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Episode 343: Music and Song in Native North America

Announcer: [00:00:00] You're listening to an AirWave Media podcast.

Liz Covart: [00:00:04] *Ben Franklin's World* is a production of The Omohundro Institute and is sponsored by the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.

Hello and welcome to episode 343 of *Ben Franklin's World*, the podcast dedicated to helping you learn more about how the people and events of our early American past have shaped the present-day world we live in. And I'm your host Liz Covart. Over the last year or two, you've been asking for episodes about music in early America. Well, associate producer Holly White and I are happy to say that we have fulfilled your request. This episode is the first in a five-episode series about music in early America. Each episode will show you how different cultures and peoples within early America used and created music in the course of their everyday lives.

In this episode, we joined Chad Hamill, a professor of applied Indigenous studies at Northern Arizona University and an ethnomusicologist who specializes in Native American and Indigenous music. Now, during our high-level conversation about music and its importance to Native American and Indigenous communities, Chad reveals the study of ethnomusicology and how it helps us understand the musical traditions of people from the past and the present, the musical landscapes of Native North America by 1492, and the role music played and plays in Native American life in both the past and the present.

But first, a bit about this series. This series is meant to be a starting point for future conversations about music and musical traditions in early America. So each episode is really meant to provide us with overview information that we can use in future episodes. Also, because we are studying music in and from the early American past—a time without recording technology—our episodes are actually a bit light on music. Holly and I did our best to find examples of musical genres and songs that our guests mention. Some of our guests even provided music that we can use. So whenever possible, you will hear examples of music. But no episode will be full of music. Lastly, as this is a five-episode series, we're going to run these episodes back-to-back over the next five weeks, so be sure you check out your podcast player of choice each week up until Christmas for new episodes. So thank you for your many requests, Holly and I really had a lot of fun producing this series, and we hope you enjoy it. Also, we wish you and your loved ones a very happy Thanksgiving and a wonderful holiday season.

Okay, let's go explore some music and musical traditions within Native North America.

Our guest is a professor of applied Indigenous studies at Northern Arizona University. His professional training is as an ethnomusicologist and his research specialties are in Indigenous music, songs and spirituality, and ecological knowledge. He's a descendant of the Spokane Tribe of Indians and the author of the book, *Songs of Power and Prayer in the Columbia Plateau: the*



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Jesuit, the Medicine Man, and the Indian Hymn Singer. Welcome to *Ben Franklin's World*, Chad Hamill.

Chad Hamill: [00:03:27] Thanks, Liz. *Xest sk'ek'wst*, good morning. It's good to be with you.

Liz Covart: [00:03:31] It's nice to be with you, too, Chad. Now I know we're looking forward to talking a lot about Native American and Indigenous music, but before we dive into that part of the discussion, the main discussion, would you tell us about some of the professional hats you wear? We haven't yet spoken with a professor of applied Indigenous studies or an ethnomusicologist. So would you tell us about applied Indigenous studies and about your work?

Chad Hamill: [00:03:56] Sure. So applied Indigenous studies is tied to Indigenous studies, and Indigenous studies is fundamentally interdisciplinary. So there are all sorts of different perspectives and the angles with which we approach the field. In terms of applied Indigenous studies, my home department, we have folks focused on Native American law and policy, Indigenous health, leadership studies, and ecological justice. And of course my area of expertise is ethnomusicology. So it's fairly broad in that sense. And we're actually the only department I'm aware of with an applied focus and with the term "applied" in the title. And what that means for us is that we're focused on applying the work that we do for the benefit of Indigenous communities, so rather than staying strictly in a scholarly sphere and writing articles in books for the benefit of a scholarly community, we're really intent on doing work that's going to have a direct impact in Indigenous communities. And that's really the distinction.

Liz Covart: [00:05:12] Now, what about the field of ethnomusicology, your specific field of study? What is ethnomusicology and how is it different from say, the field of musicology?

