

American Indian Center Quarterly

ST. CLOUD STATE UNIVERSITY
A tradition of excellence and opportunity

Fall 2008



A place for everyone

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Student Awarded IHS Scholarship Award

Rebekah Fineday, a senior at SCSU, has been awarded the IHS (Indian Health Services) Scholarship Award for the 2008 academic year. Rebekah is in her last year of the nursing program. She is from the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe; she was born and raised in Cass Lake. The benefits of receiving the IHS scholarship is that it pays for a students' tuition, books, travel and monthly stipends. There is also a two-year working commitment with the IHS once the student has completed their degree.



Rebekah wanted to go into the nursing profession because it offers more opportunity for employment and job advancement. She is devoted to providing the best care possible to her patients. She wants to educate people on health and how to be healthy.

Rebekah's driving force of being successful is all of the family support and the values she has gained from them. She also said, "I have a strong faith that I believe in that I rely on heavily to get me through tough times and even to make decisions. Without my faith I don't think I would

have had it in me to return to college after my dad passed away."

Rebekah has been active in the All Tribes Council since she has been in school. She has also been on the Alternative Spring Break Service Learning Trips to Lame Deer, Montana. Rebekah plans on working in Indian Country when she finishes school and would like to provide the best care to patients.

Harvest Festival

The AIC will host a Fall Harvest Festival on Thursday, October 30, 2008 starting at 4:30 p.m.

Pumpkins will be available to carve at the AIC from Monday, October 27- 30. There is a limit of one pumpkin per student. A meal will be held and a pumpkin carving winner will be chosen at the Harvest Festival. There will be prizes awarded to 1st, 2nd and 3rd place winners.



EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT - JEFF HOUSE (GRADUATE ASSISTANT)



This month's employee spotlight is on Jeff House, a graduate assistant at the American Indian Center. Jeff is in his first semester at St. Cloud State University in the Master of Business Administration program. His hometown is Maple Grove, Minnesota.

Jeff likes working at the AIC and he enjoys the people, the office and the building. The atmosphere is relaxed yet he gets direction.

Jeff will be working on a myriad of projects in the upcoming semester and hopes to accomplish many tasks. He will be working on creating the Friends of the American Indian Center which is a non-profit group. He is working on the Native Leadership Retreat.

He will also be attending the National Indian Education Association (NIEA) Conference in Seattle, Washington later this fall.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT - WADE DAUPHINAIS

This month's Student Spotlight is on Wade Dauphinais. He is Leech Lake Ojibwe, LCO Ojibwe and Ho-Chunk. He is currently a sophomore and majoring in Chemical Dependency with a minor in Community Psychology. He is originally from Wisconsin Dells, WI and he grew up in Anoka, Minnesota.

Wade decided on his major from personal experience. He wants to help the community with this social problem. He would also like to help people who helped him grow in this field. Wade feels that he is successful at school because he knows what he wants in life. He has learned from his past and because of that he is more focused and knows how important his academic career is.

In the future, Wade plans to give back to the community and to Native American people. He stresses that in some kind of way there is hope. He would like to eventually get his Ph.D. in this field and one day own his own treatment center that is geared for Native Americans.

Wade likes the Chemical Dependency Program here at SCSU. The teachers and professors are the most beneficial part of the learning institution. He also feels that the programs and the AIC are also very beneficial to students. When Wade isn't studying he enjoys spending time with his children. He also likes to participate in a variety of sports like golf, volleyball, soccer, football, basketball and baseball.

Something interesting about Wade is that he tried out for the Minnesota Twins and was offered a minor league deal but due to shoulder injury and family commitments he declined.



THE LAKOTA SIOUX DANCE THEATER

The Lakota Sioux Dance Theater will perform at the Paramount Theater on Friday, September 26, 2007 at 7:30 p.m. This work celebrates the culture of the Lakota people and will be performed in three parts: birth, death and rebirth of a nation. The program includes the grass, jingle dress, fancy, traditional, horse, buffalo, eagle, round and inter-tribal dances, juxtaposed with dance interpretations of the Lakota warrior tradition.

