

Message from a Visiting Professor

by Angela R. Riley

Bourzho, Ni'Kan.

As I write this, I am watching the skies grey and hoping that the weather clears for the powwow tomorrow, which promises to be remarkable. I am constantly amazed at the enormous impact that can be realized from the efforts of a few deeply dedicated individuals. This leads me, if indirectly, to the subject of this essay:



what it's been like to be a visiting professor here at UCLA. In short, the unbelievable dedication of a devoted cadre of Native students, the passion and intense intellectual rigor of a core group of AIS-affiliated faculty, and a beautiful and inspiring campus environs have all made my year here extremely fulfilling.

In the fall, I taught Indigenous Peoples' Cultural Resources in the American Indian Studies program, which was a true adventure for me. My core academic experience is in law, and this was my first foray into teaching a mix of law and non-law students, ranging from the undergraduate to graduate level. I had the opportunity for the first time to really incorporate interdisciplinary readings and perspectives into my course and to delve deeply into new areas of interest. The classroom experience was most greatly enriched, of course, by the inclusion of the perspectives of many extremely bright, talented, and passionate students. American Indian Law I was a success for similar reasons. Old material was fresh again, as my students—many of whom are Native or have worked with tribal communities—contributed their personal and professional experiences to enrich the discussion. And I reveled in teaching Property to 85 energetic and anxious 1L's (first-year students), who generously absorbed complicated property concepts—like takings jurisprudence—through noteworthy Indian law cases like *Sioux Nation* and *Tee-Hit-Ton*.

Throughout my year, you might have seen me around campus, as I've had the pleasure of speaking in many classes, taking tours, and just generally getting to know many of you on a more personal level. I remain deeply grateful to be able to work in an

area that is satisfying professionally, but that also enables me to fulfill my commitments to my tribe, the Citizen Potawatomi Nation of Oklahoma, as well as the larger American Indian community. I have felt genuinely welcome here at UCLA, and I've been honored and privileged by your warmth and openness. In fact, I've had such a wonderful time, I have agreed to visit at UCLA again next year. So if we have not had a chance to meet yet, I do hope our paths cross again in the near future.

Megwetch. ☘

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RAIN Staff Spotlight

by Kale Sopoaga, UCLA Alumna and RAIN Director

This year the Retention of American Indians Now (RAIN) has been very fortunate to have Austin Nakatsuka on staff. He is the mentorship coordinator for the project, and has done an excellent job thus far. He has been able not only to engage the community and alumni with our mentorship component, Supporting Undergraduate Natives (SUN), but also to put on culturally relevant workshops for students to promote the importance of identity. He strives hard to complete tasks and meet the goals of SUN and RAIN. Due to his passion for his work he has been able to bring together a community that

extends beyond UCLA and into the greater Los Angeles area. One of the workshops—a community meet-and-greet along with a movie screening—allowed students not only to engage in a deep conversation about the movie, but also to meet the individuals that would play the roles of head of family.

In addition to excelling in his position with RAIN, Austin has taken an active role within the American Indian Student Association (AISA). His involvement includes but is not limited to attending AISA meetings regularly, volunteering for the annual AISA Youth Conference, and providing feedback and support for the powwow planning committee. It is the qualities he exemplifies that we try to foster within our students on campus, and his development as a leader throughout the year has been rewarding for RAIN and AISA. We hope to be able to encourage the growth of more students in the upcoming years, by following in the footsteps that Austin has left behind and will continue to provide throughout his time here at UCLA. 🐾



Austin Nakatsuka (Native Hawaiian)

American Indian Studies Students Graduating in 2009

Undergraduates

Amanda Aquino
 Caleb Dunlap (Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa)
 Jared Dunlap (Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa)
 Mary-Katherine Duran (Mescalero Apache)
 Joshua Frank (Haudenosaunee, Six Nations of Grand River)
 Monica Isaac (Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation)
 Talia Montes
 Daniela Valle

Graduates

Luis Giraldo
 Kari Mans
 Raymond Naylor-Hunter (Lone Pine Paiute-Shoshone)
 Eli Raine
 Eva Thomas (Ojibway, Tohono O'odham, and Cherokee)

Joint Degree in Law and American Indian Studies

Nicole Sieminski (Tulalip)