Chad Hamill: [00:05:22] You know, ethnomusicology in basic terms is the study of people making music, and in many respects it's a bit like musical anthropology, in the sense that ethnomusicology, early on, adopted anthropological methods in terms of going into communities and doing anthropological work. So there's an expectation in the field of ethnomusicology that in terms of the work you are doing as an ethnomusicologist, it's going to be rooted within communities of people making music. And so field work is central. And there's also an emphasis on what one of the early ethnomusicologists, by the name of Mantle Hood, termed as "bi-musicality."

So there's also an expectation that, as an ethnomusicologist, you're going to make an effort to understand a musical tradition to the extent that you're going to learn it. And in that sense, back in the fifties, the thought was, well, if you learn another musical tradition, more than likely you come in with some knowledge about Western musical tradition, you're going to become bi-



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musical in the sense that you're going to learn another musical tradition and be able to speak to it from more of an embodied perspective.

Liz Covart: [00:06:43] I'm glad you mentioned that there's a lot of anthropology in the study of ethnomusicology, or in the study of the ways that people make music, because in this podcast we talk a lot about evidence and the sources historians use to research the past and to get at what happened in the past. So Chad, what sources do you use in your study of ethnomusicology? How do you know what you know about how Indigenous communities have made and make music? Both in the past and in the present?

Chad Hamill: [00:07:12] In ethnomusicological studies fairly early on, there was distinction made between the emic and the etic. Emic being an inside perspective, inside track, etic being an external, or outside, perspective. In terms of my own work, as a carrier of traditional songs within my Spokane community, when I'm focused as an ethnomusicologist on the musical traditions, the song styles of the Spokane and surrounding tribes, I bring a level of that inside perspective to the work that I do. But like anthropologists, there's also an acknowledgement that as a researcher you invariably adopt an outside or etic perspective in the work that you do, there has to be some level of distance, if you will, between you and what you are looking at listening to objectively.

Liz Covart: [00:08:09] Now it's time for us to investigate the musical landscapes of Native North America before the arrival of Christopher Columbus. So Chad, could you take us on a tour of Native North America and tell us a bit about the musical landscapes that existed around the year 1492, but before Columbus arrived?

Chad Hamill: [00:08:27] In 1491, one would encounter a vast array of distinct Indigenous communities and nations singing in a multitude of song styles and languages throughout the continent. And I really want to emphasize that. Too often, Native American cultures, communities, and nations are seen kind of as a homogenous group, and that's not at all the case. So there would've been a lot of variety, a lot of diversity in the kinds of singing you'd be hearing. So, you know, virtually every significant gathering, from the sharing of foods to sacred ceremonies, would have included singing.

So it was pervasive, it was ubiquitous, it was always there. Singing, drumming, and dancing were an integral aspect of everyday life for Indigenous communities. So for someone coming from somewhere else and landing in North America, it's likely that even before they saw an Indigenous person, they'd hear, they'd hear a song, perhaps in the distance. And there are, of course, there are many accounts where that is in fact the case.



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Liz Covart: [00:09:42] I've hear a lot of people describe music as language. That when you can read music, you can read a different language. So in what ways did Indigenous music, given the numerous varieties of peoples, languages, and cultures, in what ways did Indigenous music vary between linguistic groups, cultural groups, and maybe even by different regions of North America by 1491?

Chad Hamill: [00:10:04] Widely. It varied widely, and the reason we know this, of course, is because these song traditions, which were tied intimately to sacred activities, the use of song as a prayer, they've remained consistent. So from the point of contact to the present, our sacred song traditions have remained embedded. So in getting back to your question, the song style of plains singing, traditional singing in the plains, is going to be quite different than song styles you would find, let's say on the Northwest Coast.