There will also be a silent auction that will be held at the Paramount Theater by the Friends of the American Indian Center. The group's goal is to raise money for new computers for the American Indian Center. If you are interested in tickets you can contact the American Indian Center for information.

The AIC Director located this article and thought it would be a good resource to share:

Seeking Native American Spirituality: Read This First!

<http://www.native-languages.org/religion.htm>

Judging from the email I get, there are a lot of people out there trying to learn about traditional Native American religion and spirituality these days. Many of them are trying to do this on the Internet. Now, there is a lot of garbage and misinformation on the Internet no matter what subject you're talking about, but American Indian religion and spirituality has got to have the worst signal-noise ratio of any of them. The 'information' out there about American Indian religions ranges from inaccurate school projects by seven-year-olds, to deeply biased generalizations about the 'heathens' written 300 years ago, to hucksters pretending to be Native American shamans to scam money off of people, to useful and interesting information about actual American Indian religious traditions past and present. Sorting through these sites can be a nightmare. I wish you a lot of luck with it. Before you start, let me give you a few words of experience.

There are two reasons to be looking for information on Native American religions. The first, and easier to address, is educational. Either because you're a student who's been assigned to or just out of intellectual and cultural curiosity, you would like to learn more about how American Indians, or a particular tribe of American Indians, view the world. If that's you, then your main problem is going to be identifying the authentic and trustworthy sources. Indians are happy to talk about their beliefs and spiritual practices, both historically and in the modern day. Unfortunately, so are plenty of ill-informed non-Indians (or people of Indian descent) who think they know a lot more than they do. And so are those unscrupulous souls willing to pretend they're something they're not in hopes of making a buck or getting a little attention. My best recommendation is to get a Native American book out of the library as well as looking on the Internet, since any quack shaman can put up a website but it's a lot harder to publish a book. I also suggest ignoring and avoiding information about American Indian spirituality presented by anyone:

1. Offering anything religious for sale. Money is never accepted by authentic holy people in exchange for Indian religious ceremonies like sweat lodges or sun dances, nor for religious items like medicine bags or smudged items. (They might sell arts and crafts, of course. Use your common sense--a devout Catholic might sell you a hand-carved crucifix to hang on your wall, for example, but he wouldn't sell communion wafers over the Internet or charge you admission to bring you to his church! Selling dreamcatchers or fetish carvings online is one thing, but don't believe information provided by anyone who is trying to charge people for smudging or blessing anything, making medicine, or letting them take part in a sweat lodge or dance. They are not authentic sources of information.)

2. Inviting you into their religion on their webpage. Authentic Indians may seek to educate strangers online, but actually adopting an outsider as part of their culture is only done face-to-face and after knowing the person for some time.

3. Claiming to be American Indian shamans, talking about tarot cards and Wiccan/pagan things, or talking about crystals and New Age things. I've got nothing against shamanism, paganism, or the New Age, but a cow is not a horse: none of these things are traditionally Native American. Shamanism is a Siberian mystic tradition, Wicca is a religion based in pre-Christian European traditions, Tarot readings are an Indo-European divination method, and the New Age is a syncretic belief system invented, as its name suggests, in the modern era. None of them have anything to do with authentic Indian traditions, and anyone who thinks they do is likely to be wrong about anything else he claims about Native American religions as well. Wiccans and New Agers don't have any more knowledge about actual American Indian beliefs than you do.

4. Identifying only as 'Native American' or 'American Indian' (an authentic person would list their actu

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al tribal affiliation). Be a little wary, too, of people trying to speak with authority who identify as “mixed-blood” or “of Indian descent” or having a “Cherokee ancestor.” There are certainly some mixed-blood people who were raised in their tribe’s culture, but many more were not. A person who has rediscovered his Indian heritage as an adult is a seeker, not a teacher. He is not qualified to speak authoritatively about Native American religion or culture, for he wasn’t raised that way and doesn’t have any more knowledge about it than anyone else learning about it second-hand--including you.