In Memory of Crystal Roberts-Mesa

by Nora Pulskamp (Navajo), UCLA Alumna and AIR Director



On July 5, 2008 the UCLA American Indian community lost a dear friend, Crystal Roberts-Mesa. During her time at UCLA, Crystal was involved in many on and off-campus organizations and activities. She was a key member of the American Indian Student Association (AISA), serving as the retention coordinator for the Retention of American Indians Now project and was the director of the 2001 UCLA Powwow. The powwow's success earned her many accolades and praise from the American Indian community. In addition to her work through AISA, Crystal also worked for the American Indian Studies Center's Project HOOP (Honoring Our Origins and People through Native Theater, Education, and Community Development). In 2002 Crystal was awarded the Yellowthunder scholarship and the UCLA Women for Change award. Crystal also found the time to participate in the Undergraduate Student Association Committee as well as the United States Student Association.

Off campus, Crystal mentored and tutored high school students via the American Indian Recruitment project at UCLA. Crystal was deeply passionate about how the use of racial mascots affected Native American youth and joined the Alliance Against Racial Mascots. Crystal helped organize statewide campaigns in the continuing efforts to eliminate the use of racial mascots in public schools. Throughout all of these activities, Crystal still found time to prioritize her family

and friends and sing her heart out in karaoke. Crystal graduated from UCLA in 2002 with a bachelor degree in psychology and American Indian Studies.

In 2003 Crystal began attending San Diego State University (SDSU) to study epidemiology. While at SDSU she remained active in fighting racial mascots, especially concerning SDSU's own mascot, the Aztecs. She also began to volunteer for San Diego's American Indian Recruitment program. It was here that she met her future husband, Robert Mesa, and started to become involved in helping the Jamul Kumeyaay. Crystal graduated in 2005 with her master's degree in epidemiology. In 2007 Crystal began working at the University of California, San Diego, mentoring and counseling new admits. In October of 2007 Crystal married Robert Mesa and looked forward to a promising future with him.

Crystal remained dedicated to fighting for Native American causes and championing higher education. She was an inspiration to the students she worked with and brought out the best in everyone. Whether it was through the conviction of her words or her laughter and smile that endeared her to everyone, we can be certain that Crystal left a mark on the souls of strangers and friends alike.

It is with great sorrow that we say goodbye to such a wonderful person, but her spirit shall live on in every one of us. 🌻

Ty Coughenour's Big Gig

by Ty Coughenour (Lummi Tribe in the Pacific Northwest)

Ty Coughenour wrote and directed a short film called *Gig*. It went on to win the best drama at the UCLA campus movie fest and was recently showcased in the Los Angeles Vignette Film Festival. The film will play at the Paramount Lot in June for the Campus Moviefest International Finale. It's also been submitted to multiple film festivals. Ty is continuing to write and direct films and is working on a production that will debut later this year, so look out for his work.

Plot of movie: One man earns a living through transporting dangerous, illegal products. In his latest job, he has to transport a mysterious briefcase, and he soon finds out that this gig might be his last. This five-minute short is packed with action and suspense. 🌻





STOP THE PROMISES, START THE ACTION Increase American Indian Representation at UCLA Now!

by Heather Torres (Pueblo of San Ildefonso, Navajo)

On April 8, 2009 at UCLA's Meyerhoff Park, the American Indian Student Association (AISA) at UCLA and the American Indian Undergraduate Taskforce (AIUT), which is comprised of UCLA alumni, students, and the Native community, organized and performed an action to protest the low admissions rate of American Indian undergraduate students to UCLA. This community-led action was the first step in a process that will affect the future of possible Native UCLA Bruins. The action was needed to put a fire in administration to take up their responsibility to provide education to the American Indian community. In fact, Los Angeles has the largest concentration of urban American Indians in the nation, yet we make up 0.4 percent of the UCLA undergraduate population. Out of 26,536 undergraduate students there are only 104 self-identified American Indian or Alaska Native students, and that does not include the students who just "checked the box" on their admissions application.

