

# **“Realizing the Dreams” In Four Directions: The American Indian Studies Program at Michigan State University**

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## ***Motto***

Realizing the dreams of generations past, through preserving those of the future. Undergraduates, Graduates, Faculty, and Community building a common good for all people, creating an educational foundation for the next seven generations and beyond. The wisdom of our ancestors, the issues of today, and the promise of tomorrow.

## **Overview**

By creating a logo depicting the circle of life and situating the colors as we have, the American Indian Studies Program (AISP) at Michigan State University honors the Three Fires People of Michigan, the Chippewa (Ojibwe), Ottawa (Odawa), Pottawatomie (Potawatomie), and the Great Lakes region in general. In addition to making this cultural as well as geographical connection, the AISP logo also represents the mission of the program and the directions it takes. Starting in the east and circling clockwise, the four directions are signified in the logo as undergraduates, graduates, faculty, and community. Michigan State University's AISP aims not only to support the university community, but also to build a foundation from which to foster a community-wide appreciation of American Indian studies. As teachers, students, and community members, AISP's goal is to increase, at its inception, the awareness of as well as expertise in

American Indian studies in the academic disciplines of anthropology, education, art, history, literature, museum studies, religion, rhetoric and writing, Ojibwe language, and social work. AISP aims to achieve this goal through specialized training, programming, and outreach.

Before moving into a description and update of the program as a whole, it is appropriate to reiterate briefly a few facts covered by Susan Applegate Krouse, an Assistant Professor of Anthropology at Michigan State University (MSU), in her article entitled, "Critical mass and Other Crucial Factors in a Developing American Indian Studies Program," published in the Spring 2001 issue of *American Indian Quarterly* (Vol. 25, No. 2, pp. 216-223). The AISP started operation in fall semester 2000 when AISP was granted three years of funding to operate the program and when a director was appointed. Presently, the MSU AISP is an interdisciplinary program linking undergraduate students, graduate students, and faculty from the colleges of Arts and Letters and Social Science; it is not a department. The development of new courses with significant Native American content, however, is a priority for the AISP. For example, in the spring semester of 2003, Malea Powell, Associate Professor of American Thought and Language at MSU and editor of the *Studies in American Indian Literatures* journal, will be offering a new course entitled, "*American Indian Rhetorics*," a fledgling field of American Indian Studies.

AISP has grown to be significant contributor and partner in the rise of the larger Committee on Institutional Cooperation (the Big Ten Schools and the University of Chicago) American Indian Studies consortium (CIC-AIS) to promote and develop American Indian Studies in the Big Ten Universities. With the help of the \$10,000 per year AISP has set aside for the establishment and support of the CIC-AIS Consortium headquarters at the Newberry Library, MSU-AISP faculty have new opportunities: (1) a fall semester CIC-AIS professional conference and workshop; (2) a chance to teach a fall semester or spring semester course/workshop on an American Indian Studies topic for CIC-AIS graduate students recruited from the Big Ten universities; and (3) accompany MSU graduate students presenting papers at the CIC-AIS graduate student conference.

In spring semester 2001, the AISP undergraduate specialization was approved by all administrative bodies and by spring semester 2002 AISP granted its first specialization to Darren Kronke, an enrolled member of the Brothertown Indian Nation of Wisconsin, whom also earned dual undergraduate degrees in International Relations and German. In spring semester 2003 two more undergraduates are expected to earn MSU's AISP Specialization.

### **Undergraduates: Yellow: East, Dawn, Spring and Birth**

The undergraduate educational objectives of the AISP are to enhance course offerings and academic climate relating to the study of Native peoples in North America. The AISP offers an interdisciplinary, undergraduate degree specialization that students pursue while completing a degree program in an academic unit at MSU. The MSU AISP encourages students to earn degrees in

well-established disciplines to enhance employment opportunities, and for advanced degrees, to increase the opportunity for American Indian Studies experts and professionals in these disciplines. At MSU, students can take a variety of courses with Native American content from the departments of Anthropology, American Thought and Language (to be renamed the Department of Writing, Rhetorics and American Cultures in fall semester 2003), English, History, Language and Linguistics, and Religious Studies. Courses are also offered in the programs of American Studies and Interdisciplinary Arts and Humanities.

