Proposed UW American Indian Center

Concept Sketch, Seth Seablom/Jones & Jones
It’s difficult to believe a year has passed since the last issue of The Ledger was published. Important things have happened in the American Indian Studies Program in that span of time, and it’s my pleasure to tell you about two of these things now.

An American Indian center at the University of Wyoming has been proposed and work continues toward its creation. In the past months, a project profile for such a center has been developed with financial support provided by the Wyoming Cultural Trust Fund. The firm of Jones & Jones Architects + Landscape Architects + Planners assisted with this project and the firm’s concept drawing appears on the cover of this issue of The Ledger.

It’s the expectation of the American Indian Studies Program that an American Indian center will strengthen the representation of American Indians in the university and will contribute to UW’s cultural and ethnic diversification. It will confirm UW’s support for its Native students and their families and UW’s recognition for its tribal partners in the region. It will be visible evidence of UW’s interest in admitting and retaining American Indian students. It will attract visitors and offer them the finest expressions of tribal life and intellectual endeavors and collaborations. This mixed-use facility with its café, student computer lab, study space, and gallery space will be a welcoming, useful, and architecturally unique addition to the campus.

Another exciting development within the American Indian Studies Program was its receipt, this past summer, of the Wyoming Excellence in Higher Education Endowment. Created in 2006 by the Wyoming State Legislature, the endowment brings distinguished scholars and educators to UW to strengthen instruction and research in disciplines related to economic and social challenges facing Wyoming.

The Building Tribal Nations symposium, described in this issue of The Ledger, was made possible by the generous support provided by the Wyoming Excellence in Higher Education Endowment. Building Tribal Nations allowed us to consider the many elements required for building strong and healthy sovereign tribal nations. The gathering provided information and insights into the concerns, challenges, decisions, successes, and directions of tribal people in the United States, and also provided opportunities for sharing points of view and refining perspectives.

The symposium and the American Indian center project profile are just two examples of initiatives completed this past year, initiatives that emerged from and were strengthened by community, interdependence, and interdisciplinarity—the foundations of the American Indian Studies Program.

As I’ve had the opportunity to say many times, none of us works alone and no one succeeds without the help of others. It’s my pleasure, on behalf of the American Indian Studies Program, to recognize and most sincerely thank three individuals who have helped the program and UW’s American Indian students immeasurably: James Tosper, former member of the University of Wyoming Board of Trustees; Oliver Walter, outgoing Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences; John Nutter, recently retired Assistant to the Vice President of Student Affairs. Gentlemen, as you step away from your responsibilities of office and move into other areas of your lives, please know that the American Indian Studies Program has the highest regard for each of you and is deeply appreciative for all that you’ve given over the years. Megwiich.

Judith Antell, Director
American Indian Studies Program
A VISIT WITH SCOTT MANNING STEVENS
“EVERYTHING HAS AN INDIGENOUS ANGLE”

The importance of community and education, and the connections between the two, were key messages that Scott Manning Stevens, a member of the Akwesasne Mohawk Nation and director of the D’Arcy McNickle Center for American Indian and Indigenous Studies at the Newberry Library in Chicago, shared during his spring 2012 visit to the University of Wyoming and in his speech at the annual American Indian Studies Honoring of American Indian Graduates and Scholarship Recipients.

“I hope students will see how applicable indigenous studies is to all kinds of potential jobs or vocations,” said Stevens in an interview. “Everything has an indigenous angle: law or business, commercial ventures, environmentalism, cultural institutions.” He also stressed the importance for all students to “see opportunities in education as not just the means to a job—an education is a much richer thing. They’re not in college for job training—they’re in college to learn broadly and for the rest of their lives.”

Stevens pointed out that the McNickle Center is a resource not only for scholars, but for American Indian communities, too, for example, to help encourage language revitalization. Open and public access is vital to the fulfillment of this mission. “We need to make sure communities know they are welcome, and that the center’s resources are available to them,” said Stevens.

The McNickle Center and the Newberry Library are also home to the Newberry Consortium in American Indian Studies (NCAIS), which currently includes 18 universities in the United States and Canada. As a member of NCAIS, the University of Wyoming encourages students and affiliated faculty members to participate in the consortium’s rich offerings, which include an American Indian Studies seminar series, a spring workshop in research methods, an annual graduate student conference, and the NCAIS Summer Institute.