The needs of the American Indian community on and off campus are reflected in the five demands drafted by the taskforce that were given to the chancellor and his associates:

1. Increase the number of enrolled American Indian/Alaska Native students at UCLA.
2. Hire a designated American Indian recruiter/liasion.
3. Hire an American Indian Studies Center director by June 2009.
4. Support UCLA American Indian/Alaska Native students by designating a center for centralized services, to monitor and ensure American Indian/Alaska Native persistence to graduation.
5. Meet once per quarter with the American Indian Student Association and the UCLA American Indian Undergraduate Admissions Task Force. 🐻



Left to right: Daniela Valle; Jason Lewis, Action MC; Theresa Stewart, UCLA AISA Alumna; Robyn Esparza; Heather Torres; Jared Dunlap, Caleb Dunlap, Lorenzo Begay. Courtesy of Misha Tsukerman, Chair of Asian Pacific Coalition.



Heather Torres, AISA President and Action Speaker. Courtesy of Misha Tsukerman, Chair of Asian Pacific Coalition.

Being an American Indian at UCLA

by Fairuz Tachreen Gladys Dakam (Oglala Lakota), AISA Vice President and AIR Administrative Assistant

I started here at UCLA as a freshman last September, in 2008. I had just graduated from Sherman Indian High School, a Bureau of Indian Affairs boarding school located in Riverside, California, in May of 2008. The school has been around for more than a hundred years, rich with the history of oppressing Native American culture in the past to now celebrating being Native American. I was born on and grew up on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. When I attended Sherman, I only went home during winter break and the summer, so I have already adapted to being far from home for long periods of time.

Sherman has exposed me to various tribal traditions and perspectives. I've gained many friends, who've all come from many different reservations and parts of the United States. Although we have all come from different places, Sherman has given me a place to connect and make deep bonds that go thicker than blood. Sherman has also taught me that no matter what tribe or area you are from, we all share the same history of American genocide and oppression.

Transitioning from Sherman to UCLA has been a struggle for me. When I first came to UCLA, I was in culture shock. When I heard people talk, I felt like they were speaking a foreign language. When I tried to connect, I felt like there was no connection. Who could I talk to about living on the reservation and the issues we as Natives face, as I had discussed with my friends while at Sherman? I felt isolated. Luckily the American Indian Student Association (AISA) pulled me in and gave me a place where I felt I belonged. Even the alumni have been very kind and generous to me. The director of American Indian Recruitment (AIR) gave me a job as administrative assistant for the project. I attend one of the three weekly sites where AIR provides tutoring, peer advising, and mentoring. I also have the opportunity to visit Sherman through AIR's Higher Education Awareness component, which gives biquarterly workshops to Sherman students.

AISA has also given me the positions of secretary and the UCLA powwow vendor coordinator for this year. I feel that through being involved with AISA, I have grown a lot within several months. I was invited to be a part of the Taskforce for Undergraduate Native Admissions at UCLA. We have been pushing for the advancement of American Indians in education by working to increase the enrollment numbers of undergraduate American Indians here at UCLA. I am now the vice president of AISA, and I do not know what the future holds in store for my part in AISA, but I have already been given so many opportunities to make a difference in the American Indian community, and from what I have been told, it seems that I have already started making a difference.

Since my youth, I have witnessed the drawbacks to being "Indian." Occupying one of the poorest counties of the United States, it's no coincidence that the unemployment rate on the reservation I come from is about 85 percent. Medical treatment is inadequate, as there are limited Indian health service clinics and

one hospital to service the reservation's population of about 40,000. About age 48 is the life expectancy on the reservation. The diabetes rate is 800 percent higher than the national average. Alcoholism affects 8 out of 10 families. The teenage suicide rate is 150 percent higher than the national average. The school dropout rate is 70 percent, and the teacher turnover is 800 percent of the national average. These are only a few of the alarming statistics that affect the Pine Ridge Reservation. The nearest city, Rapid City, is about an hour and a half away from my home. Off the reservation, there is a predominantly Caucasian population, and I have borne witness to several instances of racism toward Native Americans. The funny thing about all of this is that I didn't conceive how severe any of these issues were until I left the reservation and obtained a broader perspective of the world.

There have been countless efforts to improve reservation life, but nothing has drastically changed. Corruption, lack of resources, and apathy have kept the reservation in its third world state. These conditions can also describe many other reservations.

