

Ana Goman, a Tonawanda Bando Seneca and an assistant professor in Native American Studies, reflects on her experiences and the impact of the Pocahontas narrative, particularly in relation to the 2005 film "The New World" by Terence Malick. Goman discusses the mythic status of Pocahontas in American culture and how it shapes the identities of Indigenous women. Despite being initially reluctant to engage with the film, she felt compelled to analyze its portrayal of Native peoples, given the involvement of Native actors and consultants.

While recognizing the film's aesthetic beauty, Goman critiques its failure to authentically represent Indigenous voices and experiences. She expresses anger at how the film privileges a settler narrative while erasing Indigenous historical political structures and ecological knowledge. Goman emphasizes the importance of understanding Pocahontas' true story and its implications for contemporary Indigenous identity and political recognition.

Her book aims to unpack this myth and explore the intersection of Indigenous studies with broader narratives of colonialism. She highlights the historical erasure of Indigenous peoples in American society and advocates for a deeper understanding of the political ramifications of such representations. Goman's work encourages viewers to critically engage with the cultural narratives surrounding Pocahontas and to recognize their real-life consequences for Indigenous communities today, especially regarding issues like federal recognition and access to resources. Ultimately, she seeks to foster a more nuanced understanding of Indigenous identity that moves beyond mythologization, affirming the complex realities of Indigenous peoples and their histories.