They had what the world has lost. They have it now. . . What the world has lost, the world must have again, lest it die. Not many years are left to have or have not, to recapture the lost ingredient. . . They had and have this power for living which our modern world has lost- as world-view and self-view, as tradition and institution, as practical philosophy dominating their societies and as an art supreme among all the arts. . . True, the deep cause of our world agony is that we have lost that passion and reverence for human personality and for the web of life and the earth which the American Indians have tended as a central, sacred fire since (time immemorial). Our long hope is to renew that sacred fire in us all. It is our only long hope.

- John Collier, 1947

Native American literature despite its significant contribution to the enrichment of literature is bestowed with least recognition. Twenty eight thousand years ago the native people migrated to North America and with them originated Native literature. The Indian trader James Adair was likely the first to claim, based on his observation of taboos and eating habits, that the Indians were the Lost Tribe of Israel; others were to follow, such as Elias Boudinot, whose Star of the West (1816) portrayed Indians as strayed members of the Chosen People. The Scottish historian William Robertson thought Indians had
migrated from Wales, calling them "Exuberant Highlanders." Benjamin Smith Barton, in *New Views of the Origins of the Tribes and Nations of America* (1797), asserted that the Indians had originated in Persia and other parts of Asia. According to archeologists, the first Native Americans arrived in America around 50,000 B.C. by way of the Bering Strait.

Long before settlers arrived in America, explorers reported on their voyages to the continent. Through the 1600s American literature grew from exploration narratives to include histories of settlement—both natural histories of the land and social histories of the people. Religious writings expressed the values and beliefs of American colonists. In 1492, Christopher Columbus, an Italian Explorer arrived in the “New World” and he mistakenly believed that he had reached the Indies and he described the people there as Indians. He gave the richest source of information about the early contact between American Indians and Europeans. From the time of Columbus, cultural outsiders have sought to record and explain the life ways of Native peoples. Some have done so to "inform" voyeuristic audiences of the "savage" and brutal ways of a heathen race, while others have done so to preserve a written record of a people destined to inevitably vanish from the earth. The early literature of exploration, made up of diaries, letters, travel journals, ships' logs, and reports to the explorers' financial backers, European rulers gradually was supplanted by records of the settled colonies. The people who lived in these colonies were called ‘native’.
The name ‘native’ stuck for centuries and the people who first came to America were collectively called American Indians. The natives are called even by many other names. They are also known as Amerindians, Amerinds or Indigenous, Aboriginal or Original Americans. There is a controversy regarding this. They are also called as Red Indians, because the early settlers of New England liked red color and hence painted each and everything including their bodies with red pigment. But now the name has become pejorative and they consider this name as derogatory. The British called North American Indians RED INDIAN apparently because of 'their copper-colored skin' and also to distinguish them semantically from the Indians of India. The term ‘Native American’ was also used for the indigenous peoples of North America. This was not in wide use until the 1970s, when the political incorrectness of referring to such people as ‘Indians’ began to be more keenly felt. Before long it too succumbed, the offending component being ‘native’. Seventeenth-century Frenchmen, Italians, and Englishmen generally employed a variant of the Latin 'silvaticus,' which means a forest inhabitant or man of the woods, for the Indian as the earlier spellings of 'sauvage,' 'salvaticho,' and 'salvage' show so well in each of the respective languages. English usage switched from 'savage' to 'Indian' as the general term for Native Americans in the seventeenth century, but the French continued to use 'sauvage' as the preferred word into the nineteenth century. The original image behind this terminology probably derives from the ancient one associated with the 'wild man,' or 'wilder Mann' in Germany." What Englishmen called Native Americans and how they
understood them after a few decades of settlement was by Roger Williams in a brief analysis of nomenclature in *A Key into the Language of America; Or, An Help to the Language of the Natives in That Part of America Called New England* (1643) summarized. Under the heading: 'By what names are they distinguished,' he divided terminology into two sorts: 'First, those of the English giving: as Natives, Salvages, Indians, Wild-men, (so the Dutch call them 'Wilden'), Aberygeny Men, Pagans, Barbarians, Heathen. Second, their Names, which they give themselves.' "In Canada they are known as ‘First Nations’. People from Indian ancestry who are citizens of the United States are known as Indian Americans." As information about the inhabitants of the New World became better known, Native Americans entered the literary and imaginative works of European writers, particularly the French. In this way the American Indian became part of the 'bon sauvage' or Noble Savage tradition so long an accompaniment of the Golden Age or paradisiacal mythology of Western civilization. ("Los Indios, Indians, Savage, Noble Savage, Native American” 2002).

Native Americans settled down in colonies. They domesticated dogs. In the fifteenth century, Spaniards and other Europeans brought horses which provided new mode of travel and made it possible for some tribes to greatly expand their territories and exchange goods. Spanish slave traders of the early 16th century were probably the first Europeans to interact with the native population of Florida. In 1606, England attempted to colonize for the first time with the Popham Colony in Maine, later in 1607 in Jamestown, Virginia. The
latter became the first permanent English settlement in the United States. One result of the Indians' encounter with Americans was the depletion of their populations. War, alcohol abuse, and disease took their toll. The population and culture of Native Americans was decimated by the European colonization and by disease, displacement, enslavement, internal warfare etc. Disease, especially smallpox, claimed the lives of countless number of the indigenous population. Europeans brought such diseases against which Native Americans had no immunity. Travelers, government officials, Enlightenment philosophers, and missionaries put forth a theory of the vanishing Indian alongside notions of the noble and ignoble savage. They brought with them, and continued to develop, various mythologies and rituals; these symbolic explanations were passed on orally from one generation to the next for thousands of years and constitute one of the richest, as well as oldest, traditions in American literature. Many works attested to the social harms of alcohol abuse among the Indians, citing it as the Indians' path to disappearance.

As the information about Native American spread throughout the globe, many writers stated to concentrate on the life and culture of natives. They started writing about natives and about their encounter with the Europeans. Franklin's *Autobiography* (1784), Benjamin Smith Barton's *Observation on Some Part of Natural History* (1787), and Daniel Gookin's *Historical Collection of the Indians of New England* (1792), are few works which depict the aspect of Puritan missionary portraying Indians as barbarians, decimated by disease. Native peoples’ encounter with Americans, war, alcohol, abuse and disease
took their toll. European settlers not only used Native American contacts to further their activities in the fur trade but also became responsible for tribal wars by supplying firearms. Indian Wars in English Colonies would continue on and off into American Revolution. The British made peace with Americans in the Treaty of Paris in 1983. This had ceded a vast amount of Native American territory to the United States without informing the Native Americans. The United States was eager to expand, and the national government started purchasing Native American lands in treaties. This policy resulted frequent odds between The States and settlers. American policy toward Native Americans has been an evolving process. In the late nineteenth century, reformers, in efforts to “Civilize” Indians, educated Native children in Indian Boarding Schools run by Christian missionaries. The Native American children were taught Christianity instead of their native religions. They were forced to abandon their various Native American identities and to adopt European American Culture. The children were forbidden to speak their native languages. Native Americans were given United States citizenship by the Indian Citizenship Act of 1924 to merge them with the American mainstream. This was also because of the heroic service of many Native American veterans in World War I. Throughout the period of Indian displacement and Indian wars, Americans pondered Indian origins. There are 563 federally recognized tribal governments in the United States. These tribes possess the right to form their own, government, to enforce laws, to tax, to establish membership, to license and regulate activities, to zone to exclude persons from tribal territories. By
2000, the largest tribes in the U.S. by population were Navajo, Cherokee, Chochaw, Sioux, Chippewa, Apache, Lumbee, Blackfeet, Iroquois and Pueblo. Once the new image of the Indian had begun to settle in popular culture, and once the natives were no longer threatening the East Coast populations, the Indian appeared in "high" literature and art.

