



The Ledger

AMERICAN INDIAN STUDIES PROGRAM • www.uwyo.edu/aist

SPRING 2011

Waka Taua (war canoe) at the Ngaruawahia Regatta in Aotearoa New Zealand, 2010.

Photo by Daniel Antell.



UNIVERSITY OF WYOMING

AMERICAN INDIAN STUDIES PROGRAM

A WORD FROM THE INTERIM DIRECTOR

On behalf of American Indian Studies, I wish you all the best in 2011. I hope you enjoy this fourth installment of *The Ledger*. Inside, you'll find fascinating articles about Natives who are making names for themselves around Wyoming.

I took over the directorship of American Indian Studies in January 2010, when Judith Antell went to New Zealand on sabbatical. Judy received the UW College of Arts and Sciences' prestigious Seibold Award, which enabled her to study at the University of Waikato's School of Māori and Pacific Development. In addition, she traveled throughout New Zealand, strengthening established ties with Māori people, and making new connections in order to more fully develop international education and travel opportunities for UW faculty and students. The photo on the cover illustrates one of her many adventures in New Zealand.

In 2010:

AIS launched its new major degree. UW students can now earn a bachelor's degree in American Indian Studies. Visit our website to learn more about it: www.uwyo.edu/aist. On our website, you can also learn about our excellent faculty, the courses we offer, scholarship opportunities, and the latest news about AIS.

AIS hired Cody Marshall, a pre-doctoral candidate in history from Arizona State University and a Salt River Pima tribal member. Marshall teaches American Indian history and came to AIS highly recommended by Donald Fixico,

Distinguished Foundation Professor of History at Arizona State University and author of many books including *The American Indian Mind in a Linear World* and *The Invasion of Indian Country in the Twentieth Century*.

AIS honored ten Native graduates during the American Indian Studies Honoring of Graduates in May. The speaker for the ceremony was Richard B. Williams, executive director of the American Indian College Fund and a UW graduate himself. I'd personally like to thank Cheryl Jensen, Burton Hutchison and his family, Sandra and Patrick Iron Cloud and the Little Sun drum group, Richard Williams, and all the faculty, staff and students involved in the Honoring, for making it a great success.

Angela Jaime took a group of 12 UW students on a two-week study abroad course to New Zealand, where they studied Māori culture and education and made connections for further collaboration between UW and New Zealand.

AIS hired Affie Ellis, Assistant Attorney General for the State of Wyoming, to teach a new course, *Congress, Courts and American Indians* during the fall semester. Ellis is a member of the Navajo Nation. The course was a success with students, and it further expanded AIS's course offerings in Indian law.

These are but a few of the goings on in AIS. Our faculty, staff and students are always busy. Your support is invaluable to our program's mission and goals. Please stay in touch.

Caskey Russell, Interim Director
American Indian Studies Program



AN INTERVIEW WITH DOLORES JIMERSON

“THE CIRCLE IS GETTING STRONGER...”

Dolores Ann Jimerson took time to visit with me, Judith Antell, in October, when the College of Health Sciences honored her as its 2010 Division of Social Work Alumna of the Year. It is understandable that the honor was bestowed upon her. Dolores was a member



Dolores Jimerson, 2010.

of the first class of the UW Masters of Social Work Program, graduating in 1999. Since that time, she has continued to spread her wings to contribute to the greater good and advocate for tribal people nationally and in Canada. If you ask Dolores what guides her most in the work she does today, she will tell you that growing up as a member of the Bear Clan in the Seneca Nation, within the League of the Iroquois, was a source of strength. She will also tell you that growing up economically disadvantaged in a working class city helped her to develop greater appreciation for urban Indian identity, and observing how the larger society treated marginalized people enticed her to advocate for social justice.

Dolores lives in Riverton, Wyoming, where she was recently named CEO for Wind River Health Systems, Inc., a nonprofit agency with community health centers in both Dubois and Riverton. Dolores' work in the Wyoming Department of Health, where she advocated for cultural competency and for methamphetamine prevention across the state, prepared her for this role. Formerly, she managed the Northern Arapaho Tribe's mental health program for children, With Eagles' Wings, which focuses on inclusion of culture and spirituality in treatment. Additionally, Dolores served as the Director of Community Development for the National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA) in Portland, Oregon. In that position, she worked in both the U.S. and in Canada as an educator, trainer and advocate for tribal communities that were working to address the needs of Indian children and families. Dolores was also an instructor in the Division of Social Work at UW, and she served as Director of Behavioral Health for Wind River Health Systems, where mental illness was addressed

clinically through the framework of historical trauma and unresolved grief.

