AISC Director Search
By Hanay Geiogamah, Interim Director, AISC

Thanks to the dedication and commitment of the hard-working ten-member committee and its chair, Professor Paul Ong, the search for a new director of the American Indian Studies Center (AISC) has almost been concluded. Three excellent candidates visited the UCLA campus in March and April. The finalist will be announced later this spring.

The first candidate was Professor Angela Riley, the Irving D. and Florence Rosenberg Professor of Law at Southwestern Law School in Los Angeles. A veteran litigator when she joined Southwestern’s faculty in 2003, she was also named Justice of the Supreme Court of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation of Oklahoma, of which she is a member. Her recent scholarship focuses on the protection of Native American intellectual and cultural property, as well as other legal issues related to the rights of indigenous communities.

Professor Jace Weaver, Professor of Native American Studies, Religion, and Law and Director of the Institute of Native American Studies at the University of Georgia, was the second finalist. He specializes in the intersection of Native religions, literatures, and communities. He is the author or editor of nine books in the field, three of which have won important national awards. He holds two doctorates, a JD from Columbia University and a PhD from Union Theological Seminary.

The third candidate was Professor C. Matthew Snipp, Professor in the Department of Sociology at Stanford University. He has been a research fellow at the US Bureau of the Census and a fellow at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences. Professor Snipp has published three books and more than sixty articles on demography, economic development, poverty, and unemployment. He serves as an appointed member of the Census Bureau’s Racial and Ethnic Advisory Committee.

Each of these three distinguished applicants acknowledged their respect for UCLA’s American Indian Studies Center, for its prestige and long history of leadership in the field. One of them will soon step into the director’s role and begin his/her tenure of work and commitment to our program. We must all pledge our sincere support and cooperation to the new director and welcome this person with respect and gratitude. Aho.

Exciting Developments in American Indian Studies
By Felicia Hodge, IDP Chair

While the American Indian Studies Center is undergoing a great deal of healthy change, the American Indian Studies Interdepartmental Program (AIS-IDP) is also experiencing significant programmatic changes. These changes have been taking place consistently over the last two years under the appointment of the IDP Chair, Dr. Felicia Hodge. Some of these changes include: (1) the creation of IDP-developed and -approved program bylaws; (2) greater resources for current and potential students, such as a student handbook, a Web site, www.americanindianstudies.ucla.edu, recruitment calendars, and a recruitment film (in process); (3) regular meetings with faculty to address issues such as classroom scheduling, faculty recruitment, and student needs; (4) changes to the master’s degree requirement of the written thesis—an exam is now available for both current and past students who did not complete their degree due to incomplete thesis submission.

New changes on the AIS-IDP horizon include a planned addition to our faculty to teach AIS introductory, history, English, and research courses. This is taking place concurrently with a curriculum review, which is revisiting past class offerings with an eye to meeting student and program needs. Faculty committee work has been particularly effective during this time, and the Admissions Committee reviewed a record number of applicants, proudly offering admission to more than twelve new students for this fall.

This academic program continues to provide financial support for student activities in areas such as the annual pow wow, visiting scholars, special speakers, and graduation ceremonies. Much is being done to ensure that, despite a shortage in faculty, student programs and courses will continue to be supported and offered. Although progress is being made, it is important to stress that our plans for the future place the needs of our students at center stage—in terms of academic preparation, counseling, financial aid, and student life. Check with your faculty mentors and chair to get the latest on the important changes happening here at UCLA’s IDP and AISC.
Congratulations, Second-Year MA Students!

Please join the American Indian Studies Center and Interdepartmental Program in proudly congratulating our graduating MA students. We applaud their academic diligence, fantastic research, and deep commitment to the preservation of indigenous cultures displayed throughout their time here with us at UCLA.

**JESSICA O’NEILL (Yurok)**
Thesis: “Pohlik-lah: The Drawing Together of Two Cultures”
A historical inquiry looking at the melding of cultures between the Yurok and the people who invaded their lands beginning in the 1860s, this study provides a unique statistical and demographic perspective on the history of the Yurok people during the past 150 years. It is the first attempt made to analyze the history of the Yurok people in demographic terms.

**THERESA YSABEL ROCHA (Oneida/Ojibwe)**
This is a study of how ten American Indian tribes in San Diego County decided to redefine their political sovereignty to an external audience through the formation of a tribal court consortium. This work examines how tribal communities are successfully melding traditional tribal legal systems with that of Western jurisprudence, resulting in culturally conscious ways to deal with the relevant and critical legal issues that face their tribal members today.