Though it took many years for native literature to get recognition, among the different tribal literatures the Native American literature is immeasurable centuries old. The dominant focus of Native American literature is on issues related to Native American culture, history, religion, and experiences. Native American authors and critics emerged from centuries of abuse and neglect to create, examine, and celebrate their own culturally significant and socially poignant body of literature. Their works explore American Indian identity and its relation to Euro-American society. In an attempt to preserve their culture, Native American authors first defined their culture. Native American oral literatures reflect the mythology and history of the past as well as the experiences of the present. American Indian artists also create oral literatures that reflect their personal experience and imagination. Many American Indians considered Religious ceremonies, myth, and oral sacred to be discussed collected for study by those outside the tribe. Some Indians and non-Indians believe that printing oral literature dooms it as oral performance but others feel that because stories and songs are fast-vanishing relics, they must be captured in books. The concept of storytelling is an essential part of Native American identity. Traditionally, Native Americans
told their stories orally. Native American literature, or alternately, American Indian literature, usually refers to works written by the indigenous people of the United States and Canada. Different native literatures are recognized with different names. In Canada the literature of native people is known as First Nations literature. Native American literature encompasses many different social, cultural, historical, and spiritual perspectives. Native American literature originates in the oral traditions of native peoples. The spoken words were used to pass on information from generation to generation. Native American life and literature, and ceremonies and religious rituals are often known solely through the spoken word. The history of American Indian literature reflects not only tribal cultures and the experience and imagination of its authors but also Indian-white relations. Indian oral literatures are a vibrant force that tribal peoples continue to create and perform. The oral literatures of Native Americans reflect the diversity of their religious beliefs, social structures, customs, languages, and life styles. These people believe that human beings must live in harmony with the physical and spiritual universe. In traditional Indian societies, all aspects of life are conducted according to the religious beliefs and rituals deemed essential to the survival and well-being of the group. They believe that symbolic power of the thought and word can alter the universe for good and evil. The genres of Native Americans do not correspond to Euro American genres. Native Americans wanted to live in harmony sharing some perspectives on their place in the Universe. They have great reverence for the land. The Native North Americans have a strong
sacredness of the earth which has nurtured them. Their tribal origins and histories are associated with specific places. They emphasize in their writings the importance of place. Linked to reverence for the land is the emphasis on directionality and circularity. Many tribes consider the numeral four as a sacred number. The numeral four represents the cardinal directions seasons and stages of human life. The circle symbolizes the sun and its circuit. It also represents the cycle of human life; infancy, childhood, adulthood and old age. It is also visual reminder of time. For instance, mythic culture heroes or heroines may leave the community only to return after many trials and adventures. A strong sense of community and co-operation is seen in native tribes. Tribes often stress co-operation and good relations within the group, demonstrated in communal rituals, work and play, and decision making. Among many tribes, generosity, helpfulness to others and respect for age and experience are highly valued virtues that enabled them to survive. Native Americans are culturally specific. The narratives of the Pueblo-dwelling Hopis tend to stress hard work, whereas those of Nomadic Navajos tend to emphasize movement. Ritual drama is a very sacred form of oral literature. Participation in ritual dramas unites tribal members with one another. The dramas also enable them to communicate with and attempt to control natural and supernatural forces. Ceremonies are performed seasonally as part of rituals assuring renewal of the earth or fertile crops, others mark communal events, such as entrance into a tribal society, others performed as purification ceremonies for those held captive by other tribes or for war veterans. Many pertain to special occasions in one’s life, such
as receiving a name, the onset of puberty, marriage, death, and honoring the
death after the passage of time. Ritual dramas, passed down by inheritance are
performed by priests or singers, shamans, and special societies. Among the
Eskimo, they perform the spirit flight. On the Northwest coast, their chief
function is to cure illness. Ceremonies are also performed by religious cult
societies. Navajo ceremonials have been reprinted more often than those of any
other tribe. The Iroquois version of the Ritual of condolence illustrates a ritual
drama designed to heal the group as a whole. The enemy of the society is both
death itself and the cult of death, which leads to depression and possible
insanity. Through the participation in ritual dramas or ceremonies, American
Indians renew themselves in the rich culture that has sustained tribal life for
centuries. Tribes usually use the terms chants or chant ways, ceremonies or
rituals instead of ritual drama. Ceremonies, and the songs, narratives, and
orations included in them are expressed in special forms of language. William
K. Powers states in *Sacred Language*, that the Sioux have two types of sacred
language: the generic Wakan iye (sacred language) and the Hanbloglaka
(vision talk). Wakan iye is the form of language used between medicine men
and their spirit helpers. Zuni people use regular stereotypes, which are often
highly imaginative and poetic.

In the beginning the oral literatures which were passed on from one
generation the next orally were later preserved by anthropologists in ethno
linguistic texts. But sometimes these texts were abbreviated or revised to suit
the tastes of the time. Accurate and appropriate translation is crucial to preserve
American Indian verbal arts in English. But usually translations are not true to the original texts. Between 1750 and 1829 Americans attempted to explain the Indian cultures they encountered as well as to identify Indian origins. Eyewitness and secondary accounts of Indian life or the lives of whites among the Indians became popular reading, and collections of Indian artifacts fascinated the American public. Observers of Indian societies—ministers, missionaries, government officials, Indian captives, explorers, traders, travelers—wittingly or unwittingly practiced ethnography, or the study and systematic recording of a culture. These records of Indian manners and customs reflect the authors' judgments against the backdrop of government policy regarding the Indians.

Beginning with its first thousand years of oral literature and continuing to the present time with writers in all the genre of literature, Native American is an important element in the literature of America. Symbolic explanations passed on orally from one generation to the next for thousands of years which constitute one the richest, as well as oldest, traditions in American literature. Pictographs were used to record important events and rituals. Native American literature begins with the orally transmitted myths, legends, speech, tales, and lyrics (always songs) of Indian cultures. Legends, folktales, and other forms of literature were preserved in oral form and passed down from one generation to the next through ceremonies and other community gatherings, as well as within family groups and other informal settings. There was no written literature among the more than 500 different Indian languages and tribal cultures that
existed in North America before the first Europeans arrived. As a result, Native Tribes maintained their own religions -- worshipping gods, animals, plants, or sacred persons. Systems of government ranged from democracies to councils of elders to theocracies. These tribal variations enter into the oral literature as well. The creation myths of Native American cultures share with the Genesis accounts a concern with relationships among the divine, the human, and the world of animals and plants; the reasons behind those relationships; and the saga of the universe before the advent of humanity. Native American oral literature encompasses many literary forms, and of these forms, songs and stories are among the most important. Some songs have particular significance as elements of ritual.

A. LaVonne Brown Ruoff’s *American Indian Literatures* (1991) is a volume which gives examines the history, evolution, and culture of the American Indians, discussing both oral and written literature. This even provides information about different types of oral literatures, life histories and autobiographies of Native Americans. Native American literature was preserved mainly in the forms of songs. Songs are composed by individuals, groups, and supernatural sources. Traditional beliefs hold that songs can create harmony. Each tribe has its own songs, as well as songs that are shared among tribes, and songs can be categorized according to their use, such as for religious ceremonies or for social events. Drums and flutes are two of the most popular musical instruments. Songs are most often accompanied by dance. Different tribes used songs in a different way to reflect their culture through songs.
Densmore describing about Ojibwa songs depicts in his work *Chippewa Music* (1910), that music was one of the greatest pleasures of the Ojibwa. Song is the most precious possession of the people. In Prayer; The Compulsive Word, Gladys A Richard comments that among the Navajo, song is a form of prayer. In *Papago Music* (1929), Densmore points out that the Papago use a glissando in songs connected with the ceremony for bringing rain and with the Ceremony called Limo, held for successful warriors often their return from battle. Songs are composed both communally, and individual, and other tribes. Pima believe that many mythical personages and then handed down by teachers. These songs are those created by individuals whose power is derived from their contact with the supernatural, primarily through dreams. Several hundred songs are connected with the Midewin religion of the Ojibwa. Some are sung in initiation ceremonies, others are used in medicine, and still others are performed in dances. These songs preserve the ancient teachings and beliefs of the Mide songs. Frances Densmore points out in *Chippewa Music* that archaic language is used in the Mide songs. One who wishes to sing a deer song must express himself in Yaqui within the conventions which Yaqui audiences have come to expect of maso b wikam deer songs. The words serve as a key to the ideas of the song. Songs are a part of the rituals of individual tribes or culture areas. Native people believed that songs created harmony. Usually songs are accompanied by dance. The Ghost Dance swept across the plains. It was led by the Piute medicine man Wovoka. He taught that Indians would be reunited with
family and friends in another world where there was no sickness, death, or old age, if they lived in peace and put away the old practices. Native American songs were also translated. Yaqui songs after translation lost the aesthetic effect of original songs as opined by Evers and Molina. Densmore was one of the earliest and most prolific recorders and translators of American Indian music. But she has made invaluable contributions to the history of Indian song. Indefatigable, she moved from tribe to tribe recording, and translating or paraphrasing a voluminous collection of songs. Songs constitute the largest part of the American Indian oral literatures. Fortunately there is another approach and that is to look to the system of Margot Astrov points out in the introduction to her book, *American Indian Prose and Poetry* (1962) that one may group the songs according to their purpose or what they intend to influence. The Indian believed, she writes, that the "word is power." These songs, then, may be grouped as 1) songs of healing, 2) individual songs, 3) songs of growth or germination, 4) songs of vision and dream, 5) songs of death. These songs have been translated into English, but, of course, in English they retain none of their original purpose - the power is lost. How accurately they reflect the essence of the original song, then, depends on the skill of the translator and the cultural knowledge of the reader. The tales, myths, legends, and stories are also derived from the oral tradition.

Stories play a crucial role in defining what it means to be a member of a given tribe and how a person relates to the tribe’s past, present, and future. Although the details of stories found in different tribes may differ, the tales
often have similar themes. One common theme is the creation of the world. Another is the theme of a people’s origins and migrations. Stith Thompson classified the tales according to their similarities in meaning and intent. Although he indicates there are a great variety of stories, he uses a series of categories, such as 1) Mythological stories: These stories deal with the world before it was in the present state. They explain the origins of animals, or tribes, or objects, or ceremonies, the universe itself. 2) Trickster tales: These tales related the deeds of the trickster. Sometimes the buffoon is a human being, but more often he is an animal endowed with human characteristics. 3) Hero tales: These tales represent the lives of human beings under conditions at least remotely resembling the present. Transformations, magic, otherworld journeys, ogres, and beast marriages are common. 4) Miscellaneous tales: There are other tales which are definitely borrowings from Europeans and from the Bible. These tales are somewhat like the myths of the Greeks, but animals figure more prominently in the Indian European fairy tales. They are all very interesting and entertaining to read, but one wonders how much more meaningful the tale would be if he were familiar with the people who told the tale and the reasons they told it. Although one can appreciate the repetitions and the imagery of some of the songs, the cleverness and the wit of the tales, one finds little in his own experiences which will allow him to evaluate the works as literature.

