

# **American Indian Studies at the University of Arizona – an Extended History**

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Written by Caroline Williams

Edited by Marcea Decker

## **The Origins of AIS**

The relationship between the university and the tribes started back in 1885 when the Arizona legislature provided funds for a university in Tucson. This university was to be a land-grant university, “as part of its land-grant tradition, the UA has, from the time it first admitted students, been involved in teaching, research, and service involving Indian Tribes and Indian peoples in Arizona” (Stauss, Fox and Lowe 2002, 84). One of the first steps the university made towards fulfilling its land grant mandate was to house the Arizona State Museum ([ASM](#)) at UA. The museum was designed for the purpose of “investigating and restoring Indian sites, preserving and displaying Indian cultural objects, and interpreting this data as part of the indigenous tribal historical past of Arizona” (AIS 1991, 6). In 1893, with Byron Cummings as director, ASM began forming relationships with the Native communities in the area. These relations have proved to be long-standing as today ASM still runs projects with the tribes, but not just in the Southwest, today there are projects with communities as far afield as Alaska.

By 1930, UA saw its first American Indian student, Christine Garcia, graduate. Although Garcia would not have had the opportunity to take any American Indian Studies classes, it was not long after she graduated that the Anthropology department started

developing their program of study, a trajectory which would eventually lead to the development of AIS. The Anthropology department at UA claims its origins in the hiring of Byron Cummings at both the ASM and in the department of Archaeology. While Cummings built up the program, it was one of his students that led the department to what it is today. In 1937 Cummings stepped down as head of the Archaeology department and was replaced by his former student, Emil Haury. Haury's first deed was to change the name of the department from Archaeology to Anthropology (Anthropology 2009, History). And so in 1937 the Anthropology department was born.

Haury had many visions for the department, including adding social and applied anthropology courses, but to do this he would first have to increase faculty numbers. In 1939, in order to enlarge his faculty, Haury invited Edward Spicer to come to UA. Spicer would later have an important role to play as the first chair of President Harvill's newly appointed Indian Advisory Committee (IAC) in 1958. As UA kept strengthening its commitment to the Native population both on and off campus, the Anthropology department would have one more important role in the origins of AIS.

In an effort to solve a shortage of staff who could work in the developing linguistics program in Anthropology, Haury hired Edward P. Dozier, "the first American Indian to earn a doctorate in anthropology in the United States" (Stauss, Fox and Lowe 2002, 85). Haury choosing Dozier to come to UA would be the start of a journey that would eventually lead to the development of AIS as we know it today. The want for a deeper understanding of diverse cultures as well as Indigenous peoples sparked programs such as the AIS program, [Africana Studies](#) and [Mexican American Studies](#) programs here at UA.

As the general public's interest in American Indian issues increased in the US, so did the American Indian facilities on campus. By 1959 the first Indian Student Advisor was hired in a part-time capacity (up till this point American Indian students had to go to the Anthropology department to be advised by the faculty there) and by 1968, UA hired Gordon Krutz as the first coordinator of Indian Programs. This new post would later lead to the Office of Indian Programs (OIP) which was to be housed in the Anthropology department. The OIP is still in service today, serving the same purpose, "to reach out to Indian Tribes in Arizona and help maintain good relations between the UA and Indian Tribal governments" (Stauss, Fox and Lowe 2002, 85). Today the OIP is being run directly through the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and shares Dr. Joe Hiller as Director with the AIS program.

The atmosphere towards studies in American Indian issues has dramatically changed on campus since 1885. The part-time Indian Student Advisor post changed to full time in 1969, when Arlene Hobson took over the position. Hobson would later (1977 - 1983) begin jointly writing American Indian Student newsletters with the AIS program. As studies in American Indian issues moved from Archaeology, to Anthropology and through into social and applied anthropology, a path had been formed that would lead Dozier to apply for a Ford Foundation grant to establish a program in American Indian Studies.

### **Dozier and the Ford Foundation**

Dozier had a vision for the study of American Indian issues at UA. Instead of having the classes housed in departments such as Anthropology, he wanted AIS to become its own program. At this time, Dozier "was a member of the board of directors of the Ford

Foundation” (Stauss, Fox and Lowe 2002, 86), so naturally, Dozier went to the Ford Foundation for the grant. In 1968, Dozier started the proposal for the development of formal AIS academic program. The program was to be the first of its kind in the United States. The vision of the program would include “strengthening Indian-related curriculum and expanding the number of American Indian faculty members and students at the University” (AIS 1991, 11). Although the grant was not administered until 1971, Edward P. Dozier became the “first chair of the American Indian studies program” in 1970 (Stauss, Fox and Lowe 2002, 86).