**KARI MANS**
This thesis examines intertribal coalitions centered on repatriation and cultural resources protection between federally acknowledged and non–federally recognized tribes. Under the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), only federally recognized tribes can request repatriation from museums and agencies receiving federal funds. Nonrecognized tribes have navigated this legislation by entering into coalitions with federally acknowledged tribes to begin the process of regaining ownership of their cultural objects.

**KIMBERLY ROBERTSON (Muscogee Creek)**
Thesis: “Unidentified Bodies—Documenting the Movement to End Violence Against Native Women”
The objective of this project is to articulate the activism and organizational strategies that Native women have employed to illuminate and combat the horrific problem of violence against Native women that both endangers the lives of individual women and erodes the sovereignty of Native nations. Additionally, this project will result in an archival resource for Sacred Circle: National Resource Center to End Violence Against Native Women.

**RAYMOND NAYLOR HUNTER (Paiute-Shoshone)**
Thesis: “An Examination of the Sociopolitical Structure of the Lone Pine Indian Community: A Comparative Analysis”
This work presents a sociopolitical history of the Lone Pine Paiute and Shoshone people. It seeks to demonstrate the existence of devices that will act as mobility in the form of self-learning and renewing cultural ties that are developed by rethinking pedagogy and sovereignty. As analysis, one can postulate changes and the effects of colonization over time as a means of cultural survival in the quest for a new epistemology among the Indian people.

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**The Next Generation of Yurok!**

Please join in celebrating the welcoming of our newest community member, Alex Christopher (Yurok) born on February 3, 2008 to parents Ray Carter and second-year MA student Jessica O’Neill (Yurok). Little Alex Christopher weighed in at 7 lbs., 12 oz. and cannot wait to follow in his mommy’s footsteps in joining our academic endeavors!

The UCLA American Indian community sends our warmest blessings to the entire family!
In Memoriam

Melissa L. Meyer

Melissa L. Meyer, historian of American Indians, died April 9 of complications from a cerebral hemorrhage suffered the previous summer. She was 53.

Born in Cincinnati, Ohio, of mixed Irish, German, and Eastern Cherokee heritage, Meyer received her PhD in American history from the University of Minnesota in 1985. With the publication of The White Earth Tragedy in 1994, Meyer established her reputation as a leading scholar in her field. In her book, she detailed the expropriation of land from the Anishinaabegs of the Great Lakes region from 1889 to 1920.

Meyer was an active and engaged faculty member, both at UCLA and in the profession at large. In addition to being a member of the Department of History, she was associated with the UCLA American Indian Studies Center and with the American Indian Studies Interdepartmental Degree Program. A generous and attentive mentor, Meyer worked closely with undergraduate and graduate students alike. Her course materials blended American Indian autobiographies with contemporary issues that caught the attention of students. An undergraduate in the class she was teaching at the time of her stroke described her as “a great professor who was very enthusiastic about the material she taught, and it showed in her class.” She inspired by example. One graduate student remembers her as never being afraid to “roll up her sleeves” and get into the trenches to demonstrate what good teaching was about.

She was as civic-minded as she was tough-minded. She applied her expertise in museology to assist in the design of a permanent exhibit at the Smithsonian Institution’s Museum of American History. She acted as a consultant on Native American issues for CBS News, the Smithsonian, the Minnesota Chippewa tribe, the US Department of Justice, Indian Claims Division, and the History Channel.

Meyer’s untimely death has saddened her students and friends as well as her colleagues, both in the UCLA History Department and in the larger, national Native American studies community. She is survived by her mother, Helen Meyer; her sister, Diana Meyer-Margeson of Loveland, Ohio; her husband, Russell Thornton, a professor in the UCLA Department of Anthropology; her daughter, Tanis; and her son, Zane.

UCLA’s Campbell Hall Blessing Ceremony

February 25, 2008 marked an important day in Campbell Hall history as the Academic Advancement Program (AAP) celebrated its thirty-five-year anniversary. AAP is the nation’s largest university-based program geared firmly toward student diversity. It offers a number of critical services—including tutoring, retention support, academic counseling, and transfer mentorship to low-income and underrepresented populations—to support the UCLA community. To commemorate this momentous occasion, our local community member Jimi Castillo (Tongva) performed a blessing ceremony and offered his wisdom on the importance of higher education for people of all backgrounds.