In addition, most tribes have numerous stories about individual figures such as tricksters and mythical heroes. In many tribes, story tellers use ritual formulas to open or close stories or to elicit audience response. Native
Americans believed in ghosts, the Yaqui ghosts traveling up and down the riverbanks searching their loved ones. Yaquis who refused to acknowledge the Mexican government or to pay taxes on their lands were shot. The Mexican soldiers slaughtered babies, little children, and old women. Those bodies had become ghosts. They believed, the ghosts weighed twice or three times what weighed in life. The body carries the weight of the soul all the life, but with the body gone, there is nothing to hold the weight anymore. The Indians and Mestizos refused to kill insects in the palace or the garden because spirits would be offended. Tribes sometimes use archaic language for myths. Some tribal stories follow a specific structure. American Indian Oral literatures differ considerably in content but there are some common themes. Their myths usually include stories about the creation of the, origins and migrations of the tribe, culture, heroes and trickster- transformers. Some of these myths include some tales of the original Sky Parents of Sky Father and Earth Mother. The main focus is often on the subsequent “generations”- the emerging Primal forces symbolized as animal- like or insect- like “people” preparing the world for the coming of later humans who will eventually populate the earth. Much of this literature disappeared with the destruction of Native American cultures that followed white settlement of the continent. Among the richest set of Native American stories that survive are creation myths, descriptions of the beginnings of the universe and the world and of the origin of humankind. In the “Earth-Diver Myths” of the northeastern and plains Indians, the original sacred female figure falls through a hole in the sky onto a watery void where the primal
water-creatures must magically create dry land-the earth-for the pregnant woman to rest on. In the Southwestern “Emergence Myths” these sacred powers originate in the innermost womb of earth, and the mediational figures must pass upward through several wombs or cave-like worlds until they are “birthed” out onto the surface of the earth awaiting transformation into habitable land. The magical powers of Grandmother Spider or Spider Woman play a key role in many of these tales. Another common feature of many origin myths is the symbolic motif of the Sacred Twins who must complete the world-transformation process by creating the topographical features of the world and by destroying the ancient monsters that could threaten the existence of the future human peoples. However, what is most notable in these myths is the sacred beings of the pre-human worlds as they collaborate, often unwittingly and something in very strange ways, in the material, spiritual and cultural evolution of the earth and the cosmos. Emergence myths describe the ascent of beings from under the surface of the earth to its surface and their subsequent settlement or migration. Pueblo and Navajo creation stories incorporate emergence and migration myths. While myths are true stories of the prehistoric past, tales may be true or fictional and usually are set in the historical period. Many stories describe events significant to the history of the tribe. Though most of American Indian literatures were transmitted orally the pictographic accounts preserved them. One of the few tribes to record their literature in books was Quiche Maya of the Guatemala highlands, who preserved the stories of the origin of their culture in the *Popol Vuh*, or *Council Book*. The history of
the collection of oral literatures of Native American begins in Mesoamerica in the books of the Maya. The systematic collection of the oral literature was stimulated by the publication of Henry Rowe Schoolcraft’s *Algic Researches* (1839), which focused on Ojibwa culture and literature.

Oral literature was very important in Native American life not only in the 20th century but also is continuing to be important throughout the 21st century. The development of the anthropological and linguistic study of American Indian cultures in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries flourished in the scholarly collection of oral literatures. During this period, John Wesley Powell, funding director of the Bureau of American Ethnology from 1879-1902, and Boas established the ethno linguistic approach that dominated the collection of American Indian verbal arts. The Verbal arts provided insights into Indian culture. Bios had a deeper interest in the literature itself. His rejection of cultural evolutionism, respect for American Indian culture, and appreciation of the aesthetic values and important cultural functions of Indian folklore are strong and intent.

Gradually from 18th century onwards the oral literature has been published and has grown steadily since the 1960s. The Maya in their total literary history had written about 500 books. The books were written on paper made from a certain tree, and or written on treated leather that was folded into a very neat book of possibly 15 to 20 pages on both sides and about 15 feet long or so. All of these books can be accounted for in written histories and or are to this day being held by private organizations, and foreign governments. There
are about 15 manuscripts in the position of the Guatemalan government. Over
the past 20 years there have been two written books show up in the hands of
grave robbers in Guatemala. The books were taken to be sold to antique
dealers, who in turn, gave them to the government of Guatemala. Many
historians have also continued archaeological digs in Mexico and Guatemala
which have turned up more finds in the area of stone stelas, stone plaques,
graves, and hidden chambers. The Maya had kept many thousands of records of
dates and events throughout their time of history of their civilization. The Maya
had a very accurate calendar and had developed three different calendar units.
One was for the celestial year, one for the calendar year of 365 day, and the
lunar year of 260 days. Each month was a lunar month which ran from full
moon to full moon with a few exceptions. The Maya were excellent
astronomers and had conducted detailed studies of the movement of the planets
and the moon. There is a great deal found on the studies of Venus, in the Venus
table of the Dresden Codex, and it rotational positions and the dates of the
positions in the past are very accurate. A lot of their written history can be
found on the stone stelas on the temples, on the ball courts, and in also most all
stone buildings. The Maya also have their version of the creation of the world
according to their written or told stories. These stories also have a very strong
religious value. A part of the story of the creation phenomenon parallels with
the story of Noah and the creation of the world after the flood. There are two
books that are the excellent examples of alphabetic substitutes. These are the
"Jaguar Translator" books of the Yucatan and Popol Vuh of Guatemala. These
books teach a very colorful side of the history of the Maya by using many different stories with antidotes and reasons for the cycle of beginnings of events in life history. The stories also tell of the relationship with the Gods, life and man. Many of the other texts being held also tell of the life and history of important families and the life of the Gods with the Maya. Many of the stories have been researched and it has been found that some of the stories do coincide with Maya historical events and wars. Many Maya stories are dressed up to sound very pompous and glorious. The Cycle of life Story has been told by the modern day Maya as a poetic chant. The Modern version does very closely parallels with the found written text of the Story of the Beginning of life as told by the Maya from the beginning of their civilization. The Maya had a fantastic need to express themselves and did so in their art, language, history and religion. It is strongly believed that over a third of the total half of the population did read and also could write. At the same time, written works offer the advantage of publishing ideas, stories, and thoughts to a wide audience. Native American literature has been published since the 1700s and has grown steadily since the 1960s. The 1803 Louisiana Purchase ushered in an era of expansion, and land and its use increasingly became the focus of debate on American-Indian relations. Land was precious to both groups, but the Americans had the advantage of the printed word on their side. Their writings applied descriptive and pejorative terms to Indians such as "wild," "savage," "primitive," and "heathen," rendering more persuasive the land claims of
"civilized" Americans. Even sympathetic collectors and writers employed these stereotypes. The idea that the Indians were expendable took root.

Apart from autobiographies, anthologies and life histories there were captivity narratives depicting Indian societies. These narratives fueled negative images of Indians. Mary Rowlandson's, *Narrative of the Captivity, Sufferings, and Removes of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson* (1682) was reprinted many times, and it attests to the widely accepted notion of Indian cruelty. Other narratives also portrayed Indian brutality, such as Peter Williamson's *French and Indian Cruelty* (1757); William Walton's *A Narrative of the Captivity and Sufferings of Benjamin Gilbert and His Family* (1780); and Mary Kinnan's *A True Narrative of the Sufferings of Mary Kinnan* (1795). A somewhat milder version of Indian life was depicted in *A Narrative of the Captivity of Mrs. Johnson* (1796), by Suzanne Willard (Johnson) Hastings, who lived for four years among the Abenakis. In the early nineteenth century, narratives and narrative novels began to portray Indian culture and people as having a sense of purpose. James E. Seaver recounted the praise of Indian people by Mary Jemison, who lived with the Delawares for seventy years, in his *Life of Mrs. Mary Jemison* (1824). John Dunn Hunter's *Memoir among the Indians of North America* (1824) commended his captors, the Osages and Kansas Indians, for their intelligence, religiosity, and communalism.

Even the travelers contributed a lit to the history of Native literatures. Travelers and traders recorded scrupulously detailed accounts. Bernard Romans, in *A Concise History of East and West Florida* (1775), described
Indians as unnatural and grotesque, whereas others took great care to observe and record indigenous cultures accurately. John Bartram, in *Observations on the Inhabitants, Climate, Soil, Rivers, Productions, Animals* (1751), and his son, William Bartram, who wrote of his encounters with Indians of the Southeast in 1791, portrayed the Indians favorably. The trader James Adair, who lived with Cherokees and Chickasaws for forty years, wrote glowingly about Indian law, marriage, and religion in his *History of the American Indians* (1775). The Virginian Henry Timberlake, in his memoirs of 1765, characterized Cherokee culture as an improvement over British culture. The physician and reformer Benjamin Rush praised Indians for their wisdom in a 1789 essay on Indian medicine.

The expedition from 1804 to 1806 by Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, commissioned by President Jefferson, and the publication in 1814 of Nicholas Biddle's *History of the Expedition*, provided a wealth of information about Indians from the upper reaches of the Missouri to the Pacific Ocean. The expedition brought back Indian animal-skin maps, dress, and a host of other artifacts that Jefferson displayed in his Indian cabinet at Monticello. Encountering over fifty tribes, the explorers described Indians as simple savages, culturally inferior to whites and prone to stealing and sexual promiscuity. The founding of the American Philosophical Society in 1743, with Franklin as the first president and Jefferson as a leading member, fostered the pursuit of knowledge in the areas of ethnology and philology. The Moravian missionary John Heckewelder, who became a member of the American
Philosophical Society in 1797, chronicled his experiences among the Leni-Lenape Delawares in *History, Manners, and Customs of Indian Nations* (1819). His commendation of Indian life, except for their refusal to abandon their "heathenism," became the focus of debates over Indian worthiness. The writers Washington Irving and James Fenimore Cooper considered the attributes of Indians in their fiction and nonfiction works. In his 1813 essay, "Traits of Indian Character," Irving criticized the rapacious frontiersmen for breaking treaties and undermining Indian character; he also praised Indians for what he saw as their natural "wildness" stemming from long contact with nature. Cooper's novel *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826) extolled the Indian for having conquered the wilderness and passing it on to the white man. In 1829 John Augustus Stone's popular play *Metamora, or The Last of the Wampanoags*, based on the life of Metacomet (called King Philip by the colonists), reinforced American fascination with the vanishing "noble savage."