So plains singing, one term that's been used to describe it is using kind of a terraced format, covers a wide range and, generally speaking, when we're looking at traditional songs of the Northwest Coast, we don't have as wide a range being utilized. And then a multitude of other differences from just strictly melodic differences to the ways that songs are structured, arranged, put together. It also comes down to the timbre of the voice. So you know, in terms of timbre, for those that may not be familiar with that term, you might have more of an abrasive vocal tone, one that's more smooth. We have variance there, too.

Liz Covart: [00:11:31] One thing that seems to be universal in all human cultures is that humans integrate music into prayer and religious worship. So while different Native American peoples and nations had and have different religions, I wonder if you could give us an example and talk a bit about some of the broad differences or similarities in the ways that Indigenous peoples use music in their religious worship around the year 1491.

Chad Hamill: [00:11:57] Yeah, in Indigenous communities, certainly in the precontact era—when I say “precontact” I mean the precontact European era—we have the use of prayer and song is not separated from other aspects of culture and everyday activities. So that's a real important distinction that, you know, this mindset of prayer, being in a state of prayer, giving thanks and gratitude for all that's been given, That's something that is a constant. It's always there. And so that's been a challenge in terms of relaying what is referred to as Native American music to non-Native people and communities. There's a tendency to want to view these traditions kind of within the framework of what we commonly think of as music, which is associated with all sorts of different values, largely Western values. So I don't know of a Native language that has a term for music. And that's because I mentioned the connection between singing and praying, song as prayer. These things are not compartmentalized. They all work together holistically, and I think that's an important thing to bear in mind, that just in terms of



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worldview, Indigenous peoples and communities tend to see the world in much more holistic terms.

So getting back to song traditions. They're ongoing and they permeate all aspects of life. So before someone goes out, for instance, to hunt or to gather, the songs are sung, and they're sung during the gathering and the hunting, they're intertwined that way. So you might have songs done strictly in what we might call a ceremonial sphere, in a space that's reserved for ceremonial and sacred activity, but you also have it everywhere else.

Liz Covart: [00:14:05] We seem to know a fair bit about what Indigenous music sounded like around the time of 1491, but I wonder how do we know what we know about this music and what it sounded like? It's not like we can just go into the archive and dig up a bunch of audio recordings because that technology didn't exist until the early twentieth century. So how do we know what we know about what this music may have sounded like?

Chad Hamill: [00:14:31] We do know what it sounded like because these sacred song traditions have remained intact despite all the pressures of this process of colonization and assimilation—boarding schools, for instance, where children were sent to be reprogrammed. And through all of this, all of the trauma, all of the devastation, the loss of lands, the loss of culture, and even the loss of songs, these sacred song traditions have remained intact and consistent, and so we do have a window to the past, the precontact past. In addition to that, we have the Bureau of Indian Ethnology, who were really the original ethnomusicologists before we had that term, in the nineteenth century, running all over the place, hurriedly recording stories and songs that they were convinced were going to disappear. And there were reasons to feel that way and to view it that way. So we actually have, for instance, these wax cylinder recordings that were made really all over present-day United States.

[Recording]

So we do have those records. But again, that's the thing, and it's worth emphasizing here that the song traditions, like Native cultures, didn't disappear. You look at the pressures put on them and you think—you'd understandably assume—that they would have, but they endured. And that says a lot about Indigenous resilience.

Liz Covart: [00:16:14] I'm curious how you chart change over time through music. So human civilizations aren't static, so people change and music must change. So how can we study how songs change from, say, 1491 until 1910 when that wax cylinder recording of the Owl Dance was made? And just a quick note on that recording, too, The Smithsonian does not have an author tag for the Owl Dance recording. It tells us it's the Owl Dance recording and it appears



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from some research that the Owl Dance may come from the Blackfoot, the Blackfeet people who do have a tradition of the Owl Dance.