Unique to my people and the neighboring tribes is the Black Hills, which were stolen from us over a hundred years ago. According to the 1868 Fort Laramie Treaty, "as long as the grass grows and the river flows," the Black Hills were never to be touched. They are sacred to us. We have seven sacred sites throughout the Black Hills. They are now a tourist attraction and the images of four presidents, all of whom have ordered the killing of Native Americans, are carved on the side of a mountain. Throughout the years, the US government has offered my people millions of dollars in exchange for surrendering the Black Hills, but we have continuously refused. To take the money from the US government is to say we are defeated and that we have no value for what is sacred to us.

So, I come to UCLA with all of my experiences and beliefs in mind. I have come to make a change. I want to better my life, better the lives of my family, and better the lives of my people. It is a struggle, and nothing is easy, but I know that being at UCLA has given me the power to do what is right, and the allies to help me. This is only my first year, but with support, I believe that masses of things can be accomplished within the next three years. 🦅



10th Annual American Indian Studies Association Conference

by Joshua Frank (Six Nations of the Haudenosaunee on Grand River)

She:kon.
This last winter Arizona State University hosted the Tenth Annual Conference of the American Indian Studies Association, which took place from February 5–6, 2009. The theme, “Is Decolonization Dead?”, demonstrates the social, political, and spiritual roots of the AIS discipline as well as the continued viability for AIS to critically engage current social, political, and spiritual ideas and problems that are relevant to indigenous peoples. The theme of decolonization was tackled by students, scholars, and activists within local and international contexts. I left the conference this year both inspired and overwhelmed.

Highlights from this year’s conference included a diverse and powerful lineup of scholar activists who took part in a number of equally diverse and thought-invoking panels. The first panel I attended was entitled “Community Survival.” The first panelist, Waleila Carey (Cherokee), gave a riveting and powerful talk about her own persona as well as a community’s survival. Carey is a returning graduate student who has taken leadership roles within her own community as well as a Native woman within academia. Her strong leadership invoked both the current anticolonial current against patriarchy as well as her own Cherokee community’s traditions of women’s leadership.

Following was Lori Laiwa (Pomo), whose graduate work within her own community, especially in the areas of language survival and revival, brought forth the question concerning the future of our children and future generations. Laiwa’s research and commitment to her community illustrates the potential for AIS to meet the demands of today’s tribal communities. Language revitalization is a sensitive yet pressing subject, and I found her community language work inspiring and in great need of replication elsewhere. These two women were the highlights of this panel for me, representing an

active and inspiring force of strong, Native women who continue to fight what seems like an uphill battle.

One of the most prominent panels I attended was entitled “Decolonize This! New Ideas in Decolonization,” which featured two young scholars. The first panelist, Leo Killsbuck (Cheyenne), introduced his own search as well as some possible avenues to “decolonize your mind” through understanding what he calls the “Original Man” or what it means to be human. Killsbuck demonstrated how the Cheyenne (his community) concept of *vé’ho’e* or the Spider, the Cheyenne trickster figure, has recently emerged and has become synonymous with white people and the colonized mind. The “Original Man” is thus the antithesis of the trickster, and contained within the Cheyenne language and stories lie the lessons for decolonization, empowerment, and identity.

The other panelist, Richard Sasala (Cayuga), provided a valuable and insightful report of his work in a family and community-based traditional foods effort which includes the farming, processing, cooking, and sharing of traditional Haudenosaunee foodstuffs and herbal medicines. Sasala described the positive changes and possibilities that became available to his community in upstate New York as they worked to recover their traditional

foods, farming techniques, and community traditions. Sasala expressed his community’s grave concern about the epidemic of diabetes, a problem many Native peoples share today, which stems from the colonization of our diets. The reintroduction of these traditional foods and farming practices to the Cayuga community not only helped change their diets but also their lifestyles as well, to embrace more conscious, communal, and sustainable economic practices. Both panelists demonstrated that within our own cultures and traditions are embedded valuable teachings and tools for decolonization.

Many lessons were shared, new and old ideas discussed, as well as voices and spirits heard and felt. Assuredly everyone walked away with something of value to take back to their communities and continue the dialogue in their daily lives. Decolonization is not just an idea, nor is it close to becoming a total reality for any of us today. Decolonization is a practice, demonstrated by the lifelong work of the presenters as well as by more community-based activists such as Manuel Pino and Carletta Tilousi, who have fought against nuclear and corporate colonialism and environmental racism for the last 30 years. There were many elders present at this conference who represented the preceding generations’ struggles during the 1960s



American Indian Studies Association Conference.
Left to right: Joshua Frank, James Riding In, Heather Torres. Courtesy of Heather Torres.