In 1820 President James Monroe commissioned Jedidiah Morse to tour among the Indians and ascertain the "actual state" of Indian affairs. In Morse's 1822 Report to the Secretary of War of the United States on Indian Affairs, he pressed for immediate programs of "civilization." Policymakers agreed that the Indians were expendable, but they had serious doubts as to whether the Indians would accept acculturation programs. By 1829 the notion that Indians should be made peripheral to American society had become dominant. Favoring a policy of Indian removal, Lewis Cass, the governor of Michigan Territory and later secretary of war to Andrew Jackson, dismissed Heckewelder's Indian
history and Hunter's captivity memoir as presenting Indians in too favorable a light; he found The Last of the Mohicans superficial and romantic. Responding to the removalists, William Apess, a Pequot, admonished whites for driving Indians from their ancestral domains in his autobiography, *A Son of the Forest* (1829). Jeremiah Evarts published essays against Indian removal in 1830 under the pseudonym William Penn, invoking the teachings of Penn as they correlated to Evarts's own beliefs about America's obligations, both legal and moral, to indigenous peoples. Intellectualizing Indian existence failed to stop the push for Indian removal. The audience for printed materials and collected artifacts of Indian life lived along the East Coast, far removed from the Indians of the interior and the frontiersmen who came in contact with them. By 1829 the frontier voice was a deciding factor in the formation of a policy of Indian removal. Displacement and dispossession followed, and much of the literature by then accepted Indian expendability as a reality. Frank Cushing’s translations of Zuni literature were widely praised in the past. He uncarpeted devices, lines, and whole passages of his own invention. His work and disciples dominated the field of American Indian anthropology early in the twentieth century. But his followers made the highly literal and often graceless translations.

Another important literary form of Native American literature is Oratory. Oral speeches can be divided into the ceremonial, the non-ceremonial, or some combination of these two forms. Oratory is a highly regarded skill in many Indian tribes. Most of the Indian orators were men, but women too sometimes played important roles as speakers. The plains Indians placed
restrictions on the right of women to speak in public, except for an occasional woman warrior or strong medicine woman. The Iroquois particularly emphasize oratory in their ceremonies. Their oratory focuses on the hero’s journey from one place to another and contains three kinds of words related to departure, travel, and arrival. Non ceremonial speeches can include those made at council meetings, coups counts, formal petitions, addresses of welcome, battle speeches to warriors, and statements of personal feeling or experience. Indian oratory is more commonly associated with formal addresses but informal personal speeches often deeply move the audiences, oratory, after the coming of whites consisted of the speeches made at meetings of Indians and settlers. According to Rudolf Kaiser, the first published version of the popular speech was presented to the public by H.A. Smith in 1887. Indian’s love of the land and commitment to family is eloquently expressed in the oratory. The power of American Indian oratory is still a strong tradition, whether practiced as part of a ceremony held on a reservation, testimony at a congressional hearing for Indian legal rights, or a Veteran’s speech about his wartime exploits that entitle him to carry the Indian flag at the opening ceremonies of the Indian Achievement Award Dinner in Chicago.

Besides oratory Indian writers began to write satires which were already very popular among European writers. As the education in government sponsored schools increased the number of Indian authors, their interest in creative work in a variety of genres also increased. This started the genre of satire. The first American Indian author to publish satires was Alexander Posey
(1873-1907). He satirized the politics of Indian Territory and the nation. His use of dialect and regionalisms was certainly influenced by Robert Burns, and by Finley Peter Dunn, whose satires featuring Mr. Dooley and Mr. Hennessey first appeared in the 1890s. He was also a poet. His, *The Poems of Alexander Lawrence Posey* (1910) was published after his death by his wife Mrs. Minnie Harris Posey. His poetry included protest poetry too. Will Rogers (Cherokee, 1879-1935) was the most popular humorist of his age. His first two books published in 1919 were *Rogers-isms: The Cowboy Philosopher on the Peace Conference* and *Rogerism: The Cowboy Philosopher on Prohibition*. In his writings Roger adopted the role of the wise innocent - a semiliterate Cowboy whose bad grammar and hyperbole gained him instant rapport with average Americans.

Among the different genres of Native American literature autobiographies are ancient and more popular. Twentieth century Indian authors have also written literary autobiographies. John Joseph Mathew’s (1894-1979) *Talking to the Moon* (1945) is one such work strongly influenced by Osage culture as well as by the writers Thoreau and John Muir. N. Scott Momaday is an equally sophisticated autobiographer. He later became a distinguished professor of the University of Arizona English Department. Momaday’s *Way to Rainy Mountain* (1969) chronicles the Kiowa’s origin and migration to Oklahoma, their life both before and after the reservation period, and his own quest for his tribal roots. The rediscovery of tribal, ethnic, and family roots was a frequent theme in American Indian and minority literature
during the 1960s and 1970s. Momaday makes use of Stream of Consciousness narrative in his autobiography, *The Names* (1976). He calls it “an act of imagination”. Momaday is a major influence on contemporary literature. William Lewis Tragdon’s autobiography *Blue Highway* (1982) is one of the most highly acclaimed autobiographies by a contemporary American Indian author. It chronicles the author’s physical and spiritual journey across the country. The tide of Indian-white relations influenced the content and popularity of Indian autobiographies, as well as other genre of Indian literature written and narrated during the nineteenth century. Whites desired to abrogate Indian treaty rights and to gain control of Indian land. This made most writers of the period to devote themselves to fighting for the rights of their people. The enactment of the Indian Removal Bill of 1830, the westward migration of settlers onto Indian land, the relocation of the Indian tribes onto reservations by the 1880s, and the passage of the General Allotment Act (1887), which allotted Indian Land in severalty, ended the traditionally free Indian life. After getting education in white-run schools, Native Americans began to write the stories of their lives. They combined oral history, myths and tales, and personal experience. The first autobiography published in 1829 was *A Son of the Forest* by William Apes in which he included a briefer autobiography in his experience of Five Christian Indians of the Pequod Tribe. In 1847 when government tried to remove Ojibwas from ceded territory to central Minnesota George Copway wrote *The Life, History, and Travels of Kah-ge-ga-bowh* (1847), which reflects the spiritual confessions as well as of the missionary
narratives. From the 1850s to the 1890s, most of the works by Indian authors were histories of woodland tribes from the East and Midwest. Thirty years after Copway’s autobiography, Sarah Winnemucca’s autobiography *Life among the Piutes* was published in 1883. It is a unique chronicle of piunte-white relations during the important period from 1844 to 1883. Winnemucca was the only Indian woman writer of personal and tribal history during most of the nineteenth century. *Life among the Piutes* is one of the most imaginative personal and tribal histories of the period.

By the 1890s and early twentieth century, many autobiographies of Western Indians began to appear. Charles Eastman, one of the first Indian doctors was the most influential and widely read Indian autobiographer. Eastman’s first autobiography *Indian Boyhood* (1902) is about his life as a Santee Sioux from childhood to age fifteen. The book depicts the traditional life of the Sioux before the reservation period. His second autobiography *From the Deep Woods to civilization* (1916) described his experiences in the white world. The work strongly criticizes government policy. In all his works he tried to reveal to his white audience the world views, customs, literature and history of the Indians so that non-Indian Americans might appreciate and emulate Native American virtues. Sioux writers, Luther Standing Bear and Zitkala-Sa were inspired by Eastman’s autobiographies. They wrote their personal narratives. In 1928 Eastman wrote *My People, the Sioux* assisted by E.A.Brininstool.
Gerald Vizenor’s *Interior Landscapes* (1990) is poignant, sprightly, and satiric book. His autobiography reworks and illuminates a number of incidents described in such earlier works as *Wordarrows* (1978), *Earthdivers* (1981), *The Trickster of Liberty* (1988), and various essays. The genre of narrated autobiographies was introduced by *Black Hawk, an Autobiography* (1833). Antoine Le Claire collected and translated *Black Hawk* whereas John B Patterson edited it in final form. Governor Blacksnake is a memoir contemporary to *Black Hawk*. It is recorded in Seneca style English by Benjamin Williams and edited by Thomas Alber under the title *Chainbreaker* (1989). It provides a valuable record of Indian participation in the Revolutionary war. Sam Blow Snake, Mountain Wolf Woman, Maria Chona, John Stands, James Sewid, Left Handed and Albert Yava prepared excellent ethnographic autobiographies. Life histories were important for anthropologists to understand tribal ethnography. *Black Elk Speaks* (1932) narrated by Black Elk (1863-1950) to John G Neihardt is the most widely read work of this genre. In *The Sixth Grandfather*, DeMallie reproduces the original notes taken by Neihardt’s daughter, Hilda Neihardt Petri. Chief Joseph White Bull’s *The Warrior Who Killed Custed* recorded in Dakota falls somewhere between narrated and written personal narrative. It is recorded in writing by the subjects and later edited by Scholars. The long manuscript written by Don Talayesva was revised and restructured extensively by Leo W. Simmons in *Sun Chief*. *The Autobiography of a Yaqui Poet* was the manuscript by Refugio Savala edited by Kathleen Mullen Sands. Mourning Dove’s *Autobiography and*
Ethnohistory, edited by Joy Miller and published under the title *Mourning Dove; A Salishan Autobiography* is very important work for the study of Indian woman.

Zitkala-Sa published autobiographical essays in the Atlantic Monthly in 1900 and 1901, which were later reprinted in her *American Indian Story* (1921). Zitkala, founded the society of American Indians and the National Council for American Indians. Francis La Flesche (1857-1932) was another Plains Indian who wrote a fine autobiography. He was trained by the Scholar J. Owen Dorsey as a Linguist. He became one of the first Indian anthropologists. His major works are *The Omaha Tribe* (1905-06), written with Alice Fletcher, and *The Osage Tribe* (1914-28) and *The Middle Five* (1900). James Paytiamo wrote in first half of the twentieth century. Anna Mooreshaw recently wrote her autobiography *A Pima Past* (1974). Ted Williams gives a witty account of his life in *The Reservation* (1976). James Mc Carthy provides an interesting chronicle of his early life on the reservation, his years as a student in Indian schools, and his experiences as a soldier in *World War I in A Papago Traveler* (1985).