Chad Hamill: [00:16:50] And that is the thing, right? Musical traditions, song traditions, like cultures, are not the static boxes that are impenetrable. Sharing across cultures and communities has been the norm since the beginning of humanity. And so that certainly is something you can expect when you are looking at any musical tradition. But I go back to what we might call the inherent insularity of the sacred space. And so these song traditions carried by Indigenous communities throughout present-day North America, because of the insularity of that sacred space—and that sacred space went from above ground to underground in the sense that a lot of these things had to move underground to remain intact and be preserved because of the pressures of colonization—those song traditions have remained amazingly consistent and resistant to change. Now, when we get into more of what we might call the open musical genres that were more fluid, in the sense that they were shared across these lines, we see quite a bit of musical change.

Liz Covart: [00:18:11] Could we talk about how music was shared among Indigenous peoples around 1491? We've mentioned that there is this spiritual space that tended to be fairly insular, but that there was a lot of interaction between different Native peoples. So what role did music play in the ways that Indigenous peoples interacted and still interact with each other?

Chad Hamill: [00:18:33] So, just speak to the Northwest for a moment, we have a lot of waterways. And those waterways were pathways for trading amongst different communities. And today we have what we refer to as the canoe journeys. And so tribal communities up in the Northwest every year get into traditional canoes and move along those historic and traditional routes, those waterways. And it's worth noting that before any of those canoes touch the land that belongs to another tribal community, the canoe stops there in the water and a song is given, a song is sung. And this is a way of putting forth good intentions, number one. Here we are, through the singing of the song, this is who we are and we want to come in a good way onto your lands and visit, spend time, trade, eat, whatever it might be. But that process, rather than a handshake, it's a song.

Liz Covart: [00:19:42] And I have to imagine that kind of like body language, music in its tone must indicate intention. So I imagine that perhaps songs of goodwill, like the ones that might be played before landing a canoe on someone else's land, might have upbeat and happy tones rather than angry short staccato tones, tones of danger that you might hear and say a song before a war.

Chad Hamill: [00:20:05] Yeah, certainly there are aesthetic differences that you hear when we're talking about songs of warning, right? Someone has passed. Those songs tend to have a very different quality than a song that would be sung at maybe a first foods feast or something



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like that. So getting back to your initial question, songs were in some cases, given as gifts, songs were traded among different communities. So this gets to what we might refer to as song ownership. And when we're talking about songs in a sacred sphere, these are songs that are given to an individual from the spirit realm. So from a spiritual entity, we have a Spokane term, *sumeš*. The *sumeš* are our spirit guides, if you will. So it may be a song that's given to an individual from a spirit guide to use for the benefit of their community. So in that sense, once it's given, someone carries that song.

Now, when you use the term ownership again, that's a very Western concept. Really we're talking about being the carrier of a song. And so you're gifted a song like that, it's your responsibility to carry that song, to use it in the way it was intended to be used, and then it might go back to where it came from and reappear sometime later when that song is then given to another individual.

Liz Covart: [00:21:42] So how far do you think a song could travel if it was gifted? This is something I'd really like for us to explore, but first we need to take a moment to thank our episode sponsor. As we've been hearing, music was an ever-present aspect of early American life, and our friends at the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation have a new exhibition in the art museums of Colonial Williamsburg called *Making Music in Early America*.

Making Music in Early America will immerse you in the musical world of the eighteenth century, a time when you could hear songs sung in the work fields, at militia drills on town commons, and places like churches, ballrooms, and family parlors. This exhibition at the art museums of Colonial Williamsburg will allow you to see the instruments used to enliven dinner parties, theaters, and life in enslaved quarters. It will also allow you to see how music changed over time and created communities and community life. To learn more about Colonial Williamsburg's *Making Music in Early America* exhibition, visit benfranklinworld.com/music. That's benfranklinworld.com/music.

Chad, If the Spokane people gifted a song to a neighboring Native nation who in turn gifted that Spokane song to another Native nation, how far might we expect that song to travel away from Spokane homelands? Is that even something we can know?

