A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

As has been true since it first was published in 2009, *The Ledger* provides me an opportunity to speak with you about the American Indian Studies Program (AIST) at the University of Wyoming (UW). This year, as in past years, I have the pleasure of describing a number of positive initiatives with which AIST has been affiliated, initiatives that reflect the dedication and creativity of all persons involved.

The High Plains American Indian Research Institute (HPAIRI), an entity that has been several years in development, was recently recognized by the University of Wyoming. HPAIRI has as its primary goal the facilitation of education and research collaboration between tribal communities in our region and UW faculty, staff, and students. There are many opportunities for UW and Native people to work together in ways that empower tribes, nurture innovation for American Indian sustainability, and demonstrate respect for Native people’s cultures, traditions, laws, and diverse expressions of sovereignty. The High Plains American Indian Research Institute is an entity that tribes and scholars can access and utilize for both tribally-driven research and for research initiated by UW scholars that pertains to Native peoples, their lands, and their resources.

A University of Wyoming American Indian center continues to be at the forefront of American Indian Studies efforts. For the past several years, AIST has worked closely with the University of Wyoming American Indian Center Steering Committee to host community conversations and to produce the documents necessary to propel this project forward. One such document, recently presented to the UW administration, requests that an American Indian center be included in the UW plan for 2014-2020. Campus and community support for a UW American Indian center is strong and there are clear reasons to remain optimistic that the vision will be realized.

This next academic year the American Indian Studies Program will welcome its post-doctoral fellow, Dr. Torivio Fodder, and his family. Dr. Fodder, Taos Pueblo, is an SJD graduate of the Indigenous People’s Law and Policy Program at the University of Arizona, James E. Rogers College of Law. He also holds a JD from the University of Arizona and an AB from Dartmouth College. Most recently, Dr. Fodder was a post-doctoral research fellow with the Māori & Indigenous Governance Center at the Te Piringa Faculty of Law, University of Waikato, New Zealand.

Dr. Fodder is an emerging scholar in the field of indigenous law with a special focus on international indigenous law and policy—a growing area of study. The American Indian Studies Program is excited to bring a scholar to UW who is at the forefront of his field, and who is aligned with the university’s increased emphasis on internationalization. While at UW, Dr. Fodder will have the opportunity to apply his education and experience to the teaching enterprise and to the advancement of the High Plains American Indian Research Institute.

Each of these initiatives and, in fact, all of the initiatives within the American Indian Studies Program over the twenty-two years of its existence, have been designed to support the educational needs of University of Wyoming students, contribute to the quality of life for all citizens in our region, and strengthen the political, cultural, and economic sovereignty of Native peoples. I’m very pleased to have been a part of these efforts.

Since I began my relationship with the UW American Indian Studies Program in 1993, my time with students and colleagues has been rewarding beyond measure. The friendships I’ve been privileged to enjoy have encouraged and sustained me. I’ve been provided opportunities for professional and personal growth at every turn and for that, I’m grateful. I’m thankful also for the fact that American Indian Studies has attained a level of strength and

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The American Indian Studies Program and the MFA in Creative Writing Program jointly hosted Navajo poet Sherwin Bitsui for a two-month residency during the fall 2013 semester, with funding from the Wyoming Excellence in Higher Education Endowment. During that time, Bitsui taught a class and gave public readings and writing workshops.

The students in Bitsui’s class were divided between American Indian Studies students and MFA students. “The American Indian Studies students had knowledge of Native American culture, and the MFA students brought a discussion about poetics and story to the table, and everybody shared something,” said Bitsui. “I just facilitated a conversation, really.”

This dynamic contributed to the success of the class, said American Indian Studies student Jordan Hemingway. “The split between American Indian Studies students and MFA students mirrored the idea of cultures existing side by side. It helped us gain insight into what happens during cultural exchange.”

“I think I was able to provide the students with a Navajo perspective and world view that they wouldn’t have gotten otherwise,” said Bitsui. “It’s not this broad, pan-Indian thing; it’s very specific and localized. We still have a language and a culture that are somewhat intact. We have a very poetic language. I feel that Navajo poetics has its roots in ceremonial culture, and that’s where our poetics begins, rather than with Emily Dickinson or Walt Whitman.”

