LeAnne Howe: I’m LeAnne Howe, Choctaw from Oklahoma. I’ll read from my poem set in Stonewall, Oklahoma, during the 1918 flu. This poem is about my grandmother who survived the 1918 flu pandemic, but her husband died in 1918. This is called “1918 Union Valley Road Oklahoma.”

[LeAnne Howe reads “1918 Union Valley Road Oklahoma”]

LH: My name is LeAnne Howe. I was born and raised in Oklahoma and I’m an enrolled citizen of the Choctaw Nation. I’m a poet and playwright, novelist and scholar. But I’ll tell you a secret that I don’t think I’ve ever told anyone else before: I really wanted to be the female Will Rogers as I was growing up. I thought he was funny, ironic, and extremely talented, and I’ve seen most of his films. Life Begins at Forty is one of my favorite films. I thought all the time I was growing up I just would like to be the kind of insightful writer and comic that Will Rogers embodied as an Oklahoman. He’s really one of my heroes and he’s probably the reason that I thought that I could be a writer.

So having said that, my house in Ada is my ancestral home and it’s not but about six blocks from the Chickasaw Nation tribal headquarters, in Ada. I really think I’m lucky. I’m surrounded by tribes and tribal people and kind of the ghosts of my ancestors, really, who lived in that house and lived around Ada. I have lots and lots of pictures and memories about spending my summers there in Ada, Oklahoma. Okay, that’s it. Thanks.

END OF RECORDING