new and powerful forms out of an ongoing colonial process. In picking up the fabric both torn apart and created through the colonial process and stitching it into new patterns, Osage people must form the tangled ribbons of colonialism into unique structures that can serve Osage needs, artfully weaving the 2006 Constitution into something that can act, not as a pure alternative to modernity, but as something truly possible in this moment of colonial entanglement. In viewing the future potential of Osage governance as a purposeful process of cutting, folding, and stitching together, it is possible to speak to the challenges of this colonial moment without again denying the agency of Indigenous political formations.

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