“Sherwin worked hard to illustrate the Navajo world view to the class,” said American Indian Studies student Daniel Antell. “He talked about the Navajo relationship to nature and about how there are forces around us that interact with our world.”

Bitsui’s students read poetry from contemporary Navajo authors, including Esther Belin, Luci Tapahanso, Laura Tohe, and Orlando White, each of whom joined a session of the class via Skype. The students also wrote and presented their own poems each week.

“Over the course of the semester, my students were able to notice the interiority of a culture, not just the plastic notions of culture,” said Bitsui. I hope it opens them up to looking at their own culture and language, to see what possibilities might lie within that framework.”

Daniel Antell agrees. “Sherwin’s class helped me examine my own personal experiences as a Native growing up in a predominately white society,” said Antell. “The struggle for me was to interpret my own world view in a creative way, but now I’m open to the artistic world. I continue to write, even after the class is over.”

Daniel I offer my most humble gratitude. Your patience and generosity of spirit have inspired me to do my best to help others. Your strong and deep investment in the future of the American Indian Studies Program provides me great satisfaction. You honor me.

My thanks to you all for the kindness you’ve extended to me over the years. I’ve enjoyed working with so many of you, getting to know your families, and your communities. I ask that you continue to support American Indian Studies and its new leaders. With your help, my successors will thrive in their roles and our faculty, staff, and students will continue to grow, do good work, and strive to benefit others.

Giga-waabamim menaaaw.
Northern Cheyenne multidisciplinary artist Bently Spang was the AIS Eminent Artist in Residence during the spring 2014 semester, with funding from the Wyoming Excellence in Higher Education Endowment. Spang taught a class on Native American art; had a solo exhibition, Bently Spang: On Fire, at the UW Art Museum; and presented Tekno Pow Wow III, an audience-participatory, multimedia, group performance art piece featuring pow wow, hip hop, and Māori dancers, with partial support from the Wyoming Cultural Trust Fund. The essay below, written by Jessica Hunter Larsen of Colorado College, is excerpted from the companion brochure to Spang’s projects at UW.

Like many young graduate art students, Bently Spang eagerly embraced the electronic music movement that swept through dance clubs in the 1990s. While his peers may have found the hypnotic rhythms and ecstatic dance of the techno-music scene to be exhilaratingly new, Spang was reminded of his childhood on the Northern Cheyenne reservation in Montana. “I was blown away by the energy,” he says. “It felt like déjà vu; the effortless dancing that comes out of it is like going through a wall, and not unlike my own experiences at a powwow on the reservation.” To explore the similarities he saw between the powwows of his childhood, the edgy techno-music dance parties of his college years, and urban break dancing competitions, Spang began to envision a “powwow for the 21st century” that would combine traditional Native drumming and dancing with contemporary dance to explore how diverse cultures borrow from each other to support their own ethnic identities.

The series launched with Tekno Powwow I, a collaboration with Navajo artist and DJ Bert Benally at the Montana Artist Refuge in 2004. Focused on dance as a cross-cultural, community-building activity, the event involved local dancers performing ballet, tap, modern, belly dance, Irish step, and hip hop, as well as traditional powwow dancing. In 2007, Spang took the helm of Tekno Powwow II at Colorado College and narrowed the focus of the event to comprise a fluid and evolving conversation between traditional powwow and hip hop dancing.

The Tekno Powwow’s synthesis of influences reflects the traditional powwow’s historical role as a forum for cultural exchange between American Indian tribes. While the exact origins of the modern powwow are unknown, it is generally accepted that the concept of the powwow developed out of late 19th century gatherings of Plains tribes who met to exchange songs, dances, and ceremonies. These inter-tribal gatherings were crucial in preserving Native cultures during the United States Government’s ban on Native ritual and dance, which extended from the mid-1800s to the early 1930s. During this time, dance ceremonies were held in secret, or disguised as other activities. Incorporating traditional customs, such as honoring elders and
naming ceremonies, modern powwows are an important part of Native cultural and public life. A multi-ethnic hybrid of music, fashion, and dance, the Tekno Powwow mirrors the traditional powwow’s function as a vehicle for social exchange, community-building, and education.

By mixing Native American drum rhythms with techno-music or showcasing a break dancing Fancy Dancer, the Tekno Powwow challenges the idea that Native American cultures are static. “Everyone feels they know who Native peoples are, and yet they continually put us in one time period,” Spang says. “You never hear ‘Indian’ and ‘future’ mentioned in the same sentence.”