Nonfiction prose was the major genre written by American Indian authors in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The first Indian author to publish in English was Samson Occom (Mohegan, 1723-92). He was a Presbyterian missionary to the Indians and was a powerful preacher. Occom’s *Sermon Preached at the Execution of Mose Paul in India* (1772) was the first Indian best seller. The execution sermon then was very popular in America and
exemplified in the work of Increase Mather and Cotton Mather. The pressure for Indians to move from New England resulted in the Revolutionary War. The Oneidas and other Indians in Western New York were persuaded to move to Wisconsin. William Apes was a forceful Indian protest writer of the early nineteenth century. His Experience of Five Christian Indians of the *Pequod Tribe* (1883) is like an Indian looking – Glass for the White men. Apes charges that merely because of their skin color, Indians were disenfranchised by whites. Ape’s ability as a protest writer is demonstrated in his *Indian Nullification of the Unconstitutional Laws of Massachusetts, Relative to the Marshpee Tribe* (1835). It is a well-documented account of the grievances of the tribe, which he joined and encouraged in its fight for justice. *Eulogy on King Philip* (1836) is William Apess’ final work. Apess forcefully criticizes the inhuman treatment of the Indians by the pilgrims.

In the nineteenth century histories of tribes were written based on oral traditions. David Cusick was the first Indian to publish such a history. His *Sketches of Ancient History of the Six Nations* was published in 1827. In 1850 George Copway published his *Traditional History and Characteristic Sketches of the Ojibwa Nation*. It later appeared under the title *Indian Life and Indian History*. William Whipple Warren’s *History, of the Ojibwa, Based upon Traditions and Oral Statements* (1885), provides a general introduction to the Algonkins and to the Ojibwa nation. It gives a detailed history as their origin and migration legends, their movement Westward and their battles with enemy tribes. Copway’s *Running Sketches of Men and Places, in England, France,*
Germany, Belgium, and Scotland (1851) is the first full-length travel book by an Indian. John Rollin Ridge (1827-67) is one of the few Indians to write fiction and poetry in the nineteenth century. His Life and Adventures of Ioaquin Murieta (1854) is the first novel by an Indian author. His Collected Poems (1868) reflect the sentimentality of popular literature of the period. Ridge also wrote a series on the American Indian which is recently collected in A Trumpeter of Our Own. O-gi-mew-kwe Mit-i-gwa-ki (Queen of the Woods) (1899) is often cited as the first novel by a Native American, Simon Pokagon, devoted to Indian life. But James A Clifton states in Simon Pokagon and the Sand-Bar Case that Pokagon did not write this posthumously published work. The novel combines nostalgic reminiscence for the lost golden age of the Potawatomi with fiery attacks on alcohol, which has destroyed Indian families.

As already mentioned there were many popular Native American writers among whom Charles Eastman was yet another widely read Indian author. He wrote autobiography, nonfiction prose and fiction. Elaine Goodale Eastman was his co author. In, Red Hunters and the Animal People (1904), the Eastmans combined traditional legends with adventure and animal stories based on common experiences and observations of Indian hunters. Old Indian Days (1907) is divided into stories about warriors and those about women. Wigwan Evening :Sioux Folktales Retold (1909), reissued in 1910 under the title Smoky Day’s Wigwan Evenings:Indian Stories Retold was for children. Eastman’s Soul of the Indian (1911), is his fullest statement on ethics. His, Indian Heroes and Great Chieftains (1918) is among his most interesting works because of its
anecdotes. In, *The Indian To-day* (1915), Eastman surveys Indian history, contributions to America, achievements, reservation life and problems. He also discusses government policies toward the Indian. Zitkala-Sa included short stories about Sioux life in *American Indian Stories* (1921), as well as essays and the autobiographical pieces.

The most controversial writer of 1920 was Sylvester Clark Long (Lumbee, 1890-1932). He was the child of Ex-slaves and was a mixed-blood origin. Long Lance (1928), was his autobiography in which he described himself as a Blackfeet chief named Buffalo Child Long Lance. This book was praised by high authorities like Ernest Thompson Seton and Paul Radin. During 1930s John Joseph Mathews and D’Arcy McNickle were the most accomplished American Indian novelists. Writers of this age focused on economic and social issues. But Mathews and McNickle emphasized the importance of tribalism and the devastating impact of the government’s assimilationist policies on tribes. *Wha’Kon-Tah* (1932) was Mathes’s first book. This book shows how Osage culture was affected by life on the reservation, by allotment, by the Oklahoma oil boom of the 1920s.

Next to Autobiographies, Histories, Captivity narratives, Satires etc Novels played a vital role in Native American literature. Novels by Native American authors are different from one another in some ways. Each novel presents a very specific view of a very specific place. Physical setting and cultural setting are extremely important in understanding the story. Even though there are unmistakably unique characteristics, there are also similarities.
A number of the well-known novels by Native American authors are built around the common theme of alienation and cultural conflict. Novels in this category have characteristics of the "initiation story." The basic tenet of the "initiation" theme is that a young man must at sometime face up to the decision as to what he believes and how he intends to live. Confronting cultural conflict, in these stories, is an inevitable stage in becoming an adult. It can be put off, but it cannot be avoided altogether. In most cases, the young hero is both attracted and repelled by his native culture. He is for some reason -usually because of mixed parentage - a fringe person living on the edge of his native culture. He is not a central figure in traditional beliefs and ceremonies. He generally forms a close relationship with an elder whom he trusts and admires, but he is well aware that the old way of life is passing. He has conflicts with the white world, usually in the form of run-ins with the law. For the most part, novels of this type are rather humorless, depressing, and offer little in the way of resolution. Once the trap is set, the hero almost seems doomed to play out his role with little chance of redemption. The cultural conflict is revealed and described, but seldom solved. At best, the hero learns to accept his fate and worst, he dies. One of the earliest, which has stood the test of time rather well, is *The Surrounded* by D'Arcy McNickle. First published in 1936, the novel tells the story of a young man, Archilde Leon, the son of a Spanish father and Indian Mother, who returns to the Flathead Reservation in Montana after attending boarding school. The same story of alienation and cultural conflict is being told by contemporary writers. This novel is the best-written and most published
novel by an Indian writer in the 1930s. One of the strongest influences on
McNickle’s writing was his experiences with federal Indian policy gained as an
employee of the Bureau of Indian Affairs from 1936 to 1952. He confounded
the National congress of American Indians and served as the first director of
the center of History of the American Indian, New Berry library. His novel,
chronicles a mixed-blood’s search for his place and emphasizes the importance
of oral traditions to the cultural survival of the tribe. McNickle’s Runner in the
Sun (1954), is written for middle-school readers. It evokes the life, customs,
and beliefs of the ancient cliff dwellers of Chaco Canyon, as they battle the
forces of nature and society that threaten to destroy them. His next novel, Wind
from an Enemy Sky was published posthumously in 1978. This novel depicts
the clash of two cultures within the individual to that between groups. He wrote
short stories and also histories. They came Here First (1949), The Indian Tribes
of the United States (1962), Indians and other Americans (1970) and Native
American Tribalism (1973), are the histories whereas Indian Man (1971), is a
biography of Oliver La Farge.

Along with novels and poems, dramas were very popular among Native
American writers. Bertrand N.O.Walker (1870-1927) is one of the few Indian
authors to publish poetry during the first half of the twentieth century. His
Volume of dialect poetry Yon-Doo-Shah-We-Ah (1924) contains some
interesting character sketches and narratives and lyrics that evoke traditional
Indian themes. Lynn Riggs (Cherokee, 1899-1954) was the most accomplished
Indian poet in the early twentieth century. His major published Volume of
Poetry is *The Iron Dish* (1930), which contains delicate lyrics, perceptive descriptions of nature, and some realistic observations. His use of “Silver Praye” recalls Keats’ use of synaesthesia. In his poems he effectively blends imagery of touch, sight, and sound. His descriptions of the insects, animals, and plants are in the bucolic tradition of Vergid, Thomson, and Wordsworth. His *Shadow on Snow* combines a playful sense of humor with striking imagery.

Riggs is best known as a dramatist. He was the only Indian author to publish dramas in the first half of the twentieth century. *Big Lake* (1927) was his first play which of not of great success. Two of his best plays were folk dramas set in Oklahoma and written during a 1928 Guggenheim fellowship year in Paris. Riggs’ *The Cherokee Night* (1936), deals poignantly with the sense of loss faced by Oklahoma mixed bloods growing up around Claremore as they became alienated from their Cherokee heritage during the period (1895-1931).

Riggs was not only a writer but also a guest author and director of drama at Northwestern University and the University of Iowa. Todd Downing (Choctaw, 1902-74) was one of the few Indian authors of mystery and detective fiction. Most of his novels were set in Mexico. *Murder on Tour* (1933), *The CatScreams* (1934), *Vultures in the Sky* (1935), *Murder on the Topic* (1935), *The Caseof the Unconquered Sisters* (1936), *The Last Trumpet* (1937), *Night over Mexico* (1937), *Death under the Moonflower* (1938), *The Mexican Earth* (1940) and *The Lazy Lawrence Murders* (1941) are the novels written by Tood. During 1940s and 1950s, the genres of cultural history and autobiography used by earlier writers again became prominent. Ruth Muskrat Bronson (Cherokee)
and Lois Marie Hunter (Shinnecock) were among the writers of this period. Ruth Muskrat wrote, *Indians Are People Too* (1944), and Lois (Sioux) wrote, *Speaking of Indians* (1944), a detailed account on reservations.

With the recognition and popularity of Native American literature many native writers came to light. James Welch (Blackfeet / Gros Ventre, 1940) is another American Indian writer to gain national recognition in the 1970s. Like Momaday and Silko James Welch uses the quest motif in his powerful novel, *Winter in the Blood* (1974). He realistically depicts reservation life and creates different characterizations, especially of women. His second novel, *The Death of Jim Loney* (1979) has the same motif as his first novel, *Winter in the Blood*. He combines tragedy and humor. Welch also has published his collected poems in *Riding the Earthboy* 40 (1971), which contains some powerful protest poetry.

