

Native American & Indigenous Studies



Traditional Native Dancing at the 4th Annual Powwow
(Photograph courtesy of Eric Fudd/IU Communications)

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Traditional Powwow in
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IU's 4th Annual Traditional Powwow is a Success

From November 1-2, 2014, Indiana University hosted its 4th Annual Traditional Powwow. The 2014 powwow was the most successful one to date with an estimated 2,000 in attendance (more that double the number of attendees from the previous year). Native American artists and dancers from the United States and Canada joined spectators in a two-day celebration that included traditional Native dancing and drumming.

The powwow, sponsored by the First Nations Educational and Cultural Center (FNECC), the

Office of the Vice President for Diversity, Equity, and Multicultural Affairs, the Native American Graduate Student Association, and the American Indian Center of Indiana, among others, was the lead event for the university's celebration of Native American Heritage Month. Among those participating in the event, were several renowned drum groups. The Battle River Singers from Red Lake, Minnesota, known for their unique singing that blends traditional styles with contemporary approach, served as the Northern host drum. The Southern host drum was the



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A participant in the powwow's dancing
(photograph courtesy of Paula Stapley and
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Wisconsin Dells Singers from Prairie du Sac, Wisconsin.

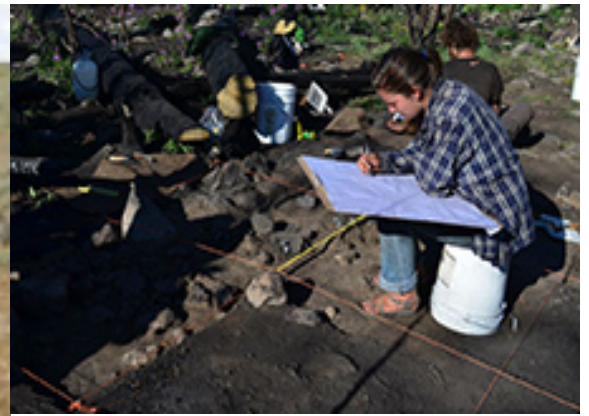
Due in large part to the presence of these well-known drum groups, many experienced dancers from the powwow circuit traveled many miles to participate in one of the fastest growing powwows in the Midwest. The invited dancers included: Denny Medicine Bird, a member of the Cheyenne and Arapaho tribes of Oklahoma, from Jones, OK; Buffy Simmons, a member of the Choctaw Nation and a student at Rose State College from Shawnee, OK; Darrell Hill, a member of the Oneida and Menominee tribes from Milwaukee, WI; and Grace Pushetonequa, a member of the Meskwaki tribe from Tama, IA. Serving as the powwow's arena director was Nicky Belle, an IU graduate student in Anthropology who is affiliated with the Standing Buffalo Dakota Nation. Belle, along with fellow FNECC members C. David Higgins, Davina Two Bears, Terri Miles, and Heather Williams, served as the powwow committee and organized the weekend's events which included the honoring of Graham "Teed" Howard, a local Brown County resident who has been involved in area powwow

activities for many years.

Belle was pleased with the continued growth of and support for the powwow: "I'm happy with the momentum the powwow has been gaining over the years. More people are getting to know about it, word is spreading through the powwow world, and more people are interested in being involved with the IU Traditional Powwow. Equally important is the footing that the powwow now holds at the university—we have gained a great deal of support from IU administrators. This speaks not only to the success of the powwow, but also to the important role that the FNECC plays on the IU campus, as well as to the University's dedication to supporting underrepresented minorities."

In addition to the weekend's dancing, there were two pre-powwow lectures given. Dr. Jessica Bardill, Department of English, East Carolina University, presented her lecture "Narrating Relations: Indigenous and Scientific Ways of Knowing," on October 30th. And Dr. Clyde Ellis, Department of History, Elon University, not only

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At left, Dr. Laura Scheiber holds an artifact from her archeological field research in Wyoming. Above, an IU student conducts archeological research as part of Scheiber's field team. (photos courtesy of the Department of Anthropology)

Faculty Spotlight: Dr. Laura Scheiber, Anthropology

As an Associate Professor in the Anthropology Department, Dr. Laura Scheiber's scholarly interests include the archeological study of the North American Plains in the pre-colonial and colonial periods. Hired in 2002 to direct the William R. Adams Zooarcheology Laboratory, a title she still holds today, Dr. Scheiber relished the opportunity to work with IU colleagues who study Native Americans of the North American Plains, the same geographic and temporal subject matter as her own expertise. This past fall she served as the interim director for the First Nations Educational and Cultural Center (FNECC).