Some of the local Native organizations involved include the drum/singers United American Indian Involvement; Elton Naswood, Executive Director of the Red Circle Project along with Counselors Franette Tolon and Mattee Jim; Nora Pulskamp, Director of UCLA American Indian Recruitment (AIR); and Kat High, Director of Haramoknega American Indian Cultural Center.
Pimu Island Archaeological Project

By Wendy Teeter

Something exciting is taking place in UCLA’s backyard on the lithic and marine-rich island of Pimu (Santa Catalina). An archaeology field school affiliated with UCLA’s Archaeology Department and Tribal Learning Community and Educational Exchange (TLCEE) program of approximately twenty students, researchers, and faculty will gather on this beautiful island off the Southern California coast from June 22 to July 25, 2008 in order to study the Pimu Island peoples’ contributions to the extensive trade network among our region’s indigenous populations.

Students will conduct fieldwork on Catalina Island, focusing on recent burn areas that will allow for the characterization of different types of archaeological sites (for example, habitation, quarry, village, ceremonial). Excavation will take place at a historic and prehistoric habitation site to recognize its attributes and determine California Register eligibility, which will help protect these sites. Essential to the mission and purpose of this collaborative project, class lectures will be given by local experts, Tongva tribal members, and California archaeologists to broaden our historical and cultural understanding of the rich interplay of resources to be found at Pimu Island.

These and other exciting field school opportunities await. If you are interested, simply check out www.archaeology.ucla.edu or send Professor Wendy Teeter an e-mail message regarding further information on issues concerning cultural resource protection at wteeter@arts.ucla.edu. We look forward to having you along in one of our upcoming courses as well as sharing a report back with the NativeBruin community on this summer’s exciting fieldwork! 

2009 Native American and Indigenous Studies Conference

Call for Papers and First Announcement
May 21–23, 2009
University of Minnesota, Twin Cities

Mark your calendars community members and scholars! The third interdisciplinary meeting of the Native American and Indigenous Studies Conference is inviting proposals from around the globe for submissions of individual papers, panel session proposals, or roundtables on any topic in Native American and Indigenous Studies. This is an extremely exciting event for all of us and the UCLA Native American and Indigenous Studies community encourages all interested parties to attend. For more information on the submission of proposals or otherwise, please visit the conference Web site for details at amin.umn.edu/NAIS2009. 

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NativeBruin >>> Spring 2008
Southwest Texas Popular Culture and American Culture Conference

By Kari Mans, Nicole Johnson, and Alisa Lee

In February, three graduate students made the trek to present at the Southwest Texas Popular Culture and American Culture conference held in New Mexico. Unfortunately, panels devoted to Native community issues, solutions, and activism tend to become lost within American popular culture conferences. Our panels were not outside this norm. Fewer than fifteen people combined attended our two panels while the next rooms were filled to capacity. Nevertheless, there was an overwhelming positive response to our presentations among attendees because our research and interests are community-based, and we all feel strongly about our topics. On one panel, Kari Mans presented on the need for intertribal coalitions comprised of recognized and unacknowledged tribes for repatriation to federally nonrecognized Native nations under the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, while Nicole Johnson discussed turning toward states and coalitions with non-Natives to protect sacred sites rather than relying on federal legislation.

On a separate panel, Alisa Lee argued that tribes should become more proactive when dealing with child adoption instead of relying on the state and social workers to learn about the Indian Child Welfare Act. In essence, at conferences dealing with American popular culture there seems to be a disconnect between theory and applied works. Popular culture studies tend to ignore the complexities of community work to focus more on theory. Despite this trend, not everyone going to these conferences wants just theory; instead they yearn for a combination of both. With our success, we encourage all those working within tribal communities to connect this break and decolonize popular culture studies to begin examining what it takes for indigenous applied work.

Pacific Worlds and the American West

By Heather Torres

On February 8 and 9, 2008, the student staff of Retention of American Indians Now (RAIN) and Pacific Islanders Education Retention (PIER) attended the Pacific Worlds and the American West Conference at the University of Utah in Salt Lake City. This international and interdisciplinary conference focused on the relationship between indigenous communities, particularly Pacific Islander communities, and the American West. Throughout the two-day conference, panels were held on a variety of topics. Influential scholars of the Pacific were keynote speakers, including Dr. Haunani Kay Trask, a prominent Hawaiian Native leader and activist; Dr. Linda Tuhiiwai-Smith, a leading Pacific indigenous researcher; Dr. Peter Brunt, an authority in Pacific Art and tattoos; and Dr. Vicente Diaz, an expert in traditional Micronesian seafaring practices.

