Hello, and I hope the new year has started in a good way for you. I’m always grateful for each new beginning, and 2010 is especially exciting for me. I’ve been honored to receive the College of Arts and Sciences Seibold Award which allows me to have the year away from my usual responsibilities as director of American Indian Studies. I’ll soon be leaving Wyoming for a six-month visit to New Zealand, where I’ll be spending time at the University of Waikato’s School of Maori Studies and Pacific Development. While there I hope to advance my knowledge of Maori society, strengthen ties already established, and make new connections necessary to more fully develop international educational and travel opportunities for University of Wyoming faculty and students. Also, I hope to learn more about the School’s Centre for Maori and Pacific Development Research. This institute is engaged in research geared toward supporting the self-determination efforts of the indigenous peoples of New Zealand, Australia, and the Pacific Rim. I expect to learn about the Centre’s projects in support of indigenous communities along with project challenges and strategies for success. I will be able to bring this relevant information, and my experience, back to our campus and apply them to ongoing efforts to establish a University of Wyoming High Plains American Indian Research Institute.

While I’m away from UW Professor Caskey Russell, Tlingit, will serve as Interim Director of American Indian Studies. Since joining us six years ago, Professor Russell has further developed his outstanding leadership skills, most recently demonstrated in his chairmanship of the AIS Elder in Residence Pilot Project. Under Professor Russell’s direction this innovative project brought Northern Arapaho elder Jerome Oldman to campus for extended visits throughout fall semester 2009. During his tenure as interim director, Professor Russell will work to advance initiatives already underway including the AIS major degree, the High Plains American Indian Research Institute, and a UW American Indian center. No doubt he also will bring important new ideas and initiatives of his own that will strengthen and support the program and the communities we serve. I know he will appreciate hearing from you as he settles into his new role. Please feel free to contact him at (307) 766-6521 or drop by the AIS offices in Ross Hall for a visit. The coffee is always on.

I hope you enjoy this third issue of *The Ledger*. We’ve had a lot going on this past year, as always, and some of that activity is reflected here. Our outstanding students continue to impress and inspire us. Crystal Bearing’s much-deserved Meyer Family Arts and Sciences Independent Study

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“I wanted to record this history for my children. Last year, we lost a lot of elders. We can’t lose any more knowledge about our tribe. I want to help out the best I can while I’m away from home,” said Crystal Bearing, recipient of a Meyer Family Arts and Sciences Independent Study Scholarship for summer 2009. For her scholarship project, Crystal spent the summer interviewing Northern Arapaho elders on the Wind River Indian Reservation under the mentorship of former AIS faculty member William Bauer. Crystal is an enrolled member of the Northern Arapaho Tribe and a senior majoring in history and minoring in American Indian studies and in environmental and natural resources at UW. She and her husband, Vidale, have three children: Journey, 10, Vidale, 5, and Layla, 5.

“From the moment I met Crystal, she displayed a strong commitment to her community and a scholarly interest in Arapaho history. Her oral history project can be a crucial project for Crystal and the Arapaho, because there are very few Arapaho histories that have been prepared by Arapaho people,” said William Bauer.

Before starting her project, Crystal requested permission from the Northern Arapaho Language Commission, the entity that reviews and approves research projects pertaining to the Northern Arapaho Tribe.

“In the beginning, it was hard to make contact with people. That’s how the elders test you,” said Crystal. “They want to see whether you’re persistent and whether you’re good at what you’re doing. I went to the senior centers at Arapaho and Ethete. I would show up, and the elders would be busy, and they would tell me to come back later. I kept going back.”

Crystal interviewed nine elders, asking them where they lived over the course of their lives, about specific locations meaningful to the Arapaho people, and about traditional morals, conduct and behavior.

“I brought my daughter, Journey, along to the interviews. She got to hear everything. She learned a lot about conduct and respect.”

Crystal says she was surprised to learn about the importance of a cattle association on the Wind River Indian Reservation in the early twentieth century. The association would loan 20 head of cattle to a family, who kept the offspring and returned the original stock. The families with cattle would join forces for cattle drives, and they would rotate watch over the herds in two-week shifts.