Before describing the requirements for the specialization, which is also a list of what MSU has to offer in the field, a few courses deserve special attention because they add to what has been traditionally offered by the established disciplines. From the department of Anthropology, ANP 432: American Indian Women and ANP 433: Contemporary American Indian Communities are courses offering study in areas long overdue in academe. Native women and Native urban communities have often been overlooked and not considered important in American Indian Studies as far as course offerings would indicate. As mentioned before, another interesting new field of study is American Indian Rhetorics, which studies the way American Indians use writing in the English language to advance political, social, cultural, and artistic concerns and movements. The American Indian Rhetorics course is currently offered as a special topics course but it will have its own number and title by the fall of 2004. AISP plans to support the development of American Indian Rhetorics undergraduate and graduate degrees, especially a Ph.D. in this new and exciting field of study. New courses in American Indian Rhetorics therefore are forthcoming.

Although not a new course offering by standards set by a few CIC universities, the MSU AISP is proud to announce first and second year Ojibwe language courses. Since we hired Helen Roy (an Ojibwe and Ojibwe language instructor) in the fall of 2000, MSU has been offering Ojibwe language courses. Helen started in 2000 as a part-time language instructor but with the combined efforts of the AISP, undergraduate and graduate students, and community members, Helen was hired as full-time instructor in the fall semester 2001. These efforts are the first of many AISP commitments to the preservation and perpetuation of Native languages in the Americas.

Although undergraduates benefit from AISP programming and course offerings like the Ojibwe language courses, the core of the undergraduate AISP mission is the specialization in American Indian studies. To earn the specialization, undergraduate students must take from 19 to 24 credit hours with significant American Indian studies content from courses offered from the colleges of Social Sciences and Arts and Letters. AISP approved courses broaden students' understanding of Native cultures, history, and current issues with emphasis on Native peoples of the Midwest. The American Indian Studies specialization requires written approval of the Director and is open to all MSU undergraduates.

Complementing the academic courses in American Indian Studies is an internship (or research project) of 1 to 6 credits that requires students to visit, research, and participate in local Native American communities in a helpful, but friendly and limited capacity for one semester or summer term. Students are supposed to work under the guidance of an approved faculty member. Each individual's program must be approved by the AISP Director in order for the student to receive credit for certification. Students accepted into the program must complete 19-24 credits with the following requirements:

1. *Bezhig*: General Core Courses: 12 (twelve) credits from at least two different academic departments. Two of these courses must be at the 300-level or above from the "Selected Course Listings."

2. *Niizh*: Electives: 6 (six) credits from courses with focus on Native American subject matter chosen from the "Selected Course Listings" or from within the College of Arts and Letters or Social Science, provided the course has significant Native American content.

3. *Niswi*: Internship: Students will enroll in Arts and Letters 493 (1-6 credits) for a one-semester internship in a Michigan Indian reservation project, a local Native American community project, or an approved research activity in consort with a supervising AISP faculty member. This can be arranged over the summer, fall, or spring semesters.

Selected Course Listings: Academic Year 2002-03

*College of Arts & Letters*

AL 493: Arts & Letters Internship (variable credit hours)

\*AL 491: Special Topics in American Cultures: American Indian Rhetorics (3 credits)

*American Studies Program*

\*AMS 491: Perspectives in American Studies (3 credits)

\*AMS 492: Seminar in American Studies (3 credits)

*Department of Anthropology*

ANP 411: North American Indian Ethnography (3 credits)

ANP 432: American Indian Women (3 credits)

ANP 433: Contemporary American Indian Communities (3 credits)

ANP 452: Native American Prehistory (3 credits)

*Department of American Thought & Language*

\*ATL 125: The American Ethnic & Racial Experience (4 credits writing)