Since 2005, Scheiber has been the co-director of an archeological project titled "Exploring Social and Historical Landscapes of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem." Scheiber, her colleagues, and her students have conducted archeological research in the Bighorn Basin of northern Wyoming and southern Montana. One of the two spatially separate locations of the project is adjacent to the Crow Indian Reservation and the other is in the Shoshone homeland of the Absaroka Mountains. The American Indian presence in Yellowstone has been minimized, largely due to federal government efforts to restore the land to its pre-contact state. This "pre-contact" state is predicated upon the idea of

a pristine wilderness and environment that demands the removal of human contact. However, there is a concerted effort in recent years to restore the presence of Native Americans in Yellowstone. This idea of bringing Native American presence back to Yellowstone was part of Dr. Scheiber's inspiration for her project.

While working on the archeological project, Dr. Scheiber began engaging with people in the Native community (more so than any other time of her career). In particular, Dr. Scheiber started working closely with the Crow and a relationship developed. Not only did she and her students start visiting the reservation, but they also started inviting members of the Crow to observe their archeological research in progress. In Scheiber's words, "We have developed a lot of connections. Two years ago, I was adopted by a Crow family and I am really proud of that. And this summer we had a naming ceremony for my children and my field students attended the ceremony."

Over the years, the project has developed into a community-based project in a number of integral ways. This last year, Dr. Scheiber's team assisted

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Dr. Jessica Bardill, Guest Lecturer on Native Studies



For IU's 4th traditional powwow, the guest lecturer was Dr. Jessica Bardill, Assistant Professor in Native American Literature in the Department of English at East Carolina University. Dr. Bardill visited campus Oct. 29th – Nov. 1st to share her scholarship on

the intersection of indigenous literatures of the U.S. and science. Sponsored by the First Nations Educational and Cultural Center, Department of History, Center for Research on Race and Ethnicity in Society, and the Mathers Museum of World Cultures, Dr. Bardill's visit included a lecture and a note of recognition at the powwow.

Specializing in indigenous literatures of the U.S., Dr. Bardill's work examines the intersection of cultures, literatures, sciences, and legal discourses. She has written on the ethical concerns between Native communities and researchers, and has contributed to the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) – this latter work can be found at <http://genetics.ncai.org/>. During her undergraduate studies at Emory University, Dr. Bardill read Gerald Vizenor's *The Heirs of Columbus* and her interest in indigenous literature of the U.S. and its relationship with science (specifically genetics) was sparked. After being introduced to this work, Bardill knew "this is what I wanted to do." For Bardill, "it was this interstice of bio-colonialism, what indigenous peoples can do with genes imaginatively, creatively, and in ways that are not bounded by 'science'" that inspired her

scholarly pursuits. Commenting on her scholarly interest, Dr. Bardill noted, "Over time, I became more informed about what I really wanted to do – providing and highlighting alternative narratives for people to live by and work with, not in an appropriation sort of terminology, but in ways that eliminated oppression."

On Oct. 30th, Dr. Bardill presented her lecture, "Narrating Relations: Indigenous and Scientific Ways of Knowing," at the Mathers Museum of World Cultures. With her lecture, Dr. Bardill interrogated the limits of genetic testing in understanding interconnections of Native American peoples and families, and how the use of different ways of knowing, both biological and cultural, can come together to form alternative narratives that structure identity and belonging. Bardill discussed how familial relationships across time and geography often do not conform to the heteronormative structures of community that require biological relations. And it is through a theory of queer kinship, in which notions of identity, kinship, and belonging are not defined purely by genetics, that alternative understandings of relation can be explored. By analyzing indigenous literatures, such as Quo-Li Driskill's *Walking with Ghosts* and Heid Erdrich's *Cell Traffic*; Natasha Threthewey's *Thrall*; and visual culture, including Indira Allegra's weaving and Louise Erdrich's appearance on *Faces of America*, Bardill explored the possibilities of alternative kinship constructions and how indigenous peoples can narrate relations on their own terms rather than solely through genetics.

Through interweaving poetry, anthropology, research ethics, and visual expression to question how indigenous traditions and scientific research seek, prove, and present knowledge in distinct ways, Dr. Bardill served as an ideal lecturer for the weekend's powwow festivities and its celebration of Native cultures and identities.

