

The Indigenous Nations Studies Program and Center at The University of Kansas

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The University of Kansas has a long history of interests in Indigenous peoples, especially American Indians. In 1965 the American Studies Program at the university published a special issue of its *American Studies Journal* entitled “The American Indian Today,” which was published as a book. This important book helped to establish an emerging precedent for American Indian studies during the late 1960s, leading to the development of American Indian studies programs in the United States and in Canada.

Founded in 1997 with initial funding from the Kellogg Foundation, the Indigenous Nations Studies Program at the University of Kansas is a graduate program offering a master’s degree of cross-disciplinary studies. Students in the Indigenous Nations Studies program learn about the complexities of Indigenous peoples, their communities and their issues in the Americas and in other parts of the world. Graduates students working on a master’s degree in Indigenous Nations Studies have the opportunity to work with more than twenty professors who are experts in their fields and who teach courses about Indigenous peoples. Through the combined strength of faculty expertise, student interest, and geography, The University of Kansas started the program to offer a master’s degree program with this special focus and opportunities for collaboration and research with Haskell Indian Nations University located in Lawrence.

In the Western Hemisphere, the native inhabitants—the Indigenous peoples—have struggled to co-exist with the immigrant peoples seeking to establish settlements in their territories. History reflects that, in many instances, the Indigenous peoples have not adapted to the economic and political realities

of the industrial world, and thus have been threatened with extinction as distinct peoples in North, Central, and South America. In the United States, for example, the Indigenous peoples have long been recognized as possessing a legal status as sovereign nations, and continue to exist in government-to-government relations with the United States. Regardless of how Indigenous peoples might be categorized, however, their continued existence in the Americas and their desire for self-determination creates an important area of study and research to all peoples. The Indigenous Nations Studies Program addresses this important academic need.

Goals of the Program

The Indigenous Nations Studies Program maintains an interdisciplinary focus that allows students of Indigenous and non-Indigenous descent to conduct academic and applied research relevant to the concerns of Indigenous communities. These goals are consistent with the Program's aspirations and values. Specialized training and course work will enable students to build bridges between Indigenous communities and institutions of higher learning. Simultaneously INSP student become catalysts for the creation of new and innovative outreach programs that are relevant and responsive to the special needs of the Indigenous people of the Americas.

The Program strives to produce a greater cohesion between undergraduate and graduate education for all students interested in Indigenous studies, and to integrate Indigenous Studies with other departments and programs across the campus, with the Tribal Sovereignty Program in The University of Kansas Law School, and with Haskell Indian Nations University. Through its interdisciplinary graduate-level courses, the Program is designed to produce trained experts and professionals who are capable of assuming leadership and policy-making positions in Indigenous government, education, community development and entrepreneurial sectors. The Indigenous Nations Studies Program produces graduates who will be able to serve Indigenous people through service with the federal, state, and local governments, and in the off-reservation private sectors.¹

At The University of Kansas, a mixture of native scholars from various backgrounds of the United States and Latin America work together in the Program. One of the premier Latin American Studies Centers in the country thrives at The University of Kansas and has related interests with Indigenous Nations Studies. For these reasons, it was heavily debated over naming the new master's degree program at The University of Kansas. The native scholars at The University of Kansas enthusiastically debated the terminology of American Indian Studies, Native American Studies, First Nations Studies, and Indigenous Nations Studies. The energized discussion went on for several months during 1997.

The terminology of American Indian Studies, Native American Studies, and First Nations Studies all carry some sort of meaning, and largely negative impli-

cations of what foreign colonialism has had on the native communities of the Americas. It seems as if we take the very name of "Indian" from our conquerors, if you want to assume that Indian people have been conquered, and try give it new definition from a native perspective. Even the term, "Native," has equally negative connotations, that "native" is something less than the "status quo" of equality, below standard, being primitive, and so forth.

The twenty plus faculty at The University of Kansas, who taught a course or courses and who were interested in the development of this new program, had a wide ranging scope of interests. Themes, parallels, concepts, and related interests seemed to have attracted the various faculty members to the monthly discussions on Thursday afternoons. Some more people dropped into these monthly meetings, and some faculty dropped out. Faculty participants came from a wide variety of disciplines, including Linguistics, English, Anthropology, Environmental Studies, Biology, History, Law, and Public Administration.