\*ATL 150: Evolution of American Thought (4 credits writing)

\*ATL 290: Independent Study (1-4 credits)

*Department of English*

ENG 354: Native American Literature (3 credits)

\*ENG 490: Independent Study (1-4 credits)

*Department of History*

HST 378: Native Americans in North America to 1830 (3 credits)

HST 379: Native Americans in North America from 1830 (3 credits)

\*HST 490: Independent Study (1-4 credits)

*Interdisciplinary Arts & Humanities Program*

\*IAH 211C: Multicultural Civilizations: The Americas (4 credits)

*Department of Language & Linguistics*

LL 151, LL 152, LL 251 and LL 252: first and second year Ojibwe Language (4 credits each)

*Department of Religious Studies*

REL 306: Native American Religions (3 credits)

\*Courses marked with an asterisk only count when the course has appropriate content focusing on American Indians and require approval of the AISP Director. These courses vary from year-to-year and can have a variety of focuses and teachers, including visiting faculty.

**Graduate Students: Red: South, Noon, Summer and Youth**

Though the development of graduate degrees in American Rhetorics and a graduate level specialization are under discussion and planning, the focus and direction of AISP graduate education has been in the support of professional development. By having tenured or tenure-stream AISP affiliated faculty in key departments in the colleges of Arts and Letters and Social Sciences, graduate students have a unique opportunity to pursue graduate degrees in American Indian Studies in many disciplines and to work with American Indian studies experts and professionals from a variety of backgrounds and educational trainings.

At a very practical level, AISP supports graduate student travel and research. AISP has a mission to make its faculty and students, both undergraduate and graduate, competent scholars and active community members. Professional activity such as presenting formal papers at conferences adds to this mission as well as making the networking contacts that will ensure the growth and stability of the program. In this way, MSU's AISP selects and supports one graduate student for each of the fall and spring CIC-AIS seminars and workshops held at the Newberry library in Chicago. These seminars are taught and facilitated by CIC-AIS faculty who teach in their respective disciplines. In the 2002-03 academic year, historians Ned Blackhawk, University of Wisconsin at Madison, and Susan

Sleeper-Smith, Michigan State University, have taught seminars in American Indian history. These seminars are open to all CIC-AIS graduate students. AISP also supports graduate student travel to the Annual April CIC-AIS Graduate Student Conference. AISP will continue to support graduate students presenting professional quality papers at these conferences.

One of the hallmarks of the CIC-AIS Graduate Student Conference is the format. Students present papers in consecutive rather than concurrent sessions. In this way, participants have the opportunity to listen to every paper and meet every student. To bolster a feeling of camaraderie and to promote a collegial atmosphere, CIC-AIS faculty travel with their respective graduate students, listen to graduate student papers, and interact with their own and all the other graduate students participants. More importantly, graduate students can listen to the variety of papers themselves, meet and interact with AIS graduate students and faculty from the other CIC institutions, and have an opportunity to develop friendships and relations that will aid them in their own professional development.

One of the most significant contributions that MSU's AISP has offered to highly qualified AIS graduate students from anywhere in the world is the AISP Pre-doctoral Fellowship program for graduate students who have advanced to candidacy. The fellowship is designed to assist the Fellow in completing their dissertation in AIS within the one year they are at MSU. Although some have been offered employment at MSU, the Pre-Doctoral Fellowships is not meant for recruitment; its goal is rather to increase the number of scholars teaching, researching, and publishing in the area of AIS.

Since 2001, the award has been \$36,000 with benefits for one year. The successful applicant is required to teach one course each semester in either the College of Arts and Letters or the College of Social Science and to be a resident of East Lansing, Michigan. Applicants must be All-But-Dissertation (ABD) and actively working in American Indian Studies and committed to a career in Native Studies. The fellowship provides office space, access to an outstanding library and computing facilities, and to the faculty involved in the American Indian Studies program at MSU.