Genald Vizenor (Ojibwa, b.1934) is one of the most widely published and versatile of the contemporary American Indian authors. He is a masterful writer of nonfiction prose. In, *The Everlasting Sky* (1972) and in *The People Named the Chippewa* (1984), many of his articles are collected. These articles are on his people and on Indian issues in general. *Wordarrows* (1978), *Earthdivers* (1981), and *The People Named the Chippewa* are his works where he skillfully has combined nonfiction and short fiction. *Earthdivers*, is one of his best stories. He uses many aspects of American Indian Oral tradition. His novel, *Darkness in Saint Louis Bearheart* (1978), deals with the quest for ritual knowledge by the culture hero-Shaman, Proude Cedarfair. *Griever: An*
American Monkey King in China (1987) won the 1986 Fiction Collective-Illinois State University Award and the 1987 American Book Award for fiction. The Trickster of Liberty: Tribal Heirs to a Wild Baronage at Petronia (1988) contains a whole family of such tricksters, who rebel against conventional systems, establish their ingenious enterprises, and tell trickster stories at such places as White Earth, Berkeley, and China. His, Harold of Orange (1983) focuses on the trickster as entrepreneur. Vizenor is not only a prolific prose writer but also a poet. His early volumes of poetry include Raising the Moon Vines (1964), Seventeen Chirps (1965), Slight Abrasions (1966), and Empty Swings (1967). Matsushinma (1984) is divided into poems on the four seasons. His poems portray the victims of modern society. Few poems depict the cultural suicide of contemporary urban Indians like his father, Clement who was murdered when Vizenor was a small child. In Tribal Stumps, the poet links his father’s life in Minneapolis to that of other mixed-bloods. Vizenor’s Anishinabe Adisokan (1970) consists of commentary and stories of Ojibwa life, customs, religion, and myths about culture hero-trickster.

N.Scot Momaday is the most influential American Indian writer in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Momaday’s emphasis on the problems of Indians in contemporary society, on the importance of oral tradition and ritual, and on the use of memory to structure plot, provide an example that several later Indian novelists followed. Like Mathews and McNickle, he portrays a mixed-blood’s quest for a sense of place, tribe, and self. Momaday’s second novel, The Ancient Child (1989), also focuses on a protagonist’s ritual journey toward
healing and incorporates some of the Kiowa, Pueblo, and Navajo themes. The Ancient Child celebrates the power of the myths and real Indian heroes with those of the outlaw hero. Mythic and real Indian heroes are interwines with those of the outlaw hero. Momaday was an autobiographer, novelist and a fine poet. His, *Gourd dancer*, includes his earlier *Angle of Geese* (1974) and contains many of the themes present in *The Way to Rainy Mountain* (1969) and *The House made of Dawn*, particularly in such poems as *Rainy Mountain Cemetery*, *Angle of Geese*, and *Bear*. Momaday uses sharply etched images and a clear style in his lyric poetry. In *Bear* he effectively captures the power of this animal so sacred to many Indian cultures. The *Gourd Dancer* is the four-poem sequence dedicated to his grandfather, Mammedaly. It stresses the importance of place, family, and tribe. Plain View the series of poems by Momaday demonstrates his skill in writing descriptive-reflective verse. Both Plain View and Delight Song of Tswai-talee evoke the spirit of Indian song in their use of repetition.

As education became common among women they too started to contribute a lot to the Native American literature. Literature about American Indian women has increased during the past twenty years. Violence against women and child abuse has become significant themes of Native American women writers who write fiction about contemporary Indian life. These writers are concerned with violence from within the Native American community, that is, with Indian women who are battered by Indian men and Indian children who are abused by their parents, but they are also concerned with violence from
outside the community, by racist white individuals and institutions. From the work that has been done by American Indian women to recover their past, it seems clear that in traditional Native American cultures women were protected from violence and mistreatment by men, and child abuse was unthinkable. Native American cultures are different from one another but seem to share common beliefs about the treatment of women and children. The lack of this traditional concern, in modern times, becomes an issue in much of the fiction today. By using the insights of the battered women's movement, one can gain a greater appreciation of the fiction's power. During the years from 1754 to 1829, American women writers made many contributions to the shaping of the nascent American nation. They are multifaceted, but sometimes this aspect is overlooked. Their voices speak through private diaries and journals, and in their letters one discovers a record of the events of their lives. Their poems, novels, and sermons unite religious teachings with domestic themes, as they question their place in the emergent social, political, and geographical landscapes of the United States. Some women's writing reflects the "cult of domesticity," which suggested that a woman's place in the domestic sphere was actually the locus of her power. Other women's writing explores the psychological struggles of women in their relationships with men—especially in novels of seduction, which became popular at the turn of the century. High society women expressed an interest in "polite letters"—newspaper articles, essays, and manuscripts largely circulated in literary salons and coffeehouses—as they attempted to infuse social discourse with their aesthetic concerns. Most
important, women's writing during the Revolutionary era illustrates an emerging sense of self-awareness. The inward focus of much of their work in the mid-eighteenth century turned outward by the beginning of the nineteenth century. As women gained self-confidence in their abilities and access to education, their writing reflected an evolution in thinking about significant issues, including religion, attitudes toward Native Americans, racial and gender inequities, and human relationships with the natural world.

Anglo writers had gotten the Native American stories so wrong that some earliest women writers like Humishuma (1888-1971), Ella Deloria (1888-1971), and Pauline Johnson (1861-1913), wrote and retold tribal stories. Later they wrote their own work like short stories or poems, a novel, autobiographies, etc. Bonin was a classically trained violinist who wrote a musical play which gained much popularity. Humishuma became a writer to preserve the stories of the Okanogan people but later she ended up writing a novel. She is well known for her novel Co-gowea, The Half-Blood. Ella Deloria contributed on the linguistics and folklore of the Dakota Sioux. Pauline Johnson, who was a Canadian Mohawk actress, was a popular poetess both for native and non-Indian people. Previously people assumed Sarah Callahan, a well-born Creek to be the first Native American novelist. The autobiographies, journal articles, and tale collections provided powerful literary heritage for contemporary women writers. The tradition of native people is well reflected in their story telling. From the work that has been done by American Indian women to recover their past, it seems clear that in traditional Native American
cultures women were protected from violence and mistreatment by men, and child abuse was unthinkable. Native American cultures are different from one another but seem to share common beliefs about treatment of women and children. The lack of this traditional concern, in modern times, becomes an issue in much of the fiction today. By using the insights of the battered women’s movement, one can gain a greater appreciation of the fiction’s power.

Few popular Native American writers are Susette LaFlesche Tibbles, Emily Pauline Johnson, Emily Susanna Howells, Mourning Dove, Paula Gunn Allen, Leslie Marmon Silko, Louise Erdrich etc.

Susette LaFlesche Tibbles (1854–1903), was a well-known Native American writer, lecturer, interpreter and artist of the Omaha tribe in Nebraska. Susette LaFlesche was a progressive who was a spokesperson for Native American rights. She was of Ponca, Iowa, and French and Anglo-American ancestry. She fought for the rights of Native Americans as a reporter and interpreter during the case of Standing Bear v. General George Crook in 1877. This landmark ruling was a major step forward for Native Americans, but legal recognition as human beings did not necessarily result in more humane treatment by the U.S. government.

Emily Pauline Johnson, a Canadian Mohawk (1861-1913), achieved critical acclaim as a poet and performer of her poetry in, her Native Canada, The United States, and England. Emily Pauline, one of the most widely read Indian authors in the United States was responsible for the evolution of American Indian women’s literature. Her short stories appeared in the Mother’s
Magazine and Boy's World, journals published in the Chicago suburb of Elgin. Known as Tekahionwake, “Double Wampum,” this Mohawk poet enjoyed both critical and popular acclaim for her writing around the turn of the century. She was born near Brantford, Ontario on March 10, 1861, the daughter of Hohawk chief Henry Martin Johnson (Onwanonsyshon) and his English wife, Emily S. Howells. An older cousin on her mother’s side was the writer William Dean Howells.

Emily Susanna Howells was her mother who was the English born cousin of the American writer William Dean Howells. Johnson’s first two volumes of poetry were The White Wampum (1895) and Canadian Born (1903). Her poems were collected in Flint and Feather (1912). ‘The Corn Husker’ is an interesting character sketch of an old Indian woman. Johnson was one of the first Indian women to publish short fiction. Her Moccasin Maker (1913) includes a fictional account of the lives of her parents and many short stories about Indian and Non-Indian woman in Canada. Her stories reflect the domestic orientation common in popular women’s fiction in the nineteenth century. They focus on the problems of mixed blood women in love with white men. The dominant theme of twentieth – century American Indian fiction was the mixed-bloods’ search for their place. Johnson’s stories for boys are collected in The Shagganappi (1913). Her work serves as a transition between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Mourning Dove’s, (Colville 1888-1936) Cogewea, the Half Blood (1981), is the first novel by an American Indian Woman. It focuses on the
identity problem of those with mixed-blood and the importance of oral tradition. Mourning Dove’s *Autobiography and Ethnohistory*, edited by Joy Miller and published under the title *Mourning Dove; A Salishan Autobiography* is very important work for the study of Indian woman.

Zitkala-Sa (Sioux) is also known as Gertrude Simmons Bonnin. Zitkala-Sa became a prominent voice for Native American rights. Zitkala-sa, "Red Bird,"a Yankton Sioux reformer and writer was one of a number of White-educated Indians who fought to obtain fairer treatment for her people by the federal government. Zitkala, founded the society of American Indians and the National Council for American Indians. She published essays in the magazines *The Atlantic Monthly and Harper’s*, edited the *American Indian Magazine* in 1918 and 1919, and wrote two books, *Old Indian Legends* (1901) and *American Indian Stories* (1921). Zitkala-Sa published autobiographical essays in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1900 and 1901, which were later reprinted in her *American Indian Story* (1921).

Dakota linguist and anthropologist Ella Deloria wrote her novel *Waterlily* (1988) in the 1940s, though it was not published until the 1980s, years after her death. Her purpose in the novel, as in all her work, was to preserve Dakota culture and to interpret it for whites, who, she believed, would need to understand Dakota values if Indians were to have a chance to survive in the modern world. *Waterlily* is set in the mid-Nineteenth Century, before whites arrived in large numbers. Deloria’s *Waterlily* was written in 1944, but was published in 1988. *Waterlily* is from a woman’s perspective. It traces the
life of *Waterlily* from birth and childhood through marriage, widowhood, childbirth, and remarriage. Deloria in this novel introduces the reader to Dakota camp life, rituals, kinship systems and customs.