Updating the traditional powwow for a media-driven, technological age, Spang challenges this moribund view of Native culture by hosting the Tekno Powwow in character as The Blue Guy: Indian of the Future. Inspired equally by comic book superheroes and the clown dances of his people, Spang says of his performance character, “Native people in movies and books get only one dimension at a time: the stoic chief or the angry young Indian male/female or the mystical shaman. I want to show some of the missing dimensions that make us human, so The Blue Guy is funny and sexy and cool.”

Spang’s installation On Fire addresses broader issues of identity, authenticity, and deep connection with the past by focusing tightly on a specific—and highly personal—landscape. Comprising performance, gestural images, and video, the installation documents the effects of the 2012 Ash Creek wildfire that devastated Spang’s family ranch on the Northern Cheyenne reservation.

In concentrated, rhythmic gestures, Spang creates rubbings from the charred bark of fire-singed trees, his movements echoing the action of the fire. Each interaction with the tree is captured on video, concluding with Spang solemnly presenting the bark-drawing to the camera. As with the Tekno Powwow’s impresario The Blue Guy, Spang acts not as a creator of a creative act, but as its facilitator. Rather than depict the fire’s devastation in a static image or extract the bark to incorporate into a sculpture, the artist engages in a dialogue with the tree, allowing it to recount its own narrative of the fire, and opens that dialogue to an audience. The trees’ narratives unfold in ever-expanding rings of contact: first with the paper, then with Spang as he directs the action, and finally with the audience, through the lens of the video camera.

On Fire’s silent dialogue with individual trees, captured by the video camera and made into ritual through repetition in the gallery, reveals the trees’ individual characters. Rather than simply comprising elements of a forest, each tree possesses its own unique “fingerprint.” For Spang, the individual presence of each tree on the reservation land signifies the living connection his family maintains to the land. He says of the reservation land, “It carries the history, it carries the heart of those people and of us today as well…it literally runs thorough my veins. It is where my family comes from; it’s where the beginnings of my life are and the continuation of that life through my family and through future generations.”
AMERICAN INDIAN STUDIES PROGRAM SUPPORT FOR NATIVE STUDENTS

The American Indian Studies Scholarship Committee awarded four scholarships to Native American students attending the University of Wyoming (UW) for the 2014-2015 academic year. The committee selected Rain Chippewa to receive the John and Ada Thorpe Scholarship. Avis Garcia, Jackalyn Kandle, and Olivia Terry were awarded the Robert W. Winner Memorial Scholarship.

RAIN CHIPPEWA (Eastern Shoshone) is a first-year law student. His background includes work as a grant writer and work with Native American children and families. It was this involvement with Native families that inspired Chippewa to go to law school. “I saw the need for legal expertise for many people living on the reservation, especially young parents who wanted to regain custody of their children.” Chippewa has expressed his sincere appreciation for the Thorpe Scholarship and its ability to help him through law school, where books alone can run up to $1,200 per semester. “I am thankful for any financial assistance that the Scholarship Committee can provide for me to pursue my goals. When one Native American succeeds, we all succeed.”

AVIS GARCIA (Northern Arapaho) is in her first year of a doctoral program in counselor education with a focus on addictions. Avis is a first-generation student in her family, having earned bachelor’s and master’s degrees from UW. After graduating with her master’s degree, she went home to the Wind River Indian Reservation, and has now returned to UW to attain her Ph.D. “I want to become a professor and teach. I want to help others learn how to better serve tribal members throughout Indian Country.” Avis also currently serves as the graduate assistant to UW Multicultural Affairs. She provides student support services, helping undergraduate students be successful in completing their college degrees.

OLIVIA TERRY (Muscogee Creek) will be an incoming freshman this fall, majoring in geology and archeology with a minor in French. In high school, she has been involved with a variety of extracurricular activities including the Tulsa Rowing Club, the National Honor Society, and the Native American Honor Society. Olivia takes pride in her Muscogee Creek heritage and culture and is looking forward to beginning her academic career at UW.