“Several elders said it was a hard life but a good life, because everybody helped out,” said Crystal.

She also learned about family lines and clan names, and she learned some things about her own family. “I learned where we lived at Mill Creek, and I learned the story of why the Arapaho name for ‘Mill Creek’ means ‘At the Sock.’ When they crossed the river at Mill Creek, the water came up to their socks.”

Crystal is still editing and transcribing the interviews from her project with the help of her husband and her father. She plans to give copies of the interviews to the elders and to the Northern Arapaho Language Commission.

“Now that I’ve done these interviews, there’s even more I want to find out. There’s so much information that these elders have that no one even knows about,” she said.

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Among Disney’s films, the most popular for little girls have been the princess movies. This genre has sent the message to young girls that in order to be a worthy human being, you must fit the criteria of a princess. Disney has included more ethnic Disney princesses among the fairest of them all. With characters such as Pocahontas and Mulan, it seemed that Disney was beginning to acknowledge and include more diversity in their products. However, Disney still finds a way to incorporate Euro-American values into the lifestyles and portrayals of the ethnic princesses. This sends the message to ethnic girls that they must discard their culture and aspire to what is made desirable by Euro-American society.

In movies such as Pocahontas, Disney goes so far as to modify historical events. In Pocahontas, the Disney studio took a piece of history and changed the events and also Pocahontas’ life by making her live past age 21. What many people do not know is that Pocahontas was a historical figure. Disney was accurate in that she had a father named Powhatan, and that she was a member of the Powhatan people. Pocahontas was not an only child though; some accounts state that she had more than 100 brothers and sisters.

After Disney’s movie came out in 1995, the Powhatan tribe issued a statement about the story of Pocahontas on their Web site:

In 1995, Roy Disney decided to release an animated movie about a Powhatan woman known as “Pocahontas.” In answer to a complaint by the Powhatan Nation, he claims the film is “responsible, accurate, and respectful.” We of the Powhatan Nation disagree. The film distorts history beyond recognition. Our efforts to assist Disney with cultural and historical accuracy were rejected. Our efforts urging him to reconsider his misguided mission were spurred.

There are accounts that John Smith was a pompous man who lied about the encounters he had with Pocahontas and her tribe. Pocahontas was held captive by the citizens of Jamestown for a year, and she was offered an ultimatum: either she marry a widower tobacco farmer named John Rolfe, or she would be killed.

By silencing this part of history in their film, Disney sends the message to society that oppression of Native people by Europeans never took place, and that Native people chose to assimilate to Euro-American culture. Similar to any other Disney classic, all of the historical conflict simply disappears from the film. The film Pocahontas sends the message that no one should be upset or concerned about Native people, because they were never really oppressed, and that Native people should be honored that Pocahontas is considered a royal figure.

One big flaw in Pocahontas is the portrayal of hierarchy in a Native tribe. Disney is not entirely at fault; this misconception has existed since the moment of contact. Most Native societies are communal, and even through there...
Winter on the northern plains traditionally meant a time of relaxed activity for the Oglala Lakota (Sioux). They tended their horse herds and occasionally hunted and raided, but for the most part they settled down and rode out the winter by surviving on stored meats and vegetables. It was rarely a time of decisive political activity. However, by 1890 conditions on Pine Ridge Reservation no longer resembled those decades past. For some tribal leaders decisive political activity now flowed from the point of a pen. In January 1890 both George Sword, Captain of Agency Police, and Fast Horse, Lieutenant of Agency Police wrote letters to the Honorable J. W. Noble, Secretary of the Interior, requesting surveyors be sent to Pine Ridge so allotment might commence. Fast Horse stated he knew nearly 300 ready to take their land, and that he worried over present conditions on the reservation because “one (Oglala) has as much right to the land as another.”