Dozier’s period in office was short lived, as in 1971 he passed away, two months before the Ford Foundation grant was received. Emory Sekaquaptewa became the second chair of AIS as the grant, administered by Anthropology department in the College of Liberal Arts, allowed for the process of hiring faculty. UA, through the AIS program, agreed to spend the grant on improving American Indian retention rates, scholarships, educational programs, materials, and most importantly to hire American Indian faculty and staff (AIS 1991, 11; Stauss, Fox and Lowe 2002, 86). While the Anthropology department hired four faculty, the English, Political Science, Education and Sociology hired one faculty each. Out of the eight original hires, only one faculty member still remains today, Larry Evers, who was instrumental in creating the Sun Tracks magazine.

The American Indian population on campus started to complain that the Ford Foundation grant was being misused. Although the grant was meant to benefit American Indian students, educational programs, materials, and most importantly to hire American Indian faculty and staff, only one of the seven faculty members hired was American Indian, Jay Stauss. On top of this, the main complaint was that the grant was being used to benefit

the Anthropology department, as opposed to help set up AIS. With all the discussions and concerns regarding the administration of monies, the Ford Foundation decided to terminate the grant after five years. AIS may have been without the necessary money to hire new faculty, but the program was now in existence.

### **Stauss's Leadership**

In 1976, following the termination of the Ford Foundation grant, Jay Stauss became chair of AIS. Stauss wanted to give the AIS program a solid structure. He argued that up till this point, the program lacked explicit goals and direction. Stauss's vision was to formulate a plan which would allow the program to "enable the American Indian Studies Program to continue to enhance the quality of teaching, research, and service offered by the college of Liberal arts to all students – Indian and non-Indian" (Office of Indian Programs 1978, 53). Stauss's vision of a program united in its approach and direction would lead to the AIS program of study we know today.

As the classes cross-listed with AIS continued to grow, the faculty (at this point still spread over five departments) worked to define the programs goals. Stauss and the faculty decided that the goals of the program should include "developing interest and intellectual skills for Indian and non-Indian students toward interpretation and appreciation of Indian life" (Office of Indian Programs 1978, 53). This theme of teaching everyone an "appreciation of Indian life" is central to the University's land grant mandate of "teaching, research, and service involving Indian Tribes and Indian peoples in Arizona" (Stauss, Fox and Lowe 2002, 84).

With the AIS program working towards Indian education for all to fulfill the land grant mission, the faculty also decided on another goal that would help American Indian students in their future employment endeavors, and to help train people in highbrow positions who would be educated in Indian issues. The group of faculty decided that an equal focus of the program should be in training leaders in American Indian issues. "Indian leadership training is foremost in the minds of Program participants. With this purpose in mind, the Program is concerned with the development of an intellectual discipline relevant to both Indians and non-Indians" (Office of Indian Programs 1978, 54). This idea of training leaders was not a new one, groups such as the Society of American Indians, formed in the early 1900s, was also keen to have prominent leaders educated in Indian issues.

Stauss's early leadership undoubtedly gave a much needed focus and direction to the program. He worked as chair to unify the group of faculty, bringing together ideas to a central goal. His influence in the program continued. Although the arrival of Vine Deloria, Jr. to the Political Science department took AIS into the graduate realm (at the time Stauss was chair, AIS was only offering undergraduate courses), Stauss remained in the picture working on behalf of AIS until he once again became the program head in 1992.

### **Deloria's leadership**

As AIS was trying to increase their American Indian scholars on campus, Vine Deloria, Jr. was hired into the political science department. Already affiliated with AIS, Deloria became its first director in 1978. However, Deloria's vision was somewhat different from Stauss's. Deloria wanted to concentrate the programs efforts on graduate students, stating that Indian Nations need American Indian graduate students, who have a

strong basis of federal Indian law. In following his vision, Deloria applied for a Ford Foundation grant to start an M.A degree in American Indian Policy. By 1979 the first students were following Deloria's dreams. While it would take a few more years to see Deloria's vision bridge the gap into the AIS program, his vision would bring about the incorporation of the AIS M.A. degree.

Deloria served as director of the program until 1981 when Robert K. Thomas took over. Deloria and Thomas had opposing opinions on what the content base of the AIS M.A. should be. Deloria explains in his own words below:

We did not solve one of the basic questions that all Ethnic Studies programs must consider. Was the content of the program to be about the minority community or about the relationship that the community had experienced with the American political system and American society? Robert K. Thomas, our beloved elder, believed that we could provide enough substance about the reality of Indian communal life so that students would get a taste of who Indians really were. I did not think this was possible. In my view, we would be on very thin ice if we purported to teach what I regarded as the cultural context of Indian life. My preference was to concentrate on the history of the relationship Indians had with the federal government on the grounds that students would be holding policy-making positions in tribal governments and would need to know the basic outline of the development of federal Indian policy and programs. Bob and I and later professors never quarreled about this division, and each of us taught courses that we believed represented our point of view, allowing the students to decide by enrollment which philosophy they wanted to follow. I must admit that Bob Thomas had a much closer relationship with the students than I did. However, I think my students wrote much more sophisticated theses than Bob's students (Deloria 1999,157).