Paula Gunn Allen is a Laguna-Lakota-Lebanese-American poet-essayist, novelist, critic, educator and editor. As a scholar and literary critic, Paula Gunn Allen (born 1939) has worked to encourage the publication of Native American literature and to educate others about its themes, contexts, and structures. Author and poet Paula Gunn Allen is of mixed Lakota and Laguna descent. She was raised in the United States, in the Western culture. Many of her works recall her Indian influences from childhood, mainly given through her mother. She has an extensive background in higher education. She was a professor of literature, American Indian studies, and women's studies at the University of California at Los Angeles. She has written many novels, poems, short stories, and criticisms. She also puts together anthologies of American Indian literature, such as *Voice of the Turtle*, *Song of the Turtle*, and *Spider Woman's Granddaughter*, which won her the American Book Award in 1990. Allen is a widely respected expert on not only literature, but also Indian history, myths, and belief patterns. She is considered one of the greatest Indian authors, alongside N. Scott Momaday, Gerald Vizenor, Leslie Marmon Silko, James Welch, and others. Allen's style of writing is extremely powerful for a number of reasons. She has done extensive study on the Indian culture and was influenced by Indian beliefs and customs from a young age. She has also lived her life in a non-Indian world; therefore she has the opportunity to see each
culture in light of the other. This gives her work a clear picture of how the attributes of Indian, tribal culture compare to the dominant, Western culture. Paula Gunn Allen has achieved success in the individualistic ways of the popular, dominant culture of the United States while adhering to Indian ideas of communal life and relationships with all spiritual beings. Allen's strength is that she writes from neither a White perspective nor an Indian perspective. Since she is neither one completely, she does not try to use her background or personal opinions to give her work validity. Her works encompass many aspects of the American Indian. Having stated that her convictions can be traced back to the woman-centered structures of traditional Pueblo society, she is active in American feminist movements and in antiwar and antinuclear organizations. She attempts to educate mainstream audiences about Native American themes, issues, and concerns by promoting Native American as a viable and rich source of study. Her fiction and poetry frequently refer to her identity as a mixed blood. She emphases, the status of Amerindian women in various Native cultures. Much of Allen’s work is preoccupied with her identity as a woman, mixed blood, and lesbian in Laguna and white society. Focusing on themes of assimilation, self identity, and remembrance, she frequently examines the quest for spiritual wholeness.

Paula Gunn Allen is one of the foremost scholars of Native American literature as well as a talented poet and novelist. She also collects and interprets Native American mythology. She describes herself as a "multicultural event," citing her Pueblo/Sioux/Lebanese/Scottish-American ancestry. Her father, E.
Lee Francis, born of Lebanese parents at Seboyeta, a Spanish-Mexican land grant village north of Laguna Pueblo, spoke only Spanish and Arabic until he was ten. Due to the lack of a Marionite rite in the area, he was raised Roman Catholic. He owned the Cubero Trading Company and was Lieutenant Governor of New Mexico from 1967 through 1970. Her mother, Ethel, is Laguna Pueblo, Sioux, and Scots. She converted to Catholicism from Presbyterianism to marry Francis. Allen's great-grandfather, the Scottish-born Kenneth Gunn, immigrated into the area in the 1800s and married her great-grandmother, Meta Atseye, whose Indian name was Corn Tassel. Meta had been educated at the Carlisle Indian School to be, as Allen says in her introduction to Spider Woman's Granddaughters, "a literate, modest, excruciatingly exacting maid for well-to-do white farmers' and ranchers' wives," but "became the farmer-rancher's wife instead." Her grandmother, half Laguna, half Scottish-American, Presbyterian, first married a Sioux (Ethel's father) and then remarried a German Jewish immigrant, Sidney Solomon Gottlieb. Her mother grew up speaking and writing both English and Mexican Spanish. Allen was born in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and grew up in Cubero, New Mexico, a Spanish-Mexican land grant village abutting the Laguna and Acoma reservations and the Cibola National Forest. She attended mission schools in Cubero and San Fidel, but she did most of her schooling at a Sisters of Charity boarding school in Albuquerque, from which she graduated in 1957. Allen’s The Woman Who Owned Shadows, written in 1983 is one of the first novels written by American Indian woman, that probes into the dilemma of the
contemporary Amerindian woman in ascertaining her identity and role in the multi-ethnic, racist and resistant, individualist and uncaring Post War II America which in itself is in turmoil with collapsed values, family units, cultural roots. Her 1983 novel *The Woman Who Owned the Shadows* and some of her poetry draws from this experience of being raised Catholic. However, Allen is well aware of the conflicting influences in her background: Catholic, Native American, Protestant, Jewish, and Marionite. In an interview with Joseph Bruchac for *Survival This Way*, Allen says: "Sometimes I get in a dialogue between what the Church taught me, the nuns taught me, and what my mother taught me, what my experience growing up where I grew up taught me. Often you can't reconcile them." Her novel speaks to this confusion as the main character attempts to sort through the varying influences to reclaim a Native American women's spiritual tradition. On her journey, her protagonist uses traditional Laguna Pueblo healing ceremonies as well as psychotherapy, the Iroquois story of Sky Woman, and the aid of a psychic Euro-American woman.

Allen received both her bachelor's degree in English (1966) and her Master of Fine Arts degree in creative writing (1968) from the University of Oregon after beginning her studies at Colorado Women's College. She had three children and is divorced. She received her doctorate in American studies with an emphasis on Native American literature (1975) from the University of New Mexico. Two other writers from Laguna Pueblo are related to Allen — a sister, Carol Lee Sanchez, and a cousin, Leslie Marmon Silko.
Allen is recognized as a major scholar, literary critic, and teacher of Native American literature. Her teaching positions include San Francisco State University, the University of New Mexico, Fort Lewis College in Durango, California, the University of California at Berkeley, and the University of California at Los Angeles, where she was a professor of English. Allen's 1983 *Studies in American Indian Literature: Critical Essays and Course Designs*, an important text in the field, has an extensive bibliography in addition to information on teaching Native American literatures. *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions*, published in 1986, contains her 1975 germinal essay "The Sacred Hoop: A Contemporary Perspective," which was one of the first to detail the ritual function of Native American literatures as opposed to Euro-American literatures. Allen's belief in the power of the oral tradition embodied in contemporary Native American literature to effect healing, survival, and continuance underlies all of her work.

Elaborating on the roles and power of Native American women, Allen's "Who Is Your Mother: Red Roots of White Feminism" was published in Sinister Wisdom in 1984. In this startling article, Allen articulated Native American contributions to democracy and feminism, countering a popular idea that societies in which women's power was equal to men's never existed. She also has been a major champion to restore the place of gay and lesbian Native Americans in the community. These ideas were first published in 1981 in a groundbreaking essay in Conditions, "Beloved Women: Lesbians in American Indian Cultures," and then reworked for the Sacred Hoop.
Allen says that her focus on women is intended to affect the consciousness of Euro-American women rather than men because, until the last ten years or so, the women in her culture were never considered weak, and she wants others to know that women were not held down in all cultures. Allen feels some ambivalence about the feminist movement because of this misunderstanding and the cultural chauvinism of Euro-American women, which has been personally hurtful to her and other Native women, but she admits that feminists provide the best audience for her work and have given her much support. In her family, the woman-centered tradition was so strong that her grandfather wanted to name her mother Susan B. Anthony. Allen was awarded a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship for Writing in 1978, and she received a post-doctoral fellowship grant from the Ford Foundation-National Research Council in 1984. Also at this time, she served as associate fellow at the Stanford Humanities Institute, coordinating the Gynosophic Gathering, A Woman Identified Worship Service, in Berkeley. She is active in the anti-nuclear and anti-war movements as well as the feminist movement. She won an American Book Award in 1990 for Spider Woman's Granddaughters: Traditional Tales and Contemporary Writings by Native American Women, which is an attempt to correct the lack of stories by and/or about Native Women in literature collections. In her 1991 *Grandmother of the Light: A Medicine Woman's Sourcebook*, Allen expands her interest in the ritual experience of women as exhibited in the traditional stories. She traces the stages in a woman's spiritual path using Native American stories as models for
walking in the sacred way. Besides her extensive work as a scholar, Allen is the author of numerous volumes of poetry. Because of her multicultural background, Allen can draw on varying poetic rhythms and structures, which emanate from such sources as country-western music; Pueblo corn dances, Catholic masses, Mozart, Italian opera, and Arabic chanting. In her work, a finely detailed sense of place resonates with landscapes from the city, the reservation, and the interior. She has been recognized by critics such as A. Lavonne Ruoff for her purity of language and emotional intensity. Allen became interested in writing in high school when she discovered the work of Gertrude Stein, whom she read extensively and tried to copy. Other influences have been the Romantic poets, Shelley and Keats. Allen took up writing more seriously in college when she read Robert Creeley's For Love and discovered that he was teaching at the University of New Mexico, where she was a student. She took his poetry class, although she considered herself a prose writer at the time. Creeley introduced her to the work of the poets Charles Olson, Allen Ginsberg, and Denise Levertov — all of whom have been major influences on Allen. She left New Mexico to finish her bachelor's degree at the University of Oregon and studied with Ralph Salisbury, who was Cherokee, though she did not know it at the time. Feeling isolated and suicidal, Allen says that the presence of a Santee Sioux friend, Dick Wilson, and the discovery of N. Scott Momaday's *House Made of Dawn* made all the difference to her. Recent influences upon her work have been Adrienne Rich, Patricia Clark Smith, and E.A. Mares.
Allen's *Shadow Country* (1982) received an honorable mention from the National Book Award before Columbus Foundation. Allen uses the theme of shadows — the not dark and not light — to bridge her experience of mixed heritage as she attempts to respond to the world in its variety. Allen's poetry has an infusion of spirits common to Native American literature, but represents not only her Native American heritage, but her multicultural heritage. She also uses her poetry to respond to personal events in her life, such as her mother's suffering with lupus ("Dear World" in Shadow Country) and the death of one of her twin sons ("On the Street: Monument" in Shadow Country). In the interview with Bruchac, Allen says, "My poetry has a haunted sense to it ... a sorrow and grievingness in it that comes directly from being split, not in two but in twenty, and never being able to reconcile all the places that I am." Allen's multicultural vision allows her to mediate between her different worlds to make a rich contribution to Native American literature as a scholar, writer, and educator. Allen continued to receive attention in the 1990s, having her work examined and critiqued in such publications as *The Journal of Homosexuality*, *The Explicator* and *Ariel*. In 1996 she cowrote an anthology of nine stories about Native Americans for young readers titled *As Long As the Rivers Flow*. In 1998, she produced a series of political, spiritual, and intensely personal essays entitled *Off the Reservation: Reflections on Boundary-Busting, Border-Crossing Loose Canons*. Allen retired from her academic position at the University of California, Los Angeles in July 1999. She died on 29 May 2008 due to prolonged illness.
Leslie Marmon Silko, an accomplished Native American contemporary writer was born in Albuquerque, New Mexico in 1948. She has a mix of Laguna Pueblo, Mexican, and White ancestry. Silko grew up at the Pueblo of Laguna, located in west central New Mexico. She attended a Catholic school in Albuquerque, commuting from Laguna. In 1969 she received a bachelor's degree in English from the University of New Mexico. She later taught creative writing and a course in oral tradition for the English department at the University. Leslie Marmon Silko, a Laguna woman is the first female Native-American novelist. She grew up on the Laguna Reservation in New Mexico and is a Pueblo Indian of mixed ancestry-Cherokee, German, Northern Plains, Indian, English, Mexican and Pueblo. She reflects her diverse heritage in her writing. Her famous novel *Ceremony* (1977), illustrates the importance of recovering the old stories and merging them with modern reality to create a stronger culture.