IU's NAGPRA: An Inside Look

In 1990, the U.S. government passed the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, or NAGPRA. This law established the rights of federally recognized tribes to reclaim cultural property from federal funded institutions, such as government agencies, museums, and academic institutions. In addition, NAGPRA requires scholars to consult tribes throughout the repatriation process. In 2010, modifications to the law required institutions to begin the process of transferring collections considered to be culturally unidentifiable to federally recognized tribes on whose aboriginal lands the collection was obtained.

In 2013, IU NAGPRA Project was created. As stated on its website, the Project is “committed to ongoing efforts to return Native American remains, funerary objects, sacred objects, and objects of cultural patrimony to lineal descendants and culturally affiliated Indian tribes, and to provide information about culturally

unidentifiable Native American collections.” Additionally, IU faculty members—April Sievert, Director of the Glenn A. Black Laboratory of Archaeology; Jayne-Leigh Thomas, Director of IU's Office of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act; and K. Anne Pyburn, Provost Professor of Anthropology—were awarded a National Science Foundation grant to study the professional training that academics receive related to understanding, recognizing, and complying with NAGPRA.

For Dr. Thomas, the Director of IU's Office of NAGPRA, the goal of the Project “is to create relationships with tribal partners in order to work together towards the repatriation of human remains and cultural items.” In addition to working closely with other Directors of repositories on campus where NAGPRA collections are curated, Dr. Thomas also works to establish lines of communication between tribal partners and the university.

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a Crow monitoring crew with an archeological project on the reservation. And in the past, Crow tribe members were participants in an archaeological on-site field camp. The project continues to grow and change.

For the past few years, the project has focused on assisting the government in documenting federal archeological sites. Specifically, Dr. Scheiber and her team have conducted fieldwork on previously unknown sites that have revealed themselves due to a number of forest fires. For the past two years, archeological field schools have gone to the sites and documented over 70,000 artifacts. These artifacts shed light into who inhabited the area and help understanding of domestic space and everyday lives.



Vendors who sold Native crafts and arts were part of the November 1st weekend's powwow festivities. (Photograph courtesy of Eric Rudd/IU Communications)

(Powwow, continued from page 2)

presented his lecture, “Get Up and Dance: The Evolution of Modern Powwow Culture,” on Oct. 31st, he also participated in the weekend’s dancing.

Since the first powwow four years ago, the event’s organizers have strived to emphasize the educational dimension of the event. Due to its prominently non-Native audience, the powwow serves as an opportunity for these non-Natives (IU students and the Bloomington community at large) to learn about contemporary Native American cultures. In addition, the event allows for Native students and community members to meet and mingle with other Natives from Indiana and beyond. Dr. Sean Gantt, a

postdoctoral fellow at IU’s Center for Research on Race and Ethnicity in Society and a seasoned powwow dancer, commented on this community building aspect of the powwow for Native students and Native community members. Gantt stated, “Powwows are inherently intertribal, so I think a lot of times they serve in bringing people together. Often powwows are set up in an urban or university setting because no matter what tribe you are from or where you are from in the country, most Natives have access to or some kind of familiarity with powwow culture.” The powwow’s sponsors and organizers have high aspirations for the event’s future. And with its rapid growth and continued support from the University and the community, IU’s annual powwow is vastly becoming one of the preeminent powwows in the Midwest.

Upcoming Events

- ❖ **Eighth Annual Native Film Series — “Lived Lives” at the IU Cinema.** Sunday, Feb. 8th at 3 pm – *The Exiles*; Sunday, Feb. 15th at 3 pm – *This May Be the Last Time*. www.indiana.edu/~fnecc/
- ❖ **Indiana University’s 3rd Annual Native American Health and Wellness Community Dance.** Saturday, April 11th at Grand Hall & Bridgwaters Lounge, Neal-Marshall Black Culture Center. www.indiana.edu/~fnecc/
- ❖ **Visit Indiana University’s** Native American and Indigenous Studies program on [facebook](#) for updates on upcoming talks, workshops, events, and more!

Links

- ❖ [IU First Nations Educational and Cultural Center](#)
- ❖ [Past NAIS Newsletters](#)
- ❖ [The American Indian Studies Research Institute](#)
- ❖ [Mathers Museum of World Cultures](#)
- ❖ [The Glenn A. Black Laboratory of Archaeology](#)