Cory Willmott

Legend, Language and Literacy: Native North American Encounters with “The Book”

Native North American nations had cultural traditions and social institutions based on oral traditions and highly developed systems of inscription. Their historical encounters with alphabetic systems include pressures to convert to Christianity and treaty documents in which they signed away their land. Most written sources of Native American history embody the biases of the colonizing nations. From early colonial encounters, however, Native Americans understood the power of colonial systems and adopted writing strategies to appropriate them. This panel explores creative struggles and achievements for Native American voices and self-representation in both indigenous and colonial languages.