During his speech to American Indian graduates at UW, Stevens covered important points in American Indian history, from the progressive era on. He stressed that “our participation [in European American society] has not always been a foregone conclusion,” and that, in fact, the disappearance of American Indian peoples was predicted. He also discussed “the path to greater self-determination that education promises us,” while adding that this has been a long road with many obstacles, including the expectation not so long ago that Native people would leave their communities behind and assimilate into European American society.

Stevens’ research interests include the diplomatic and cultural strategies of North American Indians for resistance to European and American settler colonialism. He also researches museums and the indigenous cultures displayed within them. At the time of his University of Wyoming visit, Stevens was finishing a project on American Indians and museum culture, and examining the recent growth of Indian-centered museums. “These museums are no longer about representing the other,” said Stevens, “but rather are about indigenous peoples’ ability to represent ourselves.”
At a University of Wyoming conference, leaders from the Wind River Indian Reservation and around the nation reflected on how Indian tribes can strengthen the sovereignty that lies at the heart of Indian self-government. This is a central question for Indian tribes, which strive to relate as independent governments with local, state, and federal authorities, but have often failed to exploit this special status when they negotiate everything from water rights to the curriculum that they teach children.

LaDonna Harris, a Comanche who is sometimes called first lady of Indian Country, heads a non-profit called Americans for Indian Opportunity. In her opening remarks, she spoke about decades of struggle to “break the stranglehold of the Department of Interior” on Indian life, which, to her mind at least, can come to an end when Native people educate themselves and their neighbors about the history and political rights of tribes.

“We need to teach Indian 101,” she said. “We start with history and with the sophisticated cultures that existed here when the first Europeans arrived.”

Indian people who fail to understand their own history and treaty rights can hardly expect to be treated fairly by local governments near their reservation, she said in an interview with WyoFile. “We need to begin by teaching our own young people.”

But the tribes also bear the burden of educating nearby local governments that Indian tribes are sovereign states. “They

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don’t realize that tribes are governments, too,” she said of local governments that interact with tribes on reservations. “They have never been taught who the tribes are.”

The conference, called “Building Tribal Nations,” looked at sovereignty through a range of lenses, including the role of tribal colleges, the changing paradigms of Indian law, and the intricacies of defining and negotiating Native water and energy rights.

Walter Echo-Hawk, a Pawnee attorney who has had a hand in major cases including the Cobell class-action lawsuit, anticipates a new era in federal Indian law if the next generation of Native attorneys works to apply the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples to American cases.

“There are no principles of human rights law in federal Indian law,” he said. “In the ’70s and ’80s, a few visionary leaders went to the UN to get a seat at the table when the declaration was being drafted. They did a wonderful job.”

What the declaration does, he suggests, is proclaim the same rights for indigenous people that the rest of the world already enjoys. And while it is not a binding treaty, the declaration could be the foundation of a new legal theory that could help replace the “doctrine of conquest and colonialism.”

Wes Martel, a longtime member of the Eastern Shoshone Business Council on the Wind River Indian Reservation, said in his presentation that the reservation learned about water and energy rights “the hard way.”

The Wyoming tribes lost a court case to the state of Wyoming 24 years ago that cost them more than two-thirds of their surface water rights. He called on tribes around the nation to appoint a tribal water engineer to help create water policy on tribal lands. Only 30 of the 567 federally recognized tribes have taken this step, Martel said.

If tribes do not often take the steps necessary to protect their water rights, they enter into oil and gas leasing agreements that rob future generations of the profits under Indian lands.

“We pay more attention to our casinos and hotels than to our water and oil rights,” he said. Asking a group of middle and high school students from the Wind River Indian Reservation to stand up, he called on them to pursue careers in engineering, hydrology, and other technical fields, in order to defend and preserve their homeland’s resources.

Martel believes that tribes already have most of the tools they need to preserve their own rights and resources.

“If tribes exercise their own authority and sovereignty,” said Martel, “there are a lot of things they can do without waiting around for the federal government.”

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Ron Feemster covers the Wind River Indian Reservation for WyoFile in addition to his duties as a general reporter. Feemster was a Visiting Professor of Journalism at the Indian Institute of Journalism & New Media in Bangalore, India, and previously taught journalism at Northwest College in Powell. He has reported for The New York Times, Associated Press, Newsday, NPR, and others.
It is easy to assume that with the many books and monographs, and the hundreds of articles dealing with the culture of the Arapaho people, it would be unlikely that another publication could contribute something quite new and interesting. I was pleased to be mistaken in this assumption when I saw the book here reviewed, *Arapaho Journeys: Photographs and Stories from the Wind River Reservation* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2011).