Two interesting panels were given by our own UCLA faculty and students. Professor Keith Camacho presented on the topic of gender and sexuality: “No Offense Had Been Established: Criminalizing Sexuality in the Aftermath of World War II,” while the students who work for RAIN and PIER presented on student outreach: “Cross-Community Holistic Development, a Move toward Empowerment: A View of Pacific Islander and American Indian Student-Initiated and -Run Retention and Outreach Efforts.” Each program’s services were discussed. The students presented an interactive tool used in peer counseling sessions and received helpful feedback from the students and teachers in attendance. The panels and keynote speakers were highly informative, allowing each member to become more aware, politically and emotionally, of the issues facing indigenous communities today and to bond together as representatives of their respective indigenous communities.
By Deborah Miranda (Ohlone-Costanoan Esselen Nation/Chumash)

Standing in the cold Venice Beach parking lot watching his clothing scatter in the four directions, Coyote decided to head for New Mexico, find his brother, and leave his broken heart behind.

He’d been living on Venice Beach a long time; he liked the ocean’s tall jade waves, the generous people camping in the parking lot. Their vehicles—old school buses, pick-up trucks with campers, station wagons equipped with curtains and propane stoves—felt like home. Coyote was always welcome to contribute his unique touch to the vivid vehicle decor. No one objected to his new favorite decoration, a bumper sticker of two naked women kissing, emblazoned SCREW CENSORSHIP, and even in winter Coyote could get cheap pizza by the slice at a kiosk that also sold Pall Malls and condoms, or find guys up for a game of checkers. Not to mention the sweet crazy woman with sleeping bags in the back of her van waiting for Coyote to heat them—and her—up.

But this winter, the rain didn’t quit. The sand never dried out, paint bled off his best graffiti, sleeping bags felt damp. Squalls blew in off the Pacific every day, checker players hunched grudgingly under covered shelters muttering, Friggin’ global warming.

Yeah, Coyote figured he’d head to New Mexico. Seemed like his sweet crazy woman was more crazy than sweet. Why else move her van while he was out cruising—er, walking, the beach? He’d come back to find his rickety suitcase sprawled in an empty parking space.

“Gah!” Coyote gathered up his obscene t-shirts and gangsta pants, shook the sand out of his fur, hitched up his low-riding green canvas pants and slouched up the hill to catch a #1 Santa Monica Big Blue Bus to Westwood. From there he could catch a shuttle to LAX; he had relatives they wanted him to bring home groceries!

I can’t even hold my tail up anymore, let alone my pecker, thought Coyote, bumping his suitcase around puddles. Shoulders slumped, feet sloshing in the rain, Coyote stood at the bus stop with water dripping off his snout and didn’t even have the heart to flick his ears. Oh well. At least the bus was pulling up, he had 75 cents for the ride, and there was his sister-in-law’s cooking in the near future.

He perked up enough to let three old ladies get on the bus ahead of him. Of course that meant the three old ladies took the last three seats on the bus. Behind the driver the bench seats had been folded up earlier for a wheelchair. Coyote lurched awkwardly trying to pull the seats down without losing his balance, but he couldn’t find the right button or switch. Story of my life, he growled. Finally he threw his suitcase on the floor, plopped right down on it, smiled up innocently at the three old ladies—one Black, one India, one Korean. Buncha dried up old Viejas.

At eye-level with their knobby knees, his cold feet throbbing, wet fabric clinging to his cold calves, Coyote made a strange discovery: all three of these broads had perfectly dry pants. Of course that meant that when they sat down their high-waters rose practically to their knees, but they didn’t suffer from frostbite, either. Interesting, Coyote thought, but uncool. In the gap that when they sat down their high-waters rose practically to their knees, but they didn’t suffer from frostbite, either. Interesting, Coyote thought, but uncool. In the gap between the saggy tops of their white tube socks and the bottom of their stretch-waist pants, strips of even less attractive bare hairy skin. Ay!

Well, hair on four of the six legs—at least the indigenous woman in the middle still shaved occasionally. Coyote sniffed. She used lotion, too, or maybe just a nice laundry detergent. Lilacs, maybe, or laverder? Coyote tilted his head, looked at her hands. Ah, a modest but tasteful home manicure. Cinnamon-colored skin, weather-worn but not too wrinkly. Hard-working, sturdy hands with calluses. She would never have been a beauty, Coyote admitted, but she surely could have made a man happy. She even had a cloth shopping bag sticking out of her coat pocket. Senior Tuesday at Von’s, he remembered.

