

UCLA

American Indian Culture and Research Journal

Title

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Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/9zf403bp>

Journal

American Indian Culture and Research Journal , 48(1)

ISSN

0161-6463

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Publication Date

2025-03-03

DOI

10.17953/A3.41969

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Welcome to the Indigenous Languages Slipstream

Jenny L. Davis

Welcome to the Indigenous languages slipstream
 I imagine this is all a little disorienting—
 In your universe our languages might as well
 be wearing invisibility cloaks
 because the only place you look for them
 is the past
 in a museum, and archive
 on a wax cylinder
 In your universe you carved our languages
 small enough to keep them in your pocket
 to put them on your keychains and hand down to your
 academic children like the good silverware
 only to be taken out
 on special occasions
 never for general use
 You can't see what is all around you
 because your language doesn't have a word for *Indian*
 in the present tense

But look around you
 in *this* universe our languages
 are *everywhere*

JENNY L. DAVIS is a citizen of the Chickasaw Nation and an associate professor of anthropology and American Indian studies at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, where she directs the American Indian Studies Program and codirects the Center for Indigenous Science. Davis is the author of *Talking Indian: Identity and Language Revitalization in the Chickasaw Renaissance* and *Trickster Academy*, a poetry collection.

Native movies don't star Kevin Costner here
(but they still star Tantoo Cardinal and Wes Studi).
Digital Indians speak Iñupiaq and Kanyen'kéha on
PS5s, memes circulate over social media
in Ararahih'uripih and Anishinaabemowin, and
the latest film in the Predator franchise can be watched
in Numu Tekwapu audio and subtitles.
Robots speak Chickashanompa' here
and so do the dogs, but especially
our children, our adults and our Elders.
Please keep your hands inside the vehicle and don't take anything.