The clash of ideas regarding course content and program focus above highlights the different philosophies of Stauss and Deloria as leaders of the program; Stauss wanting to educate everyone on Indian issues, and Deloria wanting to train American Indian students to go back and work for Native Nations. The debate as to what to focus graduate studies on

is ongoing, as new faculty members join the AIS program and bring new subject areas to the table.

### **The Approval of the M.A. & Ph.D.**

Although the history of AIS is rich and long, the AIS program as we know it today is a relatively young program of study. Since the establishment of the interdisciplinary Masters degree in 1982, as the first of its kind in North America, the field has grown from strength to strength, developing into the world renowned interdisciplinary program of study it is today. Today the program has a Ph.D. minor, which was approved in 1984, the same year that the American Indian Alumni Group was established, along with a Ph.D., which was approved in 1997. AIS has kept its ties with the wider campus community, therefore staying true to the original program missions.

The program carried on growing slowly for ten years after the M.A. degree was established. Robert Thomas had left the director position in 1987 and Emory Sekaquaptewa stepped into the role as interim director. Ofelia Zepeda, a well-known poet and linguist, became the program director in 1988. Ten years after the M.A. had been going strong, AIS performed an Academic Program review. This review was the first one carried out in the program. It led to a further boost in faculty lines, operations budget, office space, and perhaps most importantly, led to the appointing of the programs first full time director, Jay Stauss.



## AIS 40 years on

The program's mission statement and core values today are as follows:

**“American Indian Studies seeks** to develop a strong understanding of the languages, cultures, and sovereignty of American Indians/Alaska Natives, which honors our ancestors and their wisdom.”

**“American Indian Studies maintains** productive scholarship, teaching, research, and community development; and provides unique opportunities for students and scholars to explore issues from American Indian perspectives which place the land, its history and the people at the center.”

**“American Indian Studies promotes** Indian self-determination, self-governance, and strong leadership as defined by Indian nations, tribes, and communities, all of which originated from the enduring beliefs and philosophies of our ancestors.”

As we compare this mission statement to the philosophies of Stauss we can see that the first part is comparable with Stauss's vision of Indian education for all. Comparing the above to Deloria's vision (of wanting to train American Indian graduate students who can go back to Native Nations to work and put federal Indian law into the center of the graduate program), although his ideas of entering into the graduate realm have been realized, there is no part that follows his ideas of training political leaders to go back home. That being said, the concentrations and courses students take show a different picture of what students learn while in the program.

Today in AIS, current Ph.D. students have a choice of four concentrations areas; Societies and Cultures (SC), American Indian Law and Policy (AILP), American Indian Education (AIE), and American Indian Literatures (AIL) (AIS 2009). Three of these four distinct concentrations are self-explanatory and can be found mirroring department on campus, for example, AILP and the College of Law, AIE and the College of Education, AIL and the Department of English. The fourth, SC, can best be described as anthropology,

giving students class offerings on varying aspects of each Native Nation's unique culture. That is to say, these three concentration areas most commonly hold cross-listed classes in AIS and the departments listed above.

The classes taken while in AIS are open to all graduate students, whether they are M.A., or Ph.D. students. The differences occur in the concentration areas students study when they reach the Ph.D. stage. M.A. students are required to complete seven core courses and three electives which cover four concentration areas; SC, AILP, AIE and AIL. For the M.A. students, four of these core courses are pre-determined courses. MA students have to take an internship course as well as pre-determined courses in research methodology, and a course each from the concentrations of SC (AIS 502) and AILP (AIS 584).

AIS 502, "Dynamics of Indian Societies" is a "Historic overview of philosophies, institutions, and characteristics of Indian societies, and indigenous constructions of historic knowledge" (Course catalogue). AIS 584, "Development of Federal Indian Policy" covers "European colonial precedents through the treaty-making period; federal policy from treaty-making to the present" (Course catalogue). Together, both of these courses make a foundation from which students can base the rest of their studies. This choice, to have fixed classes in SC and AILP could be interpreted as the results of both Stauss's and Delorias's visions; Stauss wanting to educate everyone on Indian issues, and Deloria wanting to train American Indian students in AILP to go back and work for Native Nations.

In comparison, the Ph.D. students only have to