He glanced quickly at her face: a little foundation, blue eye shadow, a discreet but feminine coral pink lipstick. Firm chin, a good nose with some arch to it; not ashamed of her strength, he decided. Her hair, silver with black streaks, was pulled back into a tight braid. She’d tied a silky blue scarf, just the right shade to set off her eye shadow, at her throat.

Wa-a-aait-a-minute. What was he thinking? He was on his way outta here! Disgruntled, Coyote looked out wide front windows at the rain. Time to ditch L.A. Go where they were telling stories, serving up hot food, and a woman was only wet when he made her that way himself. Yeah.

Lost in dreams of glory, Coyote damn near missed his stop. Wait! he yelped, leaping up to snag the yellow pull-cord, bending down to grab his suitcase. Wait for me!

Scrabbling, Coyote had the odd sensation that he was hobbled like a horse. And what was that cold breeze at his backside? Just as he straightened, suitcase firmly in his left hand, Coyote’s baggy pants, held up by a piece of rope, suddenly became a lot baggier. Oops. Not only was his butt hanging out, but so was his pride and joy, and wouldn’t you know it, right at eye level with the old Indita. Her expression reminded him of his brother’s face when they’d hit the jackpot in Vegas one time.

Coyote grabbed his pants, yanked up, clung desperately to his suitcase as the bus driver went from 30 mph to nothing, screeching to a halt. Barreling forward, Coyote blew right past the driver, bounced off the dashboard down the steps, landing breathless at the foot of a gently dripping palm tree.
Coyote
(Continued)

He looked up at the bus windows to see the Black woman’s face mapped with new laugh lines. The Korean grandma’s eyes glittered with outrage. But the old Indian lady—was he just imagining it, or—well, was she giving him the eye?

Coyote felt it then: his mojo. Like a sunrise, like an illegal firecracker smuggled off the rez, like a long drink out of a fresh bottle of tequila, it came back to him: that was no little old lady. That mix of strength and serene femininity that had so intrigued Coyote . . . that old lady was a glammed up—and impressed—old man.

The bus squealed away. Coyote found himself with a suitcase in one hand, family jewels in the other, and a surprised but happy mojo. He stared after the bus, unconsciously licking his chops.

What was the old word? Joto? No, older than that, and sweeter. Joya? Jewel of the People? Nope, just a Spanish translation of the original. Coyote rolled his slippery pink tongue around in his mouth. A word that meant beauty, medicine, truth … Coyote cried the Chumash word aloud: ’aqi!

He looked back toward Venice Beach. She must live down there. He was sure he’d seen her around. Yeah, s/he sat off to the side during checkers matches and knitted. Always had a warm chuckle when Coyote won, or a soft, “Awww…” and click of tongue in sympathy if he didn’t. What was hir name? Dolores? Maria? Juanita.

It was really cold in ABQ this time of year, Coyote remembered. Ice, even.

Slowly Coyote pulled up his baggies, reknotted the rope, his tail waving and erect. Then he hauled his rickety suitcase across the street, where the #1 Big Blue Bus headed down to Venice for a mere 75 cents. Coyote smiled. Now he knew where his mojo had gone, and he was gonna be there waiting when she came back this afternoon. Hell, he might even help carry the groceries. ☮
23rd Annual Pow Wow

On May 3 and 4 the American Indian Student Association hosted its 23rd Annual Pow Wow at UCLA. The UCLA Pow Wow is a space where Native students can educate their peers, the UCLA community, and the Los Angeles community at large about Native culture and tradition. The pow wow is also a means by which the students are able to connect with the largest urban Indian population in the nation.

Head Staff

Northern Drum: Midnite Express (from Minneapolis)
Southern Drum: BucWild (from Chinle)
Head Man: John Bradley (Comanche)
Head Woman: Sarah Agaton-Howes (Anishinaabe)
Master of Ceremonies: Jeff Savage (Anishinaabe)
Arena Director: James Red Eagle (Sioux/Assiniboine)
Head Judge: Lambert Yazzie (Dine)
Gourd Society & Color Guard (California Golden State Gourd Society)
Spiritual Adviser: Jimi Castillo (Tongva)

VISIT OUR WEBSITE

For upcoming events, visit the following websites:

AISA www.studentgroups.ucla.edu/americanindian
AISC www.aisc.ucla.edu
IDP-AIS www.americanindianstudies.ucla.edu

AISA and AIGSA Frybread Sales
“Brown Bag” Presentations
RAIN Workshops
AIR Site and Outreach Visits
...and much more!

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