I visited with Dolores in the American Indian Studies Program offices shortly after her recognition by the College of Health Sciences. It was good to reminisce about her years at UW, during which I had the opportunity to spend time with her and to serve as a member of her master's committee. What follows is a portion of our conversation.

Why did you decide to go into the field you're in?

D.J.: I was in high school when my father was diagnosed with cancer, and he died when I was a freshman mechanical engineering major. We spent a lot of time going to hospitals and dealing with trying to get on disability and things like that. When my father was in the hospital for one of the last times, a woman talked to our family, and I later learned she was a social worker. At that time I had no idea what social workers really were. Eventually, I learned that social work is a profession and that education is necessary to become a social worker. So, it was personal life experience that motivated me. Also, early university experiences influenced me. When I started out my undergraduate degree I was a very different person than I am today. I got in trouble once [at another university] because a professor said I was too quiet. I had turned in my exam, and he pulled me to the side of the room and he said, "I'm German. If I were to carry out my family's traditions, I'd be killing Jews today. So, you need to get over this and become part of the rest of us." I looked at him and I remember I was mortified. He meant to belittle my culture and background, but he had the opposite effect. His ignorance motivated me to prove him wrong, to prove that I could connect my tradition and culture to my education and be successful both at the university and in my native community. What he said motivated me to do some of the cultural work I do today.

What turned past negative experiences into the social justice activism that you engage in today?

D.J.: The people who have crossed my path. I firmly believe everything happens for a reason. I met certain people at times when I was starting to feel discouraged. Both my extended family and immediate family were very strong and very encouraging.

My mother was one of the first white people in my father's family. I remember being a small child and having my

Continued on page 4



“THE CIRCLE IS GETTING STRONGER...” Continued from page 3

father say things to my brother and me like “You just remember that your mother and I love each other, because people will say things.” As a little kid I tried to figure out what that meant. I was naturally curious. I believed, and still do, that everything doesn’t have to be confrontational, it doesn’t have to be aggressive. I don’t know if it just comes naturally from my family (The League of Iroquois brought The Great Law of Peace), but my focus is on how we can be of one mind and how we can focus on peaceful solutions.

You’re a mixed blood woman and you identify strongly with your Native culture. What influenced this?

D.J.: I’m Seneca Bear Clan, and my older generations are very traditional. My great aunt was a clan mother, her son was one of our chiefs, and I’ve had a number of relatives who were faith keepers. This extended family, as well as my immediate family, was very loving and supportive and family members would say things like, “What matters is what’s in your heart.”

My mother, being someone who is not of the tribe, is Irish and Italian. She was given away when she was ten days old by her own mother and raised by Hungarian people. We make jokes about this today, but my mom was raised being told “If you misbehave, we’ll give you to the Indians.” When she was sixteen, she married my father. What she said, when we kids were older was, “I married your father because it was love at first sight and, also, to get out of my own house.” My mother quickly fell into my father’s family and culture and found them to be very embracing, their culture to be something she identified with. I want it to be clear, though, that not all of the tribe was as accepting of her. There were times I recall racist comments being made about my mother when we would be back on the reservation. Jokes would be made. It hurt, but our family was not like that. They even adopted my mom into the tribe when I was very young.

So, even though I’m mixed blood, culturally I was raised rather traditionally in the tribal sense. I’ve learned it was a gift to be born to a mixed family because there are going to be a lot more people like me in generations to come; this gift enables me to help them when they come to see me for therapy.

Clearly, it was the tribal community that surrounded you. I assume it’s that strong, Native American community that’s helped you become positive and forward looking.

D.J.: It’s been a blessing. I remember doing an independent study course in graduate school on the resiliency of people who had been in boarding schools. I looked at all our family pictures and I interviewed relatives who had gone to boarding school at Chilocco Indian Agricultural School in Oklahoma with my father. I looked at all these pictures and saw that it was during my grandparents’ generation that our people started to look different. We used to be very strong and healthy and we lived to be very old. Mental illness was very rare, and we treated it through ceremony and our medicines. It was in my grandparents’ generation that we started to see things like alcoholism and depression, people dying younger, getting sick with diabetes and heart disease. Our people were no longer strong, athletic, cross-country runners. Our weight changed, and we started to get round and thick. Our families began to be separated, our children began to look sad. Our spirits were out of balance. So, these were the manifestations of historical trauma and unresolved grief.