It was also viewed at The University of Kansas, that the themes and parallels, and concepts of "colonialism," "identity," "victimization," "sovereignty," "genocide," "survival," and "paternalism," had happened in the United States in the past. But, they were continuing in other parts of the world, and most certainly in other parts of the western hemisphere. In addition, it was believed that the historic stereotypes, the same negative ones, about Indian people would continue in other parts of the world, much less in the United States, with the supposition of freezing "us" in time. The common view about Indian people was that such Indigenous people had not advanced at all. It was assumed that our cultures and communities had stopped and disappeared in the nineteenth century.² Naturally, we were concerned at The University of Kansas that Indigenous people of the U.S. and of the rest of the hemisphere have not been respectfully recognized for our progress, for our cultural survival, for our histories, and we have not been properly recognized for our "presence" in the Americas.

The movement of Indigenous interest began with the concerned faculty at The University of Kansas, especially the Native faculty, to take steps in developing a program about Indigenous peoples. With the urging of the Indian faculty coming from Professors Luci Tapahonso, Ray Pierotti, Michael Yellow Bird, Rob Porter, and other key KU faculty like Professors Rita Napier of History, Don Stull of Anthropology, Bud Hirsch of English, and Peter Mancall of History, the movement also had the support from former President Bob Martin of Haskell Indian Nations University and other key faculty at Haskell like Karen Swisher, Dan Wildcat and Venida Chenault.

In the summer of 1996, Provost David Shulenburg with the support of Chancellor Robert Hemenway, launched a Native American Studies Task Force following two years of lobbying by faculty. "The charge," Shulenburg said, "was essentially to find out what it is this institution ought to be doing. That's pretty broad, but I think we are heading toward a recommendation for a master's level program."³

In 1996, a total of 253 American Indian students were enrolled at The University of Kansas, although they represented only one percent of the student populations. The Indian students had organized the Native American Student Association (NASA), which they changed to First Nations Students Association (FNNA), which has been operating for several years. Since then the first class of the Indigenous Nations Studies Program organized an Indian graduate student organization to join various other student organizations on the KU campus.

In an article of the *Kansas Alumni* of May, 1996, former Professor Michael Yellow Bird of the School of Social Welfare, stated, "Indigenous is used in a context currently favored by the United Nations, referring to people who have seen their social, political and spiritual stability upset by colonizing forces."⁴

Dr. Michael Yellow Bird, a forthright spokesperson about Native rights and Indigenous issues, was concerned about the past treatment of native people and the federal paternalism forced onto our people in the form of boarding schools, and other federal policies and programs. "So naturally what happens then is that they [Native people] don't get to think for themselves. The [U.S.] system is thinking for them. And then they are not free-thinkers anymore. People like me, when I continued on with my education, I saw what was happening. For Native people, I saw what was happening. For Native people, education was not liberation, it was oppression. But in my studies, the reverse became true, I think, and with education I became liberated and empowered in some sense."⁵

The University of Kansas has a lot to be thankful for regarding the involvement and advocacy of its Indigenous faculty such as Cornell Pewewardy, Ray Periotti, Rob Porter, Anne Calhoon, Michel Yellow Bird, and Luci Tapahonso. In an interview in 1996, Professor Yellow Bird stated, "As far as I am concerned, this university is going to move toward becoming a world-class university for Indigenous studies. We are going to become a tower of excellence in this field. People around the world will look to us for leadership. I am very excited about the prospects for this campus."⁶

Course Curriculum

Students pursuing the M.A. in Indigenous Nations Studies complete a minimum of 30 credit hours at the graduate level involving three program core courses, certain study track courses, and elective courses.

Core Courses: (9 credit hours) There are three required core courses:

INS 801 *An Overview of Indigenous Peoples* (3 credit hours):

A survey of the Native peoples of the World. The course examines the common histories, struggles, and goals of Indigenous peoples.

INS 802 *Issues Facing Indigenous Peoples* (3 credit hours):

This is an in-depth examination of the theories and methods of selected socio-

economic, political, legal, environmental, and cultural issues confronting Indigenous societies., team-taught by University of Kansas experts who are experienced in working with Indigenous peoples.

INS 803 Administrative Skills and Leadership (3 credit hours):

This course is designed to prepare students with the basic administrative skills needed to work in or to create organizations to assist Indigenous peoples. Topics include grant writing, leadership skills, conflict resolution, public presentation, and organizational management.