Since fall semester 2000, the AISP has supported and assisted four Pre-Doctoral fellows. The four are: Mindy Morgan, former Ph.D. candidate in anthropology from Indiana university and now a Ph.D. and an assistant professor of Anthropology at Michigan State University; John Norder, a Ph.D. candidate in anthropology from the University of Michigan and now an instructor of Anthropology at Michigan State University; Joanne DiNova, a Ph.D. candidate in Native American Women's literature from the University of Waterloo, Ontario; and Brian Klopotek, a Ph.D. candidate in American Studies Department from the University of Minnesota. Despite the preponderance of Fellows from Big Ten Universities, the Fellowship is open to any graduate in AIS with candidacy and ABD.

Applicants may be pursuing their Ph.D. degrees in any discipline or area taught by the College of Arts and Letters or the College of Social Science at MSU and will be affiliated with a department or program in one of the Colleges.

Michigan State University is very interested in attracting American Indian Studies scholars who are serious about teaching, researching, and publishing. It is fully expected that the Fellow will complete their dissertation during the award year.

### **Faculty: West, Sundown, Fall and Adulthood**

Currently, the AISP has 14 affiliated faculty members, 8 of which are of Native American descent. Four of them are enrolled members of federally recognized American Indian tribes and reservations.

The faculty teach and work in the following departments and programs in the colleges of Arts and Letters and Social Science: American Thought and Language (Writing, Rhetoric and American Cultures), American Studies, Anthropology, English, History, Linguistics, MSU Museum, and Religious Studies. The courses they teach with significant American Indian studies content are the courses students can select for a "specialization" in American Indian studies.

Generally, the content of the courses covers a wide range of subjects and approaches. The American Studies courses offer "special topics" of a particular faculty interest. For example, seminars on Native American contemporary issues and a seminar on the significance of stereotypical Indian warrior images in American culture have been proposed and taught under "special topics." In Anthropology, Native American prehistory and North American ethnography are offered. Two new Anthropology courses, Contemporary Indian Communities and American Indian Women, have been offered and taught. English courses offer the study of contemporary Native American literature and Native American oral traditions. In history, students can take courses on Native Americans and the fur trade, as well as general survey courses on a variety of historical issues from European contact to the present day. Religious Studies program offers a course on Native American religions. Students can also take a course on Ojibwe language taught by Helen Roy, an Ojibwe language expert.

AISP affiliated faculty are also the decision making body administering the program by contributing their expertise and offering their skills to meet the goals of the AISP. They participate in the annual Native American Film Series as facilitators, question writers, and discussants. They give specialized lectures, visit classrooms, and serve on university-wide committees on behalf of the AISP. They create, develop, and support new initiatives like the Ojibwe Language Quiz Bowl and Immersion Feasts and the Aanii program, the Native American freshmen/first year support program.

At a modest level of appreciation for hard work and dedication, AISP faculty have an opportunity to teach specialized seminars in American Indian Studies at

the CIC-AIS housed at the Newberry Library, Chicago. They can draw on AISP travel funds to support research, seminar participation, and to make paper presentations in their AIS expertise.

*MSU-AISP 2002-2003 Academic Affiliated Faculty:*

Phil Bellfy	American Thought & Language
George Cornell	American Studies and History
Lynne Goldstein	Anthropology
Gordon Henry Jr.	English
Susan Applegate Krouse	Anthropology
Patrick LeBeau	American Thought & Language
William Lovis	Anthropology
Robert McKinley	Religious Studies
Mindy J. Morgan	Anthropology
Jodie O'Gorman	Anthropology
Malea Powell	American Thought & Language
Frederick Roberts	Anthropology
Helen Roy	Linguistics/Ojibwe Language
Susan Sleeper-Smith	History

**Community: North, Night, Winter and Elder**

The number of affiliated American Indian Studies faculty offering courses with significant American Indian Studies content contribute to the credibility of the program; the attention to the community, however—the university as well as the greater Lansing, state, regional, and national communities—is what generates a lasting impression of MSU AISP's strength and value.