We each have a destiny and a purpose. Often times what happens is that over the years we’ve been dismembered from our true selves through colonization, boarding schools, relocation. Many of us have been separated from our lands, where our plant medicines grow, where our foods

Continued on page 5

“THE CIRCLE IS GETTING STRONGER...” Continued from page 4

exist. What I've been trying to do is re-member people and remind them, “This is your origin, here's how you were, you possess the abilities, you can do it totally on your own, call your power back.” When you're living in a place of power, you hear the voices of your ancestors talking to you and you're able to hear what you're supposed to do in life. When bad things happen, you can make sense of those things and realize they're happening to help you fulfill your destiny.

What obstacles are there? You must have many challenges.

D.J.: Well, if we were to back up to when I was a student here at the University of Wyoming, I felt I didn't fit in. I felt out of place, and people seemed like their world views were different than mine. Graduate school was very different: The way we were expected to write, the books we read, the way the journal articles were written. I went to my committee chair and said, “I feel out of place and I'm having a hard time here.” That's when she referred me to you, saying “She's in American Indian Studies and maybe she can help you out.” I remember going over to the American Indian Studies offices and feeling awkward and sort of shy, but I was glad I made the connection. You showed me the student lounge and I met some other Native students who continue today to be like my family, after all these years. I thought, “Oh, here's somebody who gets the humor, and here's somebody I can just relax with and be myself, and here's where I can get water if I want it.” That experience gave me back what I call the relational aspect of my life. So often in the bigger culture the focus is on the individual and the self, whereas in Native cultures, we're

taught to think about what we say and what we do and how those things are going to impact on the seventh generation from this time. We're told that when we're out in the world, we represent our family, our people.

What's getting better in your professional life, what's getting easier?

D.J.: Speaking up is easier for me now. I'm from a matrilineal people and the women are encouraged to be leaders and to advocate for their people. Also, we often say that everything is a circle. The circle's been wobbly and fragmented at times, and the one thing I've witnessed is that the circle's getting stronger and our voices are coming out more often. It's going to be hard to ignore us Indian people. We're no longer invisible like we used to be. Our people need to be remembered, and there needs to be healing that goes back to our original pain. We need to find holistic solutions; we truly need to include mind, body, and spirit when we think about the health and wellness of our people.

So many times it's the outsiders defining us and describing us. Let us define ourselves, let us describe ourselves. We need to be asked what works for us. We have all this light and it's like somebody's put a cover over us so that we can just see bits and pieces of our light sticking out here and there. If we could remove the cover and see ourselves the way we really are, everything would be different. We would focus on our strengths, on what's working for us. We would look at ourselves historically, at what we used to do and what we do today that continues those practices.

CHEYENNE ATTORNEY BRINGS LIFE EXPERIENCE TO AIS CLASS

“In my day to day profession, I don't work on Indian issues, so teaching has been an outlet for me to share something I'm passionate about,” says Affie Ellis. “I looked at some Indian law cases I hadn't read in awhile and remembered the great instructors who taught me law. It's been a remarkable experience.”

Ellis is an enrolled member of the Navajo Nation and has a minor in American Indian Studies from UW and a J.D. from the University of Colorado. This fall, she taught a new class, “Congress, Courts and American Indians,” for the American Indian Studies Program. Ellis designed the course to teach students how federal legislation and court

decisions shape federal Indian policy, drawing heavily on personal experience. She was a legislative assistant to Senator Craig Thomas; worked for the National Indian Gaming Commission; works in the Wyoming Attorney General's office, focusing on water and natural resources; and was recently appointed to the federal Tribal Law and Order Commission, a nine-member panel created by the Tribal Law and Order Act of 2010.

For class assignments, students assumed the role of legislative assistants and drafted memos containing background information and recommendations for support or opposition of a bill. They also prepared and presented

Continued on page 6

AFFIE ELLIS TEACHES AIS CLASS Continued from page 5

floor statements similar to those that members of Congress use to introduce legislation.

“I tried to incorporate practical experiences into the course,” says Ellis. “I think undergraduates sometimes forget that there are other lessons beyond what you learn in books that would be helpful to know before going out in the real world. I think there’s a real value to putting thoughts into written form. It forces one to organize and provide a lot of information in a short amount of space.

“The two bills I worked on that eventually passed into law were the Healthy Forest Restoration Act of 2003 and the American Indian Probate Reform Act of 2004. I wrote multiple memos on these issues: what’s going on at the committee level, what’s going on in the House, or what can be done to make sure that these bills become law.”

“I’ve enjoyed the course and Affie’s anecdotes about working on Capitol Hill and for the State of Wyoming,” says Maggie Moran, a member of the class and a graduate student in the American Studies Program.