Study Tracks

Students are required to choose one of the following tracks, taking the designated number of additional credit hours for each track:

General Studies Track (15 credit hours)

The purpose of the General Indigenous Studies track is to assist students in developing critical thinking and an understanding of the cultural, economic, environmental, political, and social needs of Indigenous peoples. Course offerings reflect a diversity of perspectives as well as methodological and theoretical foundations relating to Indigenous peoples and cultures. This track is specifically designed to provide students with flexibility in choosing their course work. Students interested in examining how a specific social or community need or issue, e.g., education, poverty, social welfare, etc., affects Indigenous peoples should elect this track. Students interested in pursuing a dual degree or combining this degree with their Ph.D. work may find this to be the most appropriate track. Students must choose five (5) courses from four (4) disciplines.

Museum Studies Track (18 credit hours)

The Museum Studies track trains professionals for positions in institutions responsible for collecting and caring for the material records of the natural and cultural world; studying these collections to create new knowledge; and sharing the results of these activities through exhibit and public educational procedures. As Indigenous nations continue in their efforts toward self-determination, there arises the need to provide for the care of cultural patrimony.

Each candidate in the Museum Studies track will be required to serve a supervised apprenticeship in an approved museum or historical agency, full-time for one (1) semester or half-time for two (2) semesters for a total of six (6) semester hours of credit. Approximately 500 hours of apprenticeship experience is expected.

Students must be enrolled in one of the following while serving their apprenticeships: AMS 799, ANTH 799, BIOL 799, or HIST 799. Opportunities may be available to receive pay for this experience and students may serve

longer apprenticeships if they wish.

Students will be required to present a research paper relevant to their apprenticeship experience that describes and critically analyzes their apprenticeship experiences with a related bibliography. Students in this track are not expected to complete a thesis given the length of the apprenticeship, but are certainly encouraged to do so if interested.

Sovereignty Development Track (15 credit hours):

The Sovereignty Development track prepares students for the practical challenges associated with exercising Indigenous rights of self-determination and the preservation and strengthening of tribal sovereignty. Survival for Indigenous nations is dependent upon the revitalization of all aspects of Indigenous life, including cultural, economic, governmental, and legal affairs.

The track's curriculum provides students with the foundation necessary to implement sovereignty development initiatives by directing a dual focus: study of the law, politics, and economics affecting Indigenous nations and surrounding states, and study of broader societal phenomena.

Students in this track must choose at least two courses that are "law related" and two courses that are "society related" as part of the total 15 credit hours. Recommended as particularly useful are the following: LAW 993 Tribal Law and Process, LAW 987 Sovereignty, Self-determination, and the Indigenous Nations, PUAD 850 Intergovernmental Relations, and PUAD 845 Organizational Analysis.

Summary of Requirements for the General Studies and Sovereignty Development Tracks: (30 hours minimum for degree)

9 credit hours	INSP core courses (3 required courses)
15 credit hours	Required by respective tracks
3-6 credit hours	Thesis option

Non-Thesis Option	Published Article required
3 credit hours	Elective

OR

Non-Thesis Internship Option	Approved Internship
3-6 credit hours	Research Paper

Research course (if appropriate to track) can be counted as part of required courses

Summary of Requirements for Museum Studies Track:
(33 hours minimum for degree)

9 credit hours	INSP core courses (3 required courses)
18 credit hours	Required by Museum Studies Track
6 credit hours	Internship Practicum (Non-Thesis Option)
Total 33 credit hours	

Internship Practicum

Students may take an internship Practicum of six credit hours as fulfillment of the non-thesis option. In addition, students must defend a research paper related to the internship experience. Students in the Museum Studies Track should consult their advisor for specific museum internship requirements.

Purpose:

The primary purpose of an internship is to expose students to the operation and administration of government and non-government agencies involved in Indigenous communities.

Course Prerequisites to Internship:

Before undertaking an internship, the student must have completed successfully two of the required INSP core courses. In unusual circumstances, any or all of these course prerequisites may be waived in writing by the Director or Graduate Advisor.

Length of Internship:

An internship normally will require 300 to 320 hours of work. This requirement may be fulfilled in any of the following ways:

Full-time work during the summer: approximately 40 hours per week for 8 weeks; or part-time work during the academic year. Approximately 10 hours per week on-site for 2 semesters; or approximately 20 hours per week on-site for one semester.

Securing an Internship:

The student is responsible for finding and arranging for his or her own internship. The INS Program will provide whatever assistance it can in this process, but it must be recognized that the primary responsibility for securing the internship rests with the student.

Academic Credit:

One to six hours of credit may be obtained for an internship, depending upon the number of contact hours with the organization and the quality and quantity of accompanying scholarly work. (Students who use an internship to fulfill the non-thesis option must complete six credit hours of internship practicum.) At a minimum, students must complete the *Journal* and the *Report* as described below. Students who are using the internship Practicum to count as

the non-thesis option, must also complete a Research paper.

Journal: During the internship the student must keep a contemporaneous weekly journal on a form provided by the Program. This journal will be used to report the following information on a weekly basis: name and location of sponsoring organization; name of supervisor; dates and hours worked; brief description of work performed; and supervisor's signature and date. This journal must be submitted to the Graduate Advisor upon completion of the internship.

Report: Upon completion of the internship, the student must submit to the Graduate Advisor a written report containing the following information: a description of the sponsoring organization; a description of the nature of the internship position; a summary of the general nature of the work performed during the internship and an evaluation of the internship as an educational experience.

Internship as Fulfillment of Non-Thesis Option:

Students who elect to use a six credit internship experience for the non-thesis option must write and defend before a three-member faculty committee a research paper related to the internship experience.

The INS Faculty at The University of Kansas

Michael Crawford, Professor, Anthropology
Bartholemew Dean, Asst. Professor, Anthropology
Donald Fixico, Bowlus Distinguished Professor, History
Peter Herlihy, Asst. Professor, Geography
Bernard Hirsch, Assoc. Professor, English
Jack Hofman, Asst. Professor, Anthropology
John Hoopes, Assoc. Professor, Anthropology
Paul Kelton, Asst. Professor, History
Joane Nagel, University Distinguished Professor, Sociology
Rita Napier, Assoc. Professor, History
Sharon O'Brien, Assoc. Professor, Political Science
Victor Papanek, Professor, Architecture
Raymond Pierotti, Asst. Professor, Biology
Robert Porter, Assoc. Professor, Law
Clifton Pye, Professor, Linguistics
Robert Rankin, Professor, Linguistics
John Simmons, Acting Director, Museum Studies
Donald Stull, Professor, Anthropology
Akira Yamamoto, Professor, Linguistics/Anthropology

The following institutions and organizations have endorsed the Indigenous Studies Program at the University of Kansas:

Haskell Indian Nations University
Haskell Indian Nations University Foundation
Lawrence Indian Center
Office of the Principle Chief, The Cherokee Nation
Haskell Indian Nations University Environmental Research Studies
The Prairie Band Potawatomi of Kansas
The Kickapoo Nation of Kansas
Sac and Fox Nation of Kansas
The Iowa Nation of Kansas
Heart of American Indian Center, Kansas City, Missouri
Wichita Indian Center, Wichita, Kansas
Native American Artist Collective, Lawrence
Omaha Indian Center, Omaha, Nebraska
Annual Lawrence Indian Art Show

Scholarships

The Indigenous Nations Studies Program is in the process of developing tuition fellowships. Even after operating for only two and a half years, the Indigenous Nations Studies Program and Center has been able to secure external grants to help fund students in return for their assistance in working on research projects. Presently, the INSP holds a research grant with the National Association of Tribal Historic Preservation to research U.S.-Indian treaties that might have legal obligations for the Department of Defense to Indian tribes.

The Thomas Bowlus scholarships fund two students every year. The late Thomas Bowlus and his wife were alumni of the University of Kansas, and their daughter designated monies to assist graduate students in earning the Indigenous Nations Studies master's degree.

As mentioned earlier, the Indigenous Nation Studies Program at The University of Kansas was started to learn more about Indigenous peoples, communities, and their issues. In trying to establish the Indigenous voice in academia, the Indigenous Nations Studies Program and Center is committed to advancing the scholarship about Indigenous peoples. To learn more about us, please see our website at www.ukans.edu/~insp. Our address is Indigenous Nations Studies, University of Kansas, 105 Lippincott Hall, Lawrence, KS 66045, or call (785) 864-2660.

Notes

1. Mission Statement from proposal that designed the Indigenous Nations Studies Program, University of Kansas, submitted March 6, 1997 to Provost David Shulenburg by

the Indigenous Nations Studies Task Force of the University of Kansas.

2. James H. Howard, "The Native American Image in Western Europe," *American Indian Quarterly*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (Winter 1980), 333-56.
3. Chris Lazzarino, "Talk of the Nations," *Kansas Alumni* (May 1996), 20.
4. Chris Lazzarino, "Talk of the Nations," 19.
5. Lazzarino, "Talk of the Nations," 22.
6. Lazzarino, "Talk of the Nations," 20.