If you’re trying to learn about American Indian religion because you want to become a part of it, though, you not only face that problem, but another, much deeper one as well: American Indian spirituality is not evangelistic. It is private and entirely cultural. You cannot convert to ‘Native American’ any more than you can convert to being black. (In fact, many Indians--myself included--are Christians in addition to our traditional tribal beliefs, just like many black people are Christian in addition to being black.) The only way to ‘join’ a Native American spiritual tradition is to become a member of the cultural group, and it’s impossible to do that over the Internet. No one who truly believed in American Indian spirituality would ever offer to tutor total strangers in religious matters online, much less charge anyone money for such a thing. So, by definition, the people who make these offers are those who either don’t really believe in Native American spirituality, or don’t know very much about it. Is that really who you want to be listening to?

On our site, we have generally given people the benefit of the doubt with our links, including websites unless we are sure there is a reason not to. Regarding Native American religion and spirituality, however, we have decided to err on the side of caution instead. Anyone who is looking for a new religion or seeking spiritual truth is a needy individual and I will not contribute to their being used by irresponsible people. If you are reading this page because you are a person in need of religious and spiritual guidance, I urge you strongly to seek out some religions that are evangelistic rather than cultural (one of the many Christian churches, Buddhism, Baha’i; there are many choices) and talk to spiritual leaders there until you find one that can help you. Falling under the influence of a false ‘shaman’ will only hurt you spiritually.

Since I have put this page up, I have received many anguished emails saying “But my grandmother was part Cherokee... are you telling me to just forget that part of myself? How can I honor my Native ancestors if you won’t share your religion with me?” The answer is simple: honor them the way they would want to be honored. Don’t pay some new-age guru \$250 to perform fake “Native American” rituals that would have offended your ancestors, go physically to their tribe and re-connect with their other descendants. It will be hard work convincing the people there that you are genuine but if you go with humility and patience you will eventually be accepted, and that is the ONLY way you will ever become part of the spiritual tradition you desire. There is no shortcut to that. Native spirituality belongs only to the cultural group, and anyone who tells you otherwise is trying to make some money off of you and/or to take a power trip at your expense.

You’ve been warned. Good luck, with whatever it is you’re looking for. You’re probably going to need it. Orrin

Useful Links:

As I explained already, the Internet is a poor source of information about Native American religions. Since each tribe has a unique cultural and religious tradition, it is difficult to generalize about native beliefs. You can look through our list of Native American tribes for some good information and links about individual cultures. Here are a few good links about Native American religion in general:

Native American Religions: Essay by an Osage writer about the religious traditions of Indian communities. This is the best overview of native spirituality I’ve seen on the Internet.

Native American Spirituality: Generic overview of American Indian religious beliefs and related issues. Very simple and it might be good for kids doing homework. **(Article continues on next page)**

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Declaration of War Against Exploiters of Lakota Spirituality: The Sioux peoples have the worst problem of all the tribes with non-natives exploiting their spiritual beliefs. Read how they feel about it.

Selling American Indian Spirituality: Article by a Sioux woman about the exploitation of Native American traditions.

Native American Religious Exploitation and Defense: Links about American Indian religious exploitation and persecution.

Tengerism: Siberian Shamanism: Website of an indigenous Buryat shaman from Siberia. If you are interested in actual (non-American Indian) shamanism, this seems like a good place to learn.

Further reading:

Here are a few genuine and worthwhile books on Native American religions:

God is Red: A Native View of Religion: Book by respected Lakota author Vine Deloria, Jr. comparing Christianity and native religions. It's a controversial book, requires critical thinking skills. I recommend it for adult readers.

Encyclopedia of Native American Religions: This is really the book you want if you're trying to write an essay about Native American beliefs, or just curious about world religions. Lots of accurate information here.