JACKALYN KANDLE (Chickasaw Nation) is a senior studying rangeland ecology and watershed management with a minor in land reclamation. This past summer, she interned with the Seeds of Success (SOS) program through UW and the Bureau of Land Management. The experience with SOS may lead to her publishing her results in a scientific journal. “This would be a great opportunity for me while going to school,” remarks Jackalyn. Also while at UW, Jackalyn traveled to Alaska to attend an American Indian Science and Engineering Society (AISES) conference. The experience inspired her. “I met many other American Indian women working towards the same goal as myself, to graduate with a science or engineering degree.” The AISES conference also offered her the opportunity to learn about leadership, renewable energy, and how to integrate her cultural background into her education. Jackalyn, along with a small group that also traveled to Anchorage, have since started an AISES chapter at UW.

UW is indebted to the McCarthy, Winner, and Thorpe families for their generosity to American Indian students at UW. As a result of the generous financial support provided by these families and the scholarships they have created, American Indian Studies has assisted American Indian students from a variety of tribal backgrounds in their educational endeavors. The American Indian Studies Scholarship Committee awards competitively scholarships of varying amounts. Eligibility requirements include tribal enrollment; full-time student status at UW; scholastic ability and achievement; demonstrated leadership; participation in extracurricular activities; letters of recommendation; personal statement; and potential to contribute to American Indian communities upon graduation. AIS begins accepting applications on November 1 of each year with a typical deadline in mid-February.
The fall 2013 semester marked the tenth year that Wayne C’Hair made the weekly journey from the Wind River Indian Reservation to teach the Arapaho language class at UW. Because of the intensive schedule for the class—it meets Friday afternoons and Saturday mornings for the first half of the semester—two teaching assistants stepped in to help: Robyn Lopez and Salvatore Chiporo.

All levels of the Arapaho class meet simultaneously, sometimes in one large group, and sometimes separated by ability. The learning style for the class is cooperative: students learn from the teacher, but they also learn from one another, taking on teaching responsibility as they become more proficient in the language.

Salvatore Chiporo, who graduates this spring from UW with bachelor’s degrees in history and anthropology, recalled the first day of his second semester in the Arapaho class, when C’Hair needed to step out for a minute and told him to take over the class. “I went to the board and wrote the Arapaho alphabet, and I followed Wayne’s style,” said Chiporo. “Wayne notices people with a passion for learning. I was thirsty to learn Arapaho. I made materials for the course—worksheets and charts—that were useful for the students.”

“I was able to do some tutoring and meet with students during the days when Wayne was not on campus. It was really beneficial for the students,” said Robyn Lopez, who first met C’Hair when she took his Arapaho language class at Central Wyoming College, and who continued to study Arapaho after transferring to UW. Lopez graduated from UW in 2007 with a bachelor’s degree in anthropology, earned a master’s degree in linguistics in 2009 from the University of Hawaii at Manoa, and is now enrolled in the Post-Baccalaureate Teacher Certification Program at UW.

Chiporo’s enthusiasm for the Arapaho language made him a clear candidate to be a teaching assistant, and Lopez’s long history with C’Hair and depth of knowledge made her a natural choice for the role. Chiporo helped with students in their third and fourth semesters of the class, while Lopez helped with students in their first and second semesters, and C’Hair would move between the groups.

Lopez notes that members of the Arapaho language class are a community at UW. She has been instrumental in fostering this community by tirelessly organizing and cooking for potluck dinners on Friday nights when class is in session. Last fall, Native students from the Cathedral Home in Laramie often attended the dinners. Lopez has also started an Arapaho language club intended to help maintain interest and proficiency in the language when class is not in session. For these exceptional efforts, Robyn received the College of Arts and Sciences Board of Visitors Student Service Award for 2014.
CHEYENNE WORD SEARCH

This issue’s word search comes courtesy of Chief Dull Knife College on the Northern Cheyenne Indian Reservation. All completed puzzles returned to American Indian Studies by July 31 will be entered in a drawing to win an AIS attaché bag. Please include your name and contact information on the puzzle.

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vokhohe rabbit
ka'ěškone child
nehešecounty told me
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hetane'O'men
ma'haahkéseho
etano'mold men
etosæ'where?
epo'ahehe is gray
xao'o skunk
voaxaæe bald eagle
emo'kōhtavo it is black
no'ee'e squirrel
ma'ehweater
ma'eno it is yellow
estsemæe
voatseva
gopher
daer