Silko reveals that living in Laguna society as a mixed blood from a prominent family caused her a lot of pain. It meant being different from, and not fully accepted by either the full blooded Native Americans or white people. Silko, despite her pain, was able to overcome the lack of acceptance and identify with the Laguna culture despite her keen awareness of the equivocal position of mixed-bloods in Laguna society, she considers herself Laguna. As a child Silko became familiar with the cultural folklore of the Laguna and Keres people through the stories passed down to her by her grandmother Lilly and her Aunt Susie. These women both had a tremendous effect on Silko. While still in
college Silko wrote and published a short story "The Man to Send Rain Clouds." For this story she was awarded with the National Endowment for the Humanities Discovery Grant. In 1974 she published Laguna Woman, a book of poetry. In 1977 she wrote her novel *Ceremony*. The novel received high praise from critics and its readers. She has in fact been called the most accomplished Native American writer of her generation.

Silko's additional literary works include *Storyteller* (1981), *Almanac of the Dead* (1991), and *Yellow Woman + the Beauty of Spirit* (1996). She has also published several articles dealing with literature as well as other pertinent social issues. Examples of these articles include "In the Combat Zone" and "Race + Racism- Faces against Freedom". In her interviews and publications, Silko emphasizes the importance of stories to the Laguna Pueblo culture. Silko reveals that living in Laguna society as a mixed blood from a prominent family caused her a lot of pain. It meant being different from, and not fully accepted by either the full blooded Native Americans or white people. Silko, despite her pain, was able to overcome the lack of acceptance and identify with the Laguna culture. Despite her keen awareness of the equivocal position of mixed-bloods in Laguna society, she considers herself Laguna.

A critic, Laura Coltelli, asked Silko in an interview if *Ceremony* was not the case that the story stressed the importance of women and their role in society. Silko answered by saying that the role of women in society was part of the theme but not all of it. In her interviews and publications, Silko emphasizes the importance of stories to the Laguna Pueblo culture. In *Critical Fictions*: 
The Politics of Imaginative Writing, Silko writes that "the stories are always bringing us together, keeping this whole together, keeping this family together, keeping this clan together. 'don't go away don't isolate yourself because we've all had these kinds of experiences' . . . This separation not only endangers the group but the individual as well-one does not recover by oneself" (Silko 86). The different perspectives given illustrate of the variety of opinions, thoughts and critiques of Ceremony.

Karen Louise Erdrich was born in Little Falls, Minnesota, in 1954 and grew up in Wahpeton, North Dakota, a town on the border of Minnesota. Her father, Ralph Louis, was a teacher with the U.S. government's Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) at Wahpeton, and her mother, Rita Joanne Gourneau, was a BIA employee at the Wahpeton Indian school. The family lived in employee housing at the school, and Erdrich attended public schools and spent a few years at St. Johns, a Catholic school. She later noted that Catholicism—with its strong sense of ritual—had a powerful effect on her that remained a part of her even after she stopped practicing the religion. Erdrich's German heritage comes from her father, and her three-eighths Chippewa heritage comes from her mother. Erdrich's admiration for her grandfather can be seen in several of the complex male characters in her writings. As a child, Erdrich's parents encouraged her to write. Her mother made little books with construction paper covers for Erdrich's stories, and her father paid Louise a nickel for each one she finished. Her mother found out about the Native American program at New Hampshire's Dartmouth College and helped Erdrich apply in 1972. Erdrich was
in the first class of Dartmouth that accepted women in the previously all-male school. Several grants and scholarships allowed her to attend Dartmouth, and Erdrich, who majored in English and creative writing, won several writing awards. Finding that poetry came easily to her, she decided to pursue writing professionally.

After her graduation in 1976, Erdrich went back to North Dakota, deciding to become a writer. Louise Erdrich is known for her moving and often humorous portrayals of Chippewa life in North Dakota in poetry and prose. In her verse and in novels such as Love Medicine, Tracks, The Bingo Palace, and The Beet Queen, she draws on her years in North Dakota and on her German and Chippewa heritage to portray the great endurance of women and Native Americans in twentieth-century America. She has won an array of awards and substantial recognition for her novels, as well as for her short stories, poetry, and essays. Louise Erdrich is a modern writer of Native American descent. In her novels, she explores the stories of several Native American families, building their creative tales from quests for identity, the influence of religion, Native American traditions, and incorporating influences of her mixed-blood background, and sense of humor, among other things. Like William Faulkner and his Yoknapatawpha County, American writer Louise Erdrich has created her own mythical landscape in and around Argus, a fictional Red River Valley reservation town on the Minnesota-North Dakota border, and has also manufactured an eccentric cast of characters who appear and re-appear throughout her many novels set there. These include the Lamartine, Pillager,
Morrisey, and Kashpaw families, as well as Father Damien, Nanapush, Dot Adare, Pauline Puyrat, and a score of others who weave in and out of 1984's *Love Medicine* through 2001's *The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse and beyond*. Readers of further titles in Erdrich's loosely connected series, including *The Bingo Palace*, *The Beet Queen*, *Tracks*, and *Tales of Burning Love* will recognize and empathize with these old friends, though with *The Antelope Wife* Erdrich branches out to introduce new locations in the region and two new families. As a Native American author, Erdrich has also been compared to Richard Wright and James Baldwin for what those writers achieved on behalf of African Americans, as well as to Philip Roth due to his Jewish narratives. Erdrich is credited with bringing Native Americans into mainstream fiction and inspiring an entire generation of new voices in Native-American literature. The daughter of a French-Ojibwa mother and a German-American father, Erdrich explores Native-American themes in her works, with major characters representing both sides of her heritage. She takes a close--sometimes near-horrific, sometimes humorous--look at the meetings of these two cultures, which sometimes clash, sometimes co-mingle. Drawing on her Chippewa/Ojibwa heritage, Erdrich examines the complex relationships--both familial and sexual--between Midwestern Native Americans and their neighboring white communities.

The first in a multi-part series, *Love Medicine* traces two Native-American families from 1934 to 1984 in a unique seven-narrator format through fourteen interconnected stories, and thereby sets the design for further
novels with their non-chronological, episodic approach. The novel was extremely well received, earning its author numerous awards, including the National Book Critics Circle Award in 1984. Other novels from Erdrich have been equally well received.

Together the Erdrich’s husband Dorris and Erdrich worked on short stories, poetry, and novels, and had six children together, three of their own and three adopted. One of their children was tragically killed in 1991, causing a major rift in the relationship. That year *The Crown of Columbus* was published, the only novel to actually have both authors' names on it, as well as a book of travel essays, *Route Two*. Michael A. Dorris (b.1945) is the author of *A Yellow Raft on Blue Water* (1987). This novel takes the family as its theme. It is the first novel by an Indian author to deal with a mixed-blood character that is part Indian and part African American. Dorris tells the stories of three generations of women torn apart by secrets but bound by kinship. *The Broken Cord: A Family's On-Going Struggle with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome* (1989) is nonfiction which portrays Dorris’ life with his adopted son Adam. The book also contains a moving foreword by Erdrich, describing her experiences with Adam, whom she adopted after she married Dorris. The marriage continued to unravel, and the couple later separated. Allegations of sexual abuse were leveled at Dorris before his tragic suicide in 1997.

and *The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse* encompass the stories of several interrelated families living in and around a reservation in the fictional town of Argus, North Dakota, from 1912 through the 1980s. The novels have been compared to those of Faulkner not only for the creation of this mythical landscape, but also due to the multi-voice narration and non-chronological storytelling the Southern writer employed in works such as *As I Lay Dying*. Erdrich's works, linked by recurring characters who are victims of fate and the patterns set by their elders, are structured like intricate puzzles in which bits of information about individuals and their relations to one another are slowly released in a seemingly random order, until three-dimensional characters--with a future and a past--are revealed. Through her characters' antics, Erdrich explores universal family life-cycles while also communicating a sense of the changes and loss involved in the twentieth-century Native American experience. *Love Medicine*, named for the belief in love potions which is a part of Chippewa folklore, explores the bonds of family and faith that preserve both the Chippewa tribal community and the individuals that comprise it.

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