

Alliance to Advance Liberal Arts Colleges
 Proposal for Faculty Workshop at Williams College in 2020
 May 9, 2019

Indigenizing and Decolonizing Liberal Arts Colleges:

Centering Indigenous Knowledges, Strengthening Intellectual and Collaborative Networks, and
 Reckoning with Institutional Histories

Summary and Rationale

The interdisciplinary field of Native American and Indigenous Studies (NAIS) has been growing in exciting ways at liberal arts colleges in recent years. Faculty, staff, students, and Indigenous communities have been collaboratively building capacity in new approaches to indigenizing and decolonizing pedagogies, research agendas, public and digital humanities, and community-based work. This has resulted in innovative forms of classroom practice, community-connected learning, exhibitions, research, publishing, and collections development at libraries, archives, and museums.¹ Pursuing this work has often involved struggles, with incremental movement forward and ongoing needs to build critical awareness and support within institutions.

We propose a workshop that convenes participants to share experiences with these interventions. It intends to address, in a deeply intertwined, dynamic, and multivocal manner, NAIS approaches to teaching, research, community engagement, and collections development. It will support expanding and strengthening intellectual and professional networks; creative knowledge-sharing about transformative theories and practices; and constructive strategies for connecting pertinent NAIS resources that are often dispersed or siloed within individual departments and repositories. In addition, this gathering will reflect upon higher education institutions' reckoning with their own fraught histories of involvement in settler colonialism, local and global missionary projects, and forms of marginalization that have impacted Indigenous people and nations. The proposed workshop aims to open up generative pathways forward that will reverberate in positive, reparative ways on and well beyond participants' respective campuses.

Goals and Intended Impact

This workshop will feature diverse ways of bringing NAIS methodologies into classrooms, research projects, and community engagement. It will highlight collaborative projects developed with and for Indigenous communities, and designed to mobilize archival, library, and museum collections in innovative ways, including through digital tools (e.g., [Mukurtu](#)) that re-cast

¹ For a sampling of such projects from AALAC member institutions, see: Amherst College, "[Frost Library acquires rare and comprehensive Native American book collection](#)" and "[“Our Beloved Kin’: A Digital Awikhighan](#)"; Williams College, "[Histories in the Making: Untangling the complex threads of Williams’ long and complex relationship with Hawai’i](#)" and "[“Take due notice of us for the future’: Native Americans and Williams College](#)"; Wesleyan University, "[Wesleyan Class Renews Interest in Wangunks, ‘Lost Tribe’ of Lower Connecticut River](#)"; Wellesley College, "[On Horseback with the Lakota Sioux, Wellesley Professor Honors Those Killed in the Wounded Knee Massacre](#)"; Mount Holyoke College, "[People Will Know Our Names](#)"; Collections spotlight with Linda Teller Pete, Diné weaver, at Mount Holyoke College Art Museum; Grinnell College, "[Teaching Native American Histories as American Histories.](#)"

information-access and knowledge-formation. Emphasis will be on transforming curricula to include and center Indigenous and decolonial topics and methods, and developing pedagogic strategies that enable cumulative student learning in new areas of study.

This gathering will also reflect on what it means to “decolonize” institutions of higher education. This is a challenging, long-term process that encompasses learning about and critically responding to colleges’ histories of involvement in settler colonialism, territorial dispossessions, missionization, and other forms of racial, ethnic, and political marginalization. Participants will share tools for addressing campus mascots, monuments/memorials, and “traditions”: the complicated symbolic and ideological formations that have created obstacles to understanding and inclusion, but can also present occasions for collective learning, dialogue, and action. Finally, discussions will reckon with faculty and institutional responsibilities around subjects such as land acknowledgments and repatriation of Indigenous heritage materials, and how developing appropriate protocols can inform responsive pedagogies.²

Format, Evaluation, and Next Steps

This workshop will take place over ~2.25 days in Spring 2020 at Williams College. The College’s location in Mohican homelands and at an important multi-tribal crossroads, and its founding role in the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, provide conversation-provoking contexts for these dialogues. The workshop will feature keynote presentations and sessions in which participants share projects-in-progress, as well as small-group breakout sessions for idea-sharing about future directions. A foundational principle of NAIS is having Indigenous partners in key roles at the table, so we will invite selected Indigenous community representatives to shape and join in the dialogues (such as tribal historians and educators who have collaborated with faculty and staff). The expertise of archivists, librarians, curators, and information technology specialists is likewise essential to NAIS pedagogy and research, so some sessions may be held in the library’s Archives/Special Collections and/or Art Museum to facilitate direct work with original materials. Most sessions will be open to wider campus and public audiences. A concluding reflection session will gather insights and narrative evaluations about the preceding days’ work, as well as lay out concrete next steps for follow-up meetings and activities. These may include digital sharing of syllabi and classroom assignments; creation of an AALAC NAIS email listserv and/or social media group; and developing proposals for the Native American and Indigenous Studies Association (NAISA) conference and/or special forums on research/pedagogies for publications such as the journal *Native American and Indigenous Studies*.

² The [Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act](#) (NAGPRA), U.S. federal legislation passed in 1990, requires institutions that have ever received any form of federal funding to review, inventory, and engage in consultations with Indigenous descendant communities about items with sacred, cultural patrimony, funerary, and other forms of significance, with the goal of returning them, as appropriate, to communities. AALAC member institutions have been reckoning with NAGPRA responsibilities in a variety of ways (e.g., [Wesleyan University Repatriation Policy](#)). Campuses across the hemisphere have increasingly been developing land acknowledgment statements and protocols that publicly address and respect Indigenous communities’ historical and ongoing homelands (e.g., [Five Colleges Kwinitekw River Valley land acknowledgment](#)).