Chad Hamill: [00:23:02] You know, I think that would be tough to know. At the same time, regionally speaking, it's like language, right? So the Spokane language is an Interior Salish language. Another term, Interior Salishan language, which is common to many, many communities from the interior northwest United States up into British Columbia. And the language will vary quite a bit as you move down that road. You know, the further you go, the more differences you're going to encounter. The more changes. So like language, you may hear a song that says, my God, that sounds really familiar. It's different, but it sounds familiar to me.



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That may in fact be a song that was shared one hundred, two hundred, five hundred years ago that took on a different hue over time, in the same way language does.

Liz Covart: [00:23:57] So thus far our conversation is centered on singing and it's integral nature to Indigenous cultures and nations, especially when it comes to religion. But I wonder about instrumentation. Chad, will we find instruments among Indigenous communities around 1491? And if we would find instruments, what kinds of instruments would we see communities playing?

Chad Hamill: [00:24:18] Yeah, so I talked about the holistic qualities of these different cultural elements. So if we're talking about a ceremony we might have singing, accompanying dancing, along with drumming. Drums were very common. A lot of different types of drums. Usually in terms of the sound of those drums differentiated by the type of skin that's used for those drums. You might also have, in terms of providing that consistent heartbeat, it might be sticks, it might be a log drum, something like that. Also, flutes were very, very common throughout present-day North America, and that's a kind of a matter of what I refer to as convergent evolution. That's not my term. I came across it at some point. I can't recall who used it in what context, but that's an important thing because in terms of archaeological and anthropological studies, too often an anthropologist—certainly in the early twentieth century, might come upon one community that has certain things, it could be ceremonies that look similar, what have you—would make a connection and say, well, those must have been brought to this other community when that may not be the case at all. It could be a simple matter of that convergent evolution where you have two things developing over time in similar ways. Getting back to the flute. I see it in that way. You have different types of woods that are used for flutes that sprout up all over the place.

So in terms of instrumentation, one thing I want to zero in on here is, you know, people may look at that and go, Gosh, that's so limiting. Just drums, rattles, flutes, and voice. What's important to bear in mind is Indigenous communities, precontact and to the present, we're talking about traditional singing and traditional ceremonies, these are very different value systems. It's not designed for performance. There's no element of virtuosity, we're not concerned with that. The primary concern in traditional contexts is the use of song as a catalyst for spiritual power to bridge those worlds. And so how many notes you might be able to play, right, within a bar. Don't care. We're not concerned with range. Not necessarily even concerned with how people normally view soft aesthetic beauty. Really the emphasis is on the ability, number one, of the singer to utilize this song to bridge those worlds for the benefit of their community. So I guess what I'm saying here is that in terms of—we might look at as the evolution of musical traditions in Europe. And from a Western perspective, these were not the kinds of things that Indigenous communities were concerned with.



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Liz Covart: [00:27:29] Now what about the use of song as a tool to carry Indigenous knowledge? I found it really interesting that your research specialties are in Indigenous music, song, and spirituality, and also ecological knowledge. So it seems that song and knowledge must have links and must be interrelated with each other if these are your areas of focus.

Chad Hamill: [00:27:49] Yeah, absolutely. So, you know, I talked about songs being transmitted from the spirit realm. One of the ways that that happens is by going to certain places in the landscape. So a sacred site or a location that may not even be viewed as a sacred site per se, but where a song is present so songs can inhabit the landscape—the physical landscape—in the sense that, you know, from our perspective, visiting a certain place and hearing that song. So there's that intimate connection between songs and places. You know, you can view this as a geography of song, and when one of those songs are sung, it strengthens one's connection to our traditional lands and our sacred sites.

Now, in terms of an Indigenous worldview, all lands are sacred. All lands have that quality interviewed in that way, but there are certain places that might be more conducive to that kind of transmission.

Liz Covart: [00:28:55] Is there an example you could share of how songs strengthen, say Spokane connections to their ancestral lands and sacred sites?

