



Notre Dame
Nulungu
**Talking Heads
Seminar Series**

A New Partnership, William Roe, 1994

‘Toxic Tourism on Indigenous Country’

Date: Wednesday 28th October 2020

Zoom: <https://notredame-au.zoom.us/j/99057149518>

Passcode: 428613

Time: 10:00am-11:00am



Presenter: Bobbie Chew Bigby

Abstract

In the far northeastern corner of the state of Oklahoma lie lands and waterways promised to a diverse set of Tribal Nations forcibly removed to this area throughout the 19th century. Today, these lands are home to both tribal members and non-Indigenous peoples alike, but the landscape and waterways have been irrevocably assaulted and transformed as a result of 20th century lead and zinc mining and the waste left behind (Manders and Aber 2014). Long known with the unfortunate designation of the “worst EPA Superfund Site in the United States” (Meadows 2019), the Tar Creek Superfund area remains to this day an ecosystem that is striving to recover from toxic chat piles, polluted creeks and overmined lands caving in on themselves. Just as important, the community members of the Tar Creek region and surrounding areas—including notably the Quapaw Nation—continue forward in an ongoing journey of healing and recovery from the severe impacts of this pollution on their health, wellbeing, sense of community and futures. At the forefront of efforts to keep the clean-up of

the Tar Creek Superfund Site and the support for its communities going is the Local Environmental Action Demanded (LEAD) agency, founded by Rebecca Jim (Cherokee Nation), a long-time educator, counselor and environmental activist in the region. As part of her work in supporting local communities and educating visitors to the area, Rebecca has been leading Tar Creek Toxic Tours that allow participants to witness and experience first-hand the devastating impacts of the mining industry on the land and her people. This presentation highlights these Tar Creek Toxic Tours as a powerful mechanism for educating and advocating on themes of environmental justice, community development, local agency and the sovereignty of Tribal Nations.

Biography

Bobbie Chew Bigby is an enrolled member of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma and a native of Tulsa, Oklahoma. Bobbie has BA degrees in Chinese Language/Literature, as well as Anthropology. Bobbie obtained her MA degree in International Studies, Peace and Conflict Resolution at the University of Queensland in Brisbane, Australia as a Rotary Peace Fellow from 2014-2015. Bobbie also holds an MS degree in Arts and Culture Administration as an Aianta Scholar from Drexel University. Bobbie completed her thesis research on examining the potential for cultural tourism development among Tribal Nations (Quapaw, Shawnee and Miami Tribes) in far Northeastern Oklahoma. Bobbie has engaged in research focused on Indigenous peoples, tourism and connections to traditional culture in China, India, Cambodia, Myanmar, Australia and back home in Oklahoma Indian Country. Bobbie is currently based between Broome, Australia and Tulsa, Oklahoma where she is pursuing a PhD at the University of Notre Dame Australia focused on comparative Indigenous cultural tourism. This research is being supported through the West Australian Government's JTSI Science/Tourism Fellows program and the University's Research Training Program. Bobbie is also engaged in co-editing and co-writing a book focused on reexamining the possibilities for tourism post-COVID 19 and the ways that tourism can better support social and ecological justice. Bobbie has a deep passion for Indigenous-participation in tourism and believes that tourism can be used as a tool for culture and language revitalization, along with environmental stewardship.