The author, Sara Wiles, spent four years in the 1970s on the Wind River Indian Reservation as a social worker. First, as she writes in the preface to her book, she took photographs “to document social service programs,” but before long, decided also to record her “fascination with the Arapaho people and their lives.” Then in 2004, she began to write captions and essays to accompany the photos.

The book contains more than 120 black and white photographs, most of them full-page in size. All were taken by the author except for several of historic value. Among the latter is a daguerreotype of Chief Friday from the early 1850s, a photograph of seven Arapaho and Cheyenne chiefs taken in 1864 a few months before the infamous Sand Creek Massacre, and several photographs from 1910 taken by Edward S. Curtis for his monumental multivolume work of 1911.

But it is the photographs by Wiles that really capture us—pictures of elderly Arapaho men and women; Arapaho babies, preschoolers and young people; men butchering buffalo, deer and elk; women beading and some of their beadwork; an elder talking to a heritage day class; scenes from horse auctions; the making of fry bread; men singing and drumming; and people engaging in the various daily activities that keep them busy throughout the year. One may read in articles and ethnographies about some of the events depicted here, but in this book one can see the actual people, and that’s the next best thing to actually being there.

Just like the photos, Wiles’ essays are personalized, based as they are on her contacts and conversations with individual Arapaho men and women. Among the interviews she recorded is one with Ben Friday, Sr., reminiscing about his life during the first half of the twentieth century (he was born in 1906), another with Ben Friday, Jr., talking about his grandfather, and still another with Marie Willow, in which Marie mentions the arranged marriage of her parents in the early 1930s.

The value of the book is enhanced by a bibliography, index, eighteen pages of valuable notes, and a foreword by Frances Merle Haas.

Finally, let me add a photo I myself took of another outstanding Arapaho, William Shakespeare (not the one mentioned in the book). Bill was an excellent linguistic informant for me after the death of my original one, the remarkable John Goggles, in the spring of 1952. Bill was also the informant for a doctoral dissertation concerning the Arapaho dialect of the Plains Indian sign language. Let me add a personal note here. In connection with his work with the doctoral student on sign language, Bill spent part of the summer of 1957 in Flagstaff, Arizona, at the Museum of Northern Arizona, just an hour north of Sedona where we were living and teaching at the time. One day Bill came down to visit us, bringing along his traditional festive regalia for picture taking. And that was the occasion for the photo included here.

Zdenek Salzmann, emeritus professor at the University of Massachusetts, is a linguist, anthropologist and folklorist. The Arapaho writing system that Salzmann developed in the 1940s is widely used on the Wind River Indian Reservation. Working with the Arapaho Language and Culture Commission, Salzmann produced a dictionary of the Northern Arapaho language in 1983, and he published *The Arapaho Indians: A Research Guide and Bibliography* in 1988.
Renee Barrera (left) and Halley Reeves are recipients of the College of Arts and Sciences Board of Visitors Student Service Award for 2013. The award recognizes UW students who demonstrate outstanding volunteerism during the academic year, and nominations must come from a faculty or staff member.

Renee Barrera is a graduate student in history, also pursuing a graduate minor in American Indian Studies. Barrera’s area of research is Native Americans in the 19th century in and around Yellowstone, Yosemite, and Grand Canyon National Parks, and her thesis director is Jeff Means, adjunct faculty member in American Indian Studies. She serves as secretary for the American Indian Studies Alliance (AISA), a UW student organization. “Renee is a willing and able volunteer for AISA and American Indian Studies activities throughout the year,” says Judith Antell, director of the American Indian Studies Program. “She was a tireless helper during the recent Building Tribal Nations symposium.”

Halley Reeves is a junior in criminal justice, working on an undergraduate minor in American Indian Studies. She is also an active member of AISA. “Halley is an organizer and enthusiastic cook for the program’s Friday night dinners,” says Antell.

Jonathon Gage, adviser for AISA, notes that Reeves helps with homemade frybread at the Friday night dinners. “Her cooking is at the heart of the meals that we share,” said Gage, adding that “The dinners and accompanying activities that Halley arranges strengthen bonds outside of the classroom.”
PIMA WORD SEARCH

This issue’s word search, contributed by Cody Marshall, highlights Pima words for animals of the Sonora Desert. All completed puzzles returned to American Indian Studies by July 31 will be entered in a drawing to win a leather folio from the Building Tribal Nations symposium. Please include your name and contact information on the completed puzzle.

Photos: Daniel Antell, Buffalo Bill Historical Center, Jonathon Gage, Zdenek Salzmann.
American Indian center concept: Jones & Jones Architects + Landscape Architects + Planners.