Chad Hamill: [00:29:02] Yeah, so we have places that historically were reserved for sacred activity and prayer. Many of our listeners may have heard the term “vision quest.” The Spokane and other communities in the Interior Northwest have something akin to that, was a process of fasting and a rite of passage back in the day, the precontact era, for our young men to go to a place and solitarily pray for guidance, spiritual power, and a song. Because a song embodies all that, right? So that's one of those things that is certainly less frequent today, but back in the precontact era, that was a regular part of our everyday existence.

Liz Covart: [00:29:56] So what happened to this tradition when the Spokane people met European and American colonizers? What impact did this contact have on Spokane music?

Chad Hamill: [00:30:06] Yeah, so the first euroamericans, In the Interior Northwest were Lewis and Clark and they didn't arrive until 1805. So relatively late compared to contact in what is today the eastern United States. So if you look at it in historical terms, that's not all that long ago. And certainly even from those early days, we had musical encounters, if you will. I would say one of the more significant ones, I get into this in my book, was the Jesuits who arrived in the 1840s. In particular, Pierre de Smet, who had the Jesuit reductions in his back pocket back in the seventeenth-century in Paraguay. There were these Jesuits going up and down the riverways, and it was a very dense area, and they had a hard time making contact with Indigenous groups



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and communities in that area. And so they'd be going up and down these riverways singing hymns. And they noticed that the Indigenous communities, folks in the Indigenous communities, would come to the bank of the river to hear these songs. And so they used that as a tool to bring those folks into the Catholic fold. And they immediately started translating these European hymns, these Catholic hymns, into the Guarani language.

So Pierre de Smet arrives in the interior Northwest 1840s, that's going to be his method. So what's interesting about all that, and I go into much more detail in the book, is that there were these prophecies, precontact prophecies. We knew the Jesuits were coming. We knew about the black gowns and the cross sticks. That's what we needed to be looking for. So Pierre de Smet and the Catholics, the Jesuits, were received with open arms because they were part of these prophecies. And it's interesting to note that the Jesuits often stood in between our Indigenous communities and then the US military, right? And so that was all part of that picture. So we worked with the Jesuits cooperatively to translate these European hymns into the Salish language. But what also happened there is we brought our song style—traditional song style, way of singing—into these hymns, what would become known as the Indian hymns, and completely reshaped them. So there was a level of Indigenous agency, musical agency, in how this process was approached and how these Indian hymns in many cases have no resemblance to their European counterparts. They were Indigenized. So that really kind of contradicts the typical narrative of, well, these Indigenous communities were just kind of helpless in the face of these outside Catholic and federal forces. No, it was a process of negotiation. And so within those Indian hymns, you have that level of Indigenous agency.

Liz Covart: [00:33:12] Kyle has a follow up question, in that he was wondering about the impact that Native American music had on European, African, and American music. So Chad, what kinds of lasting effects do you think that Native Americans and their music have had on these different cultures that they encountered?

Chad Hamill: [00:33:29] A real significant impact. I'll point your listeners to a film called *Rumble: Indians Who Rock the World*. Won a Sundance award, came out, uh, a number of years ago. That's an important rewriting of musical history, in the sense that Native Americans have been written out of critical musical histories in genres like rock and jazz. So in that film I'm talking about, Mildred Bailey, who was a Coeur d'Alene jazz singer—Coeur d'Alene is a neighboring tribe to the Spokane Interior Northwest—she was incredibly influential and had a hand in shaping jazz, a vocal style. So you still hear it today in the style of jazz vocalists, she credits the Indian songs of her youth as being the thing that shaped her voice. And if you listen to her mode of singing, her method of singing, you see a direct connection between traditional song, what I refer to as melodic glides, and the jazz singing that she's doing,



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Recording of Mildred Bailey: [00:34:38]: Have no use for other sweets of any kind since the day you came around. From the start I instantly made up my mind, sweeter sweetness can't be found. You're so sweet. Can't be beat. Nothing sweeter ever stood on feet. Every honey bean filled with jealousy when they see you out with me. I don't blame them, goodness knows, honeysuckle road.

