

## **Kline - Miami University Special Collections Blogpost**

The Miami University Walter Havighurst Special Collections division hosts a plethora of materials and archives that allows members of the Miami community to conduct research or just learn about a topic. Of special significance is the NAWPA collection. Established in 1996, the NAWPA archive houses an extensive collection of bibliographic and editorial materials utilized by the Native American women playwrights displayed by Miami University's libraries. Relatively unknown by much of the student body and even many faculty members, this selection highlights the many accomplishments of Native American women in a field that often neglects to notice them. This collection contains everything from biographies of the playwrights, novels and plays that they've written, correspondence they've sent and received, awards they've won, and even some of their anthologies. Whether for research or entertainment, this archive is a perfect place to begin utilizing the vast resources of Miami University's Special Collections department.

One of the many samplings of the Native American Women Playwright Archive includes renowned writers in the field from across the United States such as Diane Glancy, a Missouri-born author and playwright of Cherokee descent. Her award-winning material housed in the archives includes extensive samplings of many of the manuscripts of her work such as the *Maize in the Cornfield*, *American Gypsy*, and *The Woman who was a Red Deer Dressed for a Deer Dance*. These materials not only sample the writings of Glancy but also include audio cassette recordings, letters denoting Glancy's work performance in contests, and flyers from several of the live performances of her staged work. In addition to this vast array of Glancy's writings, the archive includes correspondence between her and Miami University libraries about receiving

materials related to the field<sup>1</sup>. This extensive subject material on one author is indicative of the collection's overall excellence in showcasing the diverse field of Native American women playwrights that have participated in and shaped American theater.

In addition to displaying extensive material on Native American women playwrights and significant events they were involved in, the Walter Havighurst Special Collections Archive plays host to comprehensive material on selected theater troupes headed by Native American women playwrights. One of them included Thunderbird Theatre, a drama group located at Haskell Indian Nations University in Lawrence, Kansas<sup>2</sup>. The acting troupe, first operating with Haskell Indian Nations University and later as an independent entity, performs many Native American productions. Included in the collection's materials pertaining to Thunderbird Theatre are the published materials and programs of theater acts such as *Children of the Sun* and *Songs of Life*. The wealth of information devoted to a relatively minor theater group demonstrates the quality of the archive's attention to detail and ability to acquire information.

In my personal examination of the collection, I came across several unique facets that just illustrate the fascinating topics one can find in this archive. One of the first subjects I came across was a brief outlining a civil suit several Native American women brought up against entertainment giant, Marvel. The reason for the case stemmed from the trademarked name of Spiderwoman, which came into conflict with the women's theater company that was known as "Spiderwoman Theater." The women, who were members of the Hopi Tribe, stated that the name of their theater was in honor of one of their deities, and a company like Marvel had no

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<sup>1</sup> Glancy, Diane. Letter to William Wortman. 12 April 2000. Box 2, Folder 11. Native American Women Playwright Archive. Walter Havighurst Special Collections & University Archives, Miami University Libraries, Oxford, OH. 8 May 2018.

<sup>2</sup> Thunderbird Theatre. Box 1, Folder 1. Native American Women Playwright Archives. Walter Havighurst Special Collections & University Archives, Miami University Libraries, Oxford, OH. 8 May 2018.

right to trademark a name sacred to their culture<sup>3</sup>. The Spiderwoman Theater, much like the Thunderbird Theatre mentioned earlier, is an independent drama organization that showcases Native American theater. The dispute is a reminder of the discrimination faced by Native Americans both through purposeful and unwitting actions, and how archives exhibiting their culture are necessary to help overcome it.

The Native American Women Playwrights Archive is one of the most extensive of its kind, whose easy layout makes it easy to quickly gather information on any subtopic. If anyone wishes to research a topic concerning Native American theater, I would encourage them to begin their search at the Walter Havighurst Special Collections at Miami University.

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<sup>3</sup> Marvel Comics Dispute. 1 October 1980. Box 1, Folder 9. Native American Women Playwright Archive. Walter Havighurst Special Collections & University Archives, Miami University Libraries, Oxford, OH. 4 April 2018.