Workshop planning committee (CVs enclosed)

- Liaison: Christine DeLucia (cdelucia@mtholyoke.edu, cd10@williams.edu), Associate Professor of History at Mount Holyoke College (through June 30, 2019), then Assistant Professor of History at Williams College (July 1, 2019+)
- Eli Nelson, Assistant Professor of American Studies, Williams College
- Kailani Polzak, Assistant Professor of Art, Williams College
- Kiara Vigil, Assistant Professor of American Studies, Amherst College
- Elena Tajima Creef, Professor of Women's and Gender Studies, Wellesley College
- Lisa Conathan, Head of Special Collections, Williams College Library
- Michael Kelly, Head of Archives & Special Collections, Amherst College Library

Potential workshop participants (* = confirmed interest)

- * Lisa Brooks, Professor of English and American Studies, Amherst College
- * J. Kēhaulani Kauanui, Professor of American Studies and Anthropology affiliate, Wesleyan University
- * Joseph Weiss, Assistant Professor of Anthropology, Wesleyan University
- * Tiffany Hale, Assistant Professor of Religious Studies, Barnard College
- * Lauret Savoy, Professor of Environmental Studies, Mount Holyoke College
- * Christina Leza, Associate Professor, Anthropology, Colorado College
- * Paul Albert Lacson, Associate Professor of History, Grinnell College
- * Rose Stremlau, Assistant Professor of History, Davidson College
- Miishen Carpentier, Assistant Professor of Anthropology, Reed College (email invitation sent)
- Natanya Pulley, Assistant Professor of English, Colorado College (email invitation sent)
- Dwanna McKay, Assistant Professor, Race, Ethnicity, and Migration Studies, Colorado College (email invitation sent)

This list reflects a mixture of Indigenous scholars and non-Indigenous allied scholars. If this workshop is funded we will circulate a call for additional participants, capacity permitting. Beyond the core group, multiple Williams College members, who would not require travel funding, have expressed interest in taking part (including Scott Wong and Karen Merrill, both Professors of History, as well as Annie Reinhardt and Cassandra Cleghorn, chairs of History and American Studies). Many events would be open to the larger campus community and responsive to ongoing campus dialogues and student advocacy for institutional transformations. We will seek additional funding from our respective departments and campuses as necessary.

Potential Keynote Presenters

The organizing committee has reached out to several NAIS faculty from non-AALAC institutions inviting them to offer keynote presentations about their experiences in braiding together NAIS pedagogy, scholarship, and community engagement, as well as building institutional capacities. These include:

- [Scott Manning Stevens](#) (Akwesasne Mohawk), Associate Professor of English, and Director of Native American Studies, Syracuse University; co-editor of *Why You Can't Teach United States History without American Indians* (2015); past director of the D'Arcy McNickle Center for American Indian Studies at the Newberry Library in Chicago--interested and available

- [Elizabeth Hoover](#) (Mohawk), Assistant Professor of American Studies, Brown University, and Williams College alum (Class of 2001); author of *The River Is In Us: Fighting Toxics in a Mohawk Community* (2017); co-organizer of Native American and Indigenous Studies at Brown initiative--email invitation sent

Finally, it is vital that tribal community historians, scholars, and community partners be integral to these conversations. Thus far Bonnie Hartley from the [Tribal Historic Preservation Office of the Stockbridge-Munsee Band of Mohicans](#) has expressed strong interest in taking part. The organizing committee will reach out to additional regional tribal communities/nations to invite participation (including Mohegan, Wampanoag, Nipmuc, Abenaki, Haudenosaunee, Schaghticoke, and other area communities).

Proposed schedule

(preliminary agenda, subject to evolve during planning committee conversations conducted in-person and/or via Skype in months leading up to the workshop)

Day 1: arrival at Williams College

Welcoming participants and introducing the event

Meet and greet/opening dinner

Evening NAIS film screening

Day 2: sessions

Early morning orienting place-based walk & discussion of land acknowledgments

Late morning keynote (#1) followed by discussion

Lunch with continued conversation in small groups

Panel of presentations followed by discussion

Late afternoon session in Archives/Special Collections featuring small-group work with collections items

Dinner and continuing conversation

Day 3: sessions and conclusion

Early morning keynote (#2) followed by discussion

Late morning panel of presentations followed by discussion

Lunch, followed by session in Art Museum and small-group work with collections items

Afternoon panel of presentations with Q&A

Wrap-up reflections, discussion of continuing collaborations

Participants depart this evening or following morning

Proposed budget

Expense	Amount
Shared stipend for workshop organizers	1,000.00
Travel and accommodation expenses for AALAC participants & keynote presenters (~15 non-local participants, est. average \$900 each: 2 or 3 nights hotel + vehicle mileage for some, air travel for others)	12,000.00

Stipend for 2 speakers from outside the AALAC (max. \$1,000 honorarium each)	2,000.00
Administrative expenses (mailing of notices, posters for publicity, duplication of conference and evaluation materials)	300.00
Meals (2 breakfasts, 2 lunches, 2 dinners, & coffee breaks, using Williams College catering or another local option)	4,700.00
	TOTAL \$20,000.00 max