Chad Hamill: [00:35:09] So that's one example, but they are countless examples of that kind of influence. And of course it's not a one-way street. The crosspollination is so significant when we're talking about what we point to as musical genres and cultures, and that's the norm. Crosspollination always has been the norm.

Liz Covart: [00:35:30] And crosspollination must happen even more today with the internet and people's ability to share anything pretty much instantly. Plus, you also have music services that provide access and exposure to all sorts of different music on demand.

Chad Hamill: [00:35:45] Yeah, no, absolutely.

Liz Covart: [00:35:48] Chad, is there one thing about Indigenous and Native American music and its history that you'd really like for us to know?

Chad Hamill: [00:35:54] Yeah. That it's still here and it's healthy and vibrant. It didn't go away and it's remained consistent. And even if you're not seeing it and hearing it in mainstream media, it's there.

Liz Covart: [00:36:08] Thinking about music as a source and as a window onto the past, what do you know that music can reveal to us about past Indigenous societies?

Chad Hamill: [00:36:18] You know, in many respects, everything can be found within a song. It encapsulates and expresses who we are as Native people, and that's how important it is. And I say that not because I'm an ethnomusicologist. Truly, it is that expressive form that embodies who we are.

Liz Covart: [00:36:36] Now we should get into the Time Warp." This is a fun segment of the show where we ask you a hypothetical history question about what might have happened if something had occurred differently or if someone had acted differently.

In your opinion, Chad, what might have happened if Europeans and enslaved Africans had not settled in Native North America during the sixteenth century? How might the musical landscape



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of Native North America be different if people of European and African descent had just remained occasional transatlantic trading partners?

Chad Hamill: [00:37:28] Well, there's no doubt that colonization was devastating to Indigenous peoples in present-day North America, led to a loss of lands and culture including ceremonies and songs. But I'd argue that very little would have changed in the sense that traditional songs would've continued to be sung as they are today, and that the crosspollination between Indigenous, European, and African communities would've happened nonetheless. Music has never been limited by race, nation, or geography. It's a universal language that transcends borders, both literally and figuratively.

Liz Covart: [00:38:05] So Chad, what aspect of ethnomusicology are you researching and writing about now?

Chad Hamill: [00:38:11] So I've been actively working to Indigenize the scholarly process in the sense that in addition to doing research, I'm bringing traditional elements, including songs and stories, into the work, both the published work and public presentations. So my focus over the last few years has been the degradation of our rivers in the Interior Northwest owing to the damming of those rivers, in particular the Grand Coulee Dam, which at the time it was built, was the biggest cement structure on earth. And what it did is it took away our salmon, which were at the center of our lifeways for many tribes in the region. So, it's really important for me to Indigenize that process because this process of scholarship, of research, is a very westernized approach to knowing and to learning. And so what I'm seeking to do is to bring Indigenous ontologies and ways of knowing directly into that process. So that's my focus.

Liz Covart: [00:39:23] Could you share an example with us so that we can better understand this difference between the Western approach to research and an Indigenous approach to research? So to use history as an example we're all familiar with, historians often go into an archive and that's where they try to find written and material sources from the past that can tell them something about the people of the past and events of the past, and perhaps even about our present. So Chad, how might an Indigenous researcher using Indigenous methods look for sources and ways to conduct their research?

