

About WISR MA and PhD alumnus, Dennis Hastings

The late, Dennis Hastings, was one of the [Native Americans, who occupied Alcatraz in 1969](#). He met WISR co-founder, John Bilorusky at University Without Walls-Berkeley in 1973, and he consulted with WISR's co-founders during the process of creating WISR. He returned to his tribal homeland, the Omaha reservation, and then founded the Omaha Tribal Historical Research Project (OTHRP). He continued as director of OTHRP until his death in 2023. In 1998 he earned his Master's degree at WISR, in part with assistance from a scholarship from the Association for Community-Based Education. This resulted in a book (published by the University of Nebraska Press) he coauthored with an anthropologist, Robin Riddington, on Dennis' successful efforts to return to his Tribe (from the Harvard Peabody Museum), the Sacred Pole of the Omaha. This book, [Blessing for a Long Time](#), was published by the University of Nebraska Press. Subsequently, in the early 2000s, Dennis and a colleague, Margery Coffey, pursued and earned their doctorates at WISR (in 2009), doing collaborative research in many areas of Omaha history. Their 1,500 page dissertation (which included drawings, maps, and photos) was praised as a masterpiece by scholars of Native American history as the definitive history of the Omaha people in the face of the European invasion. [Their dissertation, Grandfather Remembers, is available for viewing through WISR](#), but all rights to this dissertation are reserved by Margery Coffey. Their dissertation contained pivotal evidence that was used by the Omaha to win a dispute before the US Supreme Court in March 2016. Several years ago, [their dissertation ended up being the definitive evidence in case before the US Supreme Court](#) which resulted in a unanimous decision upholding the rights and authority of the Omaha people in case brought against the Tribe by the residents of Pender, Nebraska.

Dennis was the founder and Director of the Omaha Tribal Historical Research Project (OTHRP). OTHRP became the designated Cultural Authority for the Omaha Tribe of Nebraska and Iowa in Perpetuity by Tribal Council Resolution. Among his many awards and accomplishments are:

- Certificate of Award presented by the Pawnee Tribe in recognition of assistance and support leading to the enactment of the Nebraska Unmarked Burial Sites and Skeletal Remains Protection Act
- Honorable Mention of the Victor Turner Prize in Anthropology for Blessing For a Long Time: The Story of the Omaha Sacred Pole co-authored with Robin Ridington. (University of Nebraska Press, 1997 still in print). Dr.Hastings has collaborated on many books on the Omaha
- Genealogical Research: Paul Brill, Genealogist. Research into the Genealogy of the Omaha Tribe.
- Omaha Archival Photographic Project: John Carter, Nebraska State Historical Society
- Wax Cylinder Restoration and Reintroduction of Traditional Omaha Music: Dorothy Sara Lee, University of Indiana.
- West Meets West: Awarded 1993 Nebraska Arts Council's Governor's Art Awards for West Meets West, a collaborative performance with the City of Omaha Symphony Orchestra of contemporary Omaha tribal and symphonic music. Dennis coordinated the Omaha sector.
- "We Are One" Project: Dennis Hastings and Nebraska Educational Television (film of traditional Omaha life in 1800 designed for 4th and 5th grade curriculum in Nebraska public schools to educate both Indians and non-Indians).
- The Omahas and the History of Anthropology: Joan Mark, Peabody Museum, Harvard University
- Bringing the past to the future: Placement of pictures in the various institutions on the reservation, OTHRP
- New Moon Moving, Interpretive Center/Museum, planned to house cultural artifacts and deducational materials on the Omaha reservation: Starting in 1995, the proposed Interpretive Center/Museum was designed by native Nebraskan architect, Vincent Snyder with an actual model of the design completed in 2002. The design for this project has already won three awards: Association of

Collegiate Schools of Architecture Faculty Design Award 2002,
Boston Society of Architects' Unbuilt Architecture Design Award
2002, 50th Annual Progressive Architecture Award -- Architecture
Magazine 2003.