Native Religions and Cultures of North America: Collection of in-depth anthropological essays on a dozen different Native American religions.

The Sacred: An interesting book on Native American spirituality by three Indian women from different tribal traditions.

South and Meso-American Native Spirituality: An overview of Indian religions in countries other than the US and Canada.

Native and Christian: A series of essays by Native American authors on their experiences blending Christianity and Indian spirituality.

American Indian Myths and Legends: Well-attributed collection of many diverse traditional stories of Native America. (Like any other body of mythology, some of the stories involve adultery, rape, or sexual situations, so be sensible about which ones you share with young children.)

39th Annual NIEA Convention

The 39th Annual NIEA (National Indian Education Association) Convention will be held on October 23-26, 2008 in Seattle, Washington at the Washington State Convention & Trade Center. The convention themed, "Crossroads – Pulling Together Our Indigenous Knowledge," has an impressive lineup of speakers and activities which are planned for the conference. The Keynote Speakers include, Billy Frank, Jr., Coach Dale Brown, Sherman J. Alexie, Jr., and Dr. Cassandra Manuelito-Kerviet. The invited speakers include U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell, U.S. Senator Patty Murray, Congressman Jay Inslee, Congresswoman Cathy McMorris and Congressman Adam Smith. Activities planned for this event include a Native Language Revitalization Forum, Junior High/High School Student Strand, College/University Student Symposium, Tribal Leaders Task Force, 3rd Annual

Native Oratory Contest and an Annual Gala Banquet.

The NIEA is an organization which represents American Indians, Alaskan Natives and Native Hawaiian educators and students.

22nd Annual MIEA Conference

The 22nd Annual MIEA (Minnesota Indian Education Association) Conference will be held on October 8-9, 2008 in Mahanomen, Minnesota at the Shooting Star Casino and Event Center. Some activities that are planned for the upcoming conference are the creation of an art mural, quiz bowl challenge, hand games competition, pow-wow, awards banquet, workshops and a MIEA Board of Directors meeting.

American Indian Center

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Please note the American Indian Center will no longer be mailing newsletters.

A place for everyone

FALL SEMESTER 2008

Tuesday, August 19 - Friday, August 22 Faculty Workshops/Convocation

Monday, August 25 Day and Evening Classes Begin

Monday, September 1 Labor Day Holiday - No Classes; Offices Closed

Thursday, October 23 - Friday, October 24 Fall Break

Tuesday, November 11 Veterans Day Holiday - No Classes; Offices Closed

Wednesday, November 26 Thanksgiving Break Begins at 5:00 p.m.

Thursday, November 27 - Friday, November 28 Thanksgiving Break

Friday, December 12 Last Day of Classes

Monday, December 15 - Friday, December 19 Final Exams

Friday, December 19 Graduate Students: Graduate Hooding and Commencement (Evening)

Saturday, December 20 Undergraduate Students: Undergraduate Commencement (Afternoon)

Friday, December 26 Grades Due to Records by 4:00 p.m.

VISIT OUR WEBSITE

<http://www.stcloudstate.edu/aic>

Upcoming AIC Events:

September (2008)

9/18/08 American Indian Speaker Series, 7:00p.m., Location TBA

9/26/08 Lakota Sioux Dance Theatre, 7:30p.m., Paramount Theatre

9/26 & 9/27/08 Native Leadership Retreat, All Day, American Indian Center

October (2008)

10/8 & 10/9/08 Minnesota Indian Education Association Conference(MIEA), Mahnomon, MN

10/23 - 10/26/08 National Indian Education Association Conference(NIEA), Seattle, WA

10/23/08 American Indian Speaker Series, 7:00p.m., Location TBA

10/30/08 Fall Harvest Festival, 4:30 p.m., American Indian Center

November (2008)

11/20/08 American Indian Speaker Series, 7:00p.m., Location TBA



2008 AIC HOUSE BLESSING

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