Chad Hamill: [00:39:54] Well, so I'd be the first to admit that some of those historical written sources by explorers, fur traders, missionaries, military men, is important in the sense that it often does, when you can kind of get through the inherent biases, right,

there are things there that can be very valuable. But in terms of an Indigenous approach, as you alluded to, the way that we transmit knowledge and carry knowledge is oral. It's through oral tradition, and so it would be a matter of, when we're talking about a study that is historical, of



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finding those within a community that carry the traditions and carry those histories. Inherit it from them directly. And that's an important aspect of Indigenous Studies that distinguishes it from other disciplines. It really is fundamentally rooted in the experience and the knowledge of the Indigenous peoples that are part of the Indigenous Studies discipline. So I would say, you know, in addition to those written sources, those oral sources are vital. Vital to having a thorough picture, comprehensive picture, of culture, tradition, and history.

Liz Covart: [00:41:15] Thank you for that information. Now, if we have more questions about music and what we westerners would call early Native North America, how can we contact you?

Chad Hamill: [00:41:25] You can find me at my NAU address, Northern Arizona University, chad.hamill@nau.edu.

Liz Covart: [00:41:37] Chad Hamill, thank you for speaking with us and for helping us better understand the important role that music has and does play in Native American and Indigenous cultures and practices.

Chad Hamill: [00:41:46] Yeah, it's been my pleasure. Thanks, Liz.

Liz Covart: [00:41:51] As Chad related, music is entwined with the activities of daily life for many Indigenous and Native American peoples. Music is so integral to Indigenous cultures that Chad has yet to find a Native American language with a distinct word for music. Now, as we heard, music plays many roles in Native American and Indigenous lives. For example, music is a necessary part of spiritual wellbeing. Music and songs unlock spiritual power because the songs themselves represent gifts from the spiritual realm. Music and song can also serve as diplomatic gifts. Songs convey the intentions of one tribe to another and we could see this in the example that Chad gave us when he described how Native Americans in the Pacific Northwest gift songs to neighboring nations before they ever set foot on their neighbor's lands during canoe voyages.

Now, the centrality of music and song to Native American lives was never a hidden secret. This is why Jesuit priests and missionaries often use songs to meet Indigenous peoples they wanted to convert to the Catholic faith. Song and song exchange served as a safe meeting place for early Americans who came from very different cultural and spiritual backgrounds. And because music and songs served as a safe meeting place for cultures to intermix and exchange ideas, we can see a lot of crosspollination and musical sharing. As Chad noted, the Indian hymns to come out of these encounters between Jesuit missionaries and Indigenous peoples of North and South America convey spirituality and Catholic religion in very different musical notes and traditions. And this brings us to the one big thing Chad wants us to walk away knowing: Native music has always been a part of North American places and spaces. Native music existed in vibrant ways



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before European colonization, during European colonization, and after European colonization. And we can still hear this vibrancy if we listen for it.

Take Chad's example of Mildred Bailey. Mildred was a Native American woman who had a gift for song and singing, and she has influenced jazz singers from the 1930s through today. And she's just one Native American musician. Now with all many history books make it seem like Native people's cultures and music faded away as Europeans and Americans pushed west across the North American continent, that is not the truth of it. For more than thirteen thousand years, Native Americans have lived in North America. They are still here living with us today and their cultures and traditions and songs are still entwined with the land and they're still very vibrant. You'll find more information about Chad, his book, *Songs of Power and Prayer in the Columbia Plateau*, plus notes, links, and a transcript for everything we talked about today on the show notes page: benfranklinworld.com/343.

If you are looking for more information about Native American history or Native Americans in the present, be sure to check out the wide selection of Native authored books at Birchbark Books. You'll find our friends at Birchbark at birchbarkbooks.com. That's birchbarkbooks.com. Production assistance for this podcast comes from the Omohundro Institute's digital audio team: Joseph Adelman, Holly White, Ian Tonat, and Dylan Holzer. Breakmaster Cylinder composed our custom theme music. This podcast is part of the AirWave Media podcast network. To discover and listen to their other podcasts, visit airwavemedia.com. Finally, where would you like to go next with our investigation of Indigenous music in early North America? Let me know: liz@benfranklinworld.com. *Ben Franklin's World* is a production of the Omohundro Institute and is sponsored the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.