Danielle Jensen, a graduate student in anthropology, agrees, adding that “Affie’s class made me feel like a firsthand observer of what is happening in Washington and on Indian reservations.”

“Part of the focus of the class is to try and tie some of these old laws to issues that are relevant and alive today, and I think that’s what I’ve enjoyed the most,” says Ellis. “Looking back at laws that were passed in the 1800s and seeing how they have so much validity and importance to what we’re doing now is so interesting. The students have been engaged and thoughtful. That’s been very rewarding.”



Affie Ellis and the Dalai Lama in Washington, D.C., 2001.

THE MORE PEOPLE COVERING NATIVE ISSUES, THE FURTHER THE NEWS WILL GO

Tristan Ahtone, a reporter for Wyoming Public Radio (WPR) and an enrolled member of the Kiowa Tribe, was a guest at the November meeting of the American Indian Studies Alliance, one of two American Indian student organizations at the University of Wyoming. The Alliance is dedicated to exploring ideas of interest to American Indian Studies students and Native American students, staff, faculty and community members, which it does by organizing presentations and performances on campus. Twenty-five students attended the session to meet Tristan and learn more about journalism in Indian Country.

“I went to school at the Institute for American Indian Arts (IAIA) in Santa Fe. It started my career in journalism. I originally went to school for painting and realized I wasn’t a very good painter. There was an elective journalism class, and I found that I enjoyed writing, so I switched to creative writing and started pursuing journalism,” said Ahtone, who eventually earned a graduate degree from the Columbia School of Journalism in New York.

“Columbia initially put me on a waiting list, so I moved to New York to get started doing any sort of journalism I could. I got on with a couple of magazines that never got off the ground, but they sent me out to report, and it built up my portfolio a little more to resubmit to Columbia.”

After graduate school, Ahtone had a fellowship with the National Minority Consortium, through Native American Public Telecommunications (NAPT) to work for the Online Newshour, an internship with National Public Radio, and he did freelance work for National Native News and for Frontline.

“NAPT partnered with the News Hour with Jim Lehrer in 2008 to do election coverage in minority communities. Three days after I graduated from Columbia, I was in New Mexico covering the elections. As far as I know, I was the only person in the country with the 2008 elections in Indian Country as a beat.”

Wyoming Public Radio hired Ahtone as a reporter in August 2010.

“WPR has been very open to my coverage of Native issues, because there hasn’t been a lot of it in the state,” said Ahtone, who has broadcast stories about the Wind River Tribal College, the Northern Arapaho Business Council election, and the Eastern Shoshone Business Council’s response to the Cobell v. Salazar settlement.



Tristan Ahtone in WPR Studio, 2010.
Photo by Renny Mackay.

“Getting people interested in Native issues is one of the bigger problems I’ve faced,” said Ahtone. “A lot of people don’t see that Native issues have an effect nationally.”

Among the most important news stories in Indian Country, Ahtone lists the economy and predatory housing lenders, as well as drug smuggling across the Mexican border onto reservation lands and into Arizona, a story that *Foreign Policy* magazine listed in a November article, “The Stories You Missed in 2010,” by Joshua E. Keating.

The more people who are covering Native issues, the further the news will go,” said Ahtone. “I hope that in the future, there will be more money to get Native students involved in journalism. I hope that National Native News will get more money to commission stories and expand their show to a longer format. I hope that the tribal newspapers and radio stations will link up to form an Indian associated press so that people can look at breaking news from Indian Country on a daily basis.”

THANK YOU TO OUR 2010 DONORS

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TLINGIT WORDSEARCH

THEME: TRADITIONAL FOODS FROM THE SEA
"WHEN THE TIDE IS OUT, THE TABLE IS SET." TLINGIT SAYING

All completed puzzles sent to AIS by April 30, 2011 will be entered in a drawing to win a prize. Please include your name and contact information on the puzzle.

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Caskey Russell, Tlingit tribal member, in Alaska, 2010.

Photo by Reina Russell.

- | | |
|---------------|---|
| gáal' | clams |
| yaak | mussels |
| cháatl | halibut |
| yaaw eexí | herring grease |
| k'ínk' | fermented salmon heads |
| s'áaw | Dungeness crab |
| dzánti | flounder |
| <u>x'</u> óon | seal |
| l'ook | Coho salmon |
| yéin | sea cucumber |
| laak'ásk | seaweed |
| gáax'w | herring eggs (usually eaten raw off a hemlock branch) |