These letters provide a glimpse into the two most significant developments on The Great Sioux Reservation/Pine Ridge Reservation between the years 1851 and 1920. During these years disagreements arose within the Oglala community concerning the future of both the growing Oglala cattle interests and the necessity of accommodation with an increasingly intrusive American culture. George Sword and Fast Horse represent a small, vocal, and yet increasingly powerful segment of the Oglala tribe. In 1891 these two men drafted a petition, signed by 131 heads-of-households who represented 515 tribal members. These men hoped to take their land in severalty by applying for their allotments under the agreement of the Sioux Bill Act of March 2, 1889. Of particular personal interest, among the names elegantly written on the petition was that of George W. Means, my great grandfather.

However, the vast majority of the tribe opposed these actions and sought to continue familiar ways of living. During the early reservation period, as buffalo numbers dwindled and tribal mobility diminished, the Oglala Lakota developed a dynamic economic strategy founded on the creation of a tribal cattle herd. They envisioned a more pastoral society that would follow the cattle herds as they once followed the buffalo, harvesting them for meat and hides in an effort to maintain their economic, political, and social foundations. Nonetheless, a portion of the tribe envisioned a future that did not include commonly owned or shared reservation land used to run large herds of cattle. During the next fifteen years these two viewpoints competed in a struggle to realize their vision for the tribe’s future.

George Means and his fellow petitioners moved energetically to facilitate the allotment process. Over the next several years the Commissioner of Indian Affairs received many letters asking that surveys be completed so allotment might commence. The Acting Agent, Captain Charles G. Penny, noted at the time “these people are all mixed bloods, but well disposed and reasonably progressive.” The focus of these men’s communications dealt predominantly with allotment; however, these letters reveal other factors affecting both tribal unity and control over economic and political power.

As Fast Horse, George Standing Bear and likeminded Oglala sought allotment they found themselves increasingly tied to the agents of the American federal government in an effort to gain political and economic power on Pine Ridge. First, when these men wrote letters they revealed a familiarity with the culturally imposed system of power relationships and the willingness to work within that system. Fast Horse and the others realized the value and power of writing inherent within the increasingly invasive power structure of the United States. As a result they wrote letters and promulgated petitions to both local and federal agents of the government. Their familiarity with agency bureaucracy led them to attempt access through new avenues of communication rather than meet with Agents and District Farmers in more traditional councils that depended upon the spoken word. Moreover, Grass and Fast Horse accepted positions as tribal judges. These positions were created to promote assimilation by controlling native behavior. To work as a part of federally created institutional controls demonstrated a willingness to accept a significant level of cultural change in order to further one’s own agenda. Clearly, these men sought control of the growing tribal cattle interests and the most valuable land on the reservation, and they were willing to accept a greater level of cultural change in order to achieve these goals.

The emergence of writing as a tool of political machinations was but one example of the dramatic changes faced by the Oglala during this important period in their history. Moreover, it was emblematic of the many challenges faced
Actor and musician Gary Farmer is a member of the Cayuga Nation and the Iroquois Confederacy. He has appeared in the films *Smoke Signals*, *Powwow Highway*, and *Dead Man*. Farmer and his blues band, the Troublemakers, visited the University of Wyoming on October 13-14, 2009, when American Indian Studies student Daniel Antell interviewed him.

Daniel Antell: What factors have influenced you to accept or reject a script?

Gary Farmer: There was an elder in my community who said she never wanted me to play a drunk or any role like that. She told me that before *Skins*. I thought that script really humanized the alcoholic, and that’s why I did it. I had only a small part, but I put my weight behind it. I think the film makes a powerful statement about the tragedy of alcoholism, and that it is a disease. We’ve got to care for these people and find a way out of this.

I get a lot of scripts, but 95% of them never get made. When there’s a big film and the script needs work, you jump right on it and think you can work from the inside out. Not a lot of movies come along that we can participate in. Native actors don’t have much choice. It becomes an economic question. Can you afford to turn down this role, when your family needs food? It’s a tough question for actors. I try to pick the strongest material that’s got something to say or at least is real.

Daniel Antell: What are your responsibilities as a Native actor, and to whom are you responsible?

Gary Farmer: I’m responsible to myself. I’m the one making the decisions. When I was hired to play a Hopi in *Dark Wind*, I consulted with the Hopi. They weren’t happy with the story, so I did research on my own, found an alternative story idea for the film, and tried to convince the director and the producer to make some changes. To prepare for my role as “Nobody” in *Dead Man*, I did certain things in terms of my own spiritual development. It’s a very individual choice as an artist. There’s not much you can do when someone is irresponsible, because there’s always somebody who will take the job. If not, the filmmakers will find another culture to pull from. Sometimes they won’t hire Indian actors for Indian roles, because it’s too late in the creative process, and they don’t want to make changes. It’s their story, so you either play along or not.

Daniel Antell: Why does the representation of Native people in film matter?

Gary Farmer: It matters because of the whole disappearing syndrome. We’re not disappearing. We’re here. Why don’t you see any contemporary Indian stories on television? Because they don’t see us as a valid audience with the economic power to purchase their goods. That’s changing because of the casinos.

I think that contemporary stories are important, because people in America still believe that we’re in the past, that it’s a bygone culture, and that it was conquered. I think it’s important for Native America to tell the stories, and that’s happening on a very small scale. There are a lot of independent Native filmmakers in North America. American producers aren’t really interested in developing contemporary stories of Native America. Consequently, contemporary Native stories don’t get developed for television, and if they do, it’s always from the dominant culture’s point of view. Native work needs to be developed outside of the system independently and then sold to the system.

We need to develop networks of our own. In Canada, there’s the Aboriginal People’s Television Network. You get it in your basic cable package there. There’s nothing like that here in the United States. We need more media outlets with Native content. Imagine a 500-channel universe, and none of it is relevant to your people. Your children all have satellite dishes, and it’s doing a lot of damage to their self-esteem because nothing on television reflects their reality.

Radio is also important. There are only 27 radio stations in the United States operated by tribes. Without a system of radio stations across the country, how can an independent, Native musician like me reach a Native American audience with my music? How do I survive as an artist if there are no outlets for my music?
A Word from The Director Continued from page 2

Scholarship allowed her to conduct research of value and relevance to the Northern Arapaho people, and Amanda LeClair’s insightful essay illustrates the creative intellectual work undertaken by Native students at UW. Daniel Antell’s interview with Gary Farmer brought forth important and unique perspectives from the Cayuga actor and musician. Like our students, our faculty members routinely engage in the research and writing enterprise. Professor Jeff Means’ gracious response to the request for a contribution to this issue of The Ledger resulted in the captivating historical writing published here, writing that illustrates the best of contemporary scholarship in the discipline of American Indian Studies.

I wish you all good things in 2010, and on behalf of the students, staff, and faculty in American Indian Studies I thank you for your friendship and support. Your many contributions and kindnesses are valued beyond measure.

—Judith Antell, Director

Student Voices Continued from page 3

“I hope she continues this excellent work in graduate school,” says William Bauer.

“I’m grateful for this research project and for the support of the Meyer family. I wouldn’t have known half this stuff without the project. I’m going to keep working on it whenever I can,” says Crystal, who plans to thank the elders for their help by cooking for them in the near future.

Disney and Pocahontas Continued from page 4

There is a communication gap among Indian people, but technology has helped us get closer together. I have 5000 Indian friends on Facebook.

It’s extremely important for Native people to be in the mainstream media. If we help America understand us, I think we’d have an easier track in life. We need to start using the media better. Nobody else is going to do it for us.
This issue’s word search highlights Maori words for means of transportation. All completed puzzles sent to AIS by March 31, 2010 will be entered in a drawing to win a prize. Please include your name and contact information on the puzzle.

hoiho horse
motoka car
motopaika motorcycle
pahi bus
paihikara bicycle
tarakihana tractor
tereina train
waka canoe
waka-rere-rangi airplane
waka-roa van
waka-topatopa helicopter

Persons seeking admission, employment, or access to programs of the University of Wyoming shall be considered without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, age, veteran status, sexual orientation, or political belief. • Graphic design by Elizabeth Ono Rahel • 2009/500/BG