Conference

(Continued)

and 1970s as part of the American Indian Movement and the many other struggles by indigenous peoples. This conference illustrated the dire need for that glowing torch to be passed on to the next generation of students, youth, activists, community members, mothers, fathers, and children. All of us from the younger generation have a choice to make.

Giving thanks to Creator and all Creation, *Skennon:kon, Thok niwakewen: nake niahkwe.* ☘

Youth Conference Registration Table. Left to right: Daniela Valle, Elizabeth Fasthorse, Heather Torres. Courtesy of Heather Torres.
Cultural Workshop: Coil Basketweaving. Brighid Pulskamp and girls on the Tule River Basketball team. Courtesy of Heather Torres.

The American Indian Student Association's 10th Annual Youth Conference and Basketball Tournament at UCLA

by Daniela Valle (Youth Conference Coordinator, AISA)

The 2009 three-day American Indian youth conference took place March 20–22 at UCLA. High school and middle school students came from different parts of California, Arizona, and Nevada with their coaches and families. These students participated in workshops and the basketball tournament.

Basketball. The conference began with a blessing by James Castillo and a night full of basketball. The young women played in the Student Activities Center and the young men played in the John Wooden Center. Both the men's and women's games were intense. The second day of basketball was on Sunday, when the semifinals and finals were played in the John Wooden Center.

Workshops. Saturday was dedicated to academic, wellness, and cultural workshops and speakers. Some of the topics covered were The College Freshmen Experience, The Systems of Higher Education, Financial Wellness, Tobacco Awareness, Pow Wow Dances, Coil Basket Weaving, and many more. The keynote speaker, Virginia Myers (a UCLA, AISA Alumna), addressed the students and families while they enjoyed the food provided by Red Chili Shack. Myers shared her story about the importance of knowing yourself and pursuing higher education.

Saturday evening, UCLA students and alumni shared their experience at UCLA and the meaning of higher education for their respective Native communities. They also shared some of the issues they face at UCLA as Native Americans. The UCLA students included AISA's president, Heather Torres, and vice president, Gladys Dakam. In the end, they encouraged the students to pursue higher education, no matter what institution, although we prefer they come to UCLA. We ended Saturday night with a dinner and music in the Student Activities Center.

Results. The teams were amazing! Two California teams made it to the top three on both brackets, which included students from the United Native Youth of Los Angeles.

Young Women

SCIC Lady Warriors	3rd Place
Fort Mojave	2nd Place
Nevada Krew	Champions

Young Men

SCIC Warriors	3rd Place
Fort Mojave	2nd Place
Arizona Warriors	Champions

Great job, teams!

The Youth Conference committee would like to give thanks to the volunteers, Isadore Poor Thunder (designer), Lucius Martin, and a special thanks to Jose "Jojo" Leon, and their supporters. Thank you! ☘



EVENTS

24TH ANNUAL POWWOW AT UCLA

UNITING TWO WORLDS

May 2-3, 2009

Head Staff:

- Tazbah Chavez, Head Woman
- Charley Lewis, Head Man
- Midnite Express, Head Northern Drum
- Dark Horse, Head Southern Drum
- Jimi Castillo, Spiritual Advisor
- Victor Chavez, Arena Director
- Randy Edmonds, Master of Ceremonies
- Lambert Yazzie, Head Judge
- California Golden State Gourd Society, Color Guard

2009 Powwow Committee:

- Heather Torres, Director
- Liz Fasthorse, Director
- Gladys Dakam, Vendor Coordinator
- Alexis Fischer, Volunteer Coordinator
- Tazbah Chavez, Graphics Coordinator



Left to right: Fiona Pulskamp, Fairuz Dakam, Heather Torres. Courtesy of Renee Villalvazo.



Grand Entry California Golden State Gourd Society. Courtesy of Christina Torres.

Bird Singing/Dance, Sunday morning. Left to right: Elizabeth Fasthorse, Becky Campbell, Heather Torres, Daniela Valle, Kale Sopoaga. Courtesy of Christina Torres.



Powwow Art provided by Nathaniel Cunejo, Sherman Indian High School



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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