*University:*

Within the university, AISP supports with funds and with active participation the following organizations:

1. Aanii (The MSU Native American first year support program). Aanii is a program designed to meet the needs of Native American first year undergraduate students by providing academic assistance and cultural programming. Academic seminars are designed to provide Aanii students with writing, math, and science tutors and additional help with these difficult courses. Experts in many fields and areas, like counseling and residence life, meet with Aanii students to assist them in the difficult transition to the university and to train them to meet the challenges they will encounter at a large university. Monthly supper clubs and other social events offer cultural programming like drumming, dancing, and beadwork as well as creating a place to meet the university Native American community, its students, staff, and faculty.



2. EAGLE (Educating Anishinabe: Giving, Learning, Empowering). EAGLE is an organization of American Indian Faculty and Staff at MSU. The goals of EAGLE are to be involved in all levels of University life, to promote professional relationships between faculty, state, and administrators, to demand accountability from those involved in the formation of policies that impact American Indians, and to be active in the recruitment of American Indian students, staff, and faculty. Although any MSU personnel interested in Native American issues may be an associate or affiliate member of EAGLE, to be an active member, to vote and to hold office, an applicant must verify American Indian status through tribal affiliation or certification by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (or the equivalent Canadian organization).
3. NAISO (North American Indian Student Organization). NAISO is the undergraduate Native American student organization with its own funding and programming goals. AISP supports their programming and offers advice when asked. Sometimes AISP faculty serve as NAISO faculty advisors. Three of the current AISP affiliated faculty were former NAISO members. George Cornell was a part of the original group in the early 1970s. This group established NAISO as a legitimate and official MSU student group with its own budget and culture room. Gordon Henry and Patrick LeBeau helped to establish the first annual NAISO-MSU pow-wow in 1981, an event held (around February) to this day.

*Lansing and State:*

An annual Ojibwe language programming, the AISP speaker series, and the Native American film series bring nationally known Native American scholars and celebrities and American Indian studies scholars and experts to the Michigan State University campus where they share their wisdom and knowledge with the local and university communities.

1. Held annually, the "Ojibwe Language Immersion Feast" and the "Ojibwe Language Quiz Bowl" are designed for student recruitment, community outreach, and regional/national exposure. These immersion programs include community elders speaking and teaching Ojibwe, talking circles in Ojibwe, a quiz bowl that tests student proficiency in the Ojibwe language, and fun activities in Ojibwe. AISP has also supported undergraduate travel to Ojibwe language seminars.
2. The AISP speaker series has brought to campus many nationally recognized American Indian Studies scholars and personalities who have shared their expertise and wisdom with students, faculty, and members of the greater university and local community.
3. Along with EAGLE, AISP has sponsored an annual Native American film series, now in its seventh year.

### **Conclusion**

The growth of MSU's AISP is ongoing and cyclical. After two and one-half years in operation, we are beyond our beginnings, but we are still in our youth. Even when we come full circle, we will be ready to begin anew. Our goal is to continue, year after year, as a program contributing to the overall understanding of American Indians in the U.S. and the Americas. As undergraduates and graduates, we pursue AIS not only to augment and bolster our credentials, but also to serve our Native American communities. When some of us become researchers and teachers ourselves, we wish to share our strengths and our expertise in an effort to increase awareness and to suppress stereotyping and misunderstanding. As community members, we return and share the awesome educational gifts bestowed to us as youths and provide programming to the greater non-Native community in the best way we can.

We look to the directions we have set ourselves to follow. In this way, we perceive a higher goal than self-interest and larger community than our own individual careers.

### ***Mission Statement:***

Understanding American Indian cultures and identities, the places of Indigenous people in new and changing worlds, and the changing demands in the pursuit of cross-cultural diversity is an issue that transcends traditional boundaries between academic disciplines.

To understand the complexity of these problems and to respond to them thoughtfully, students require a range of training both across disciplines and outside university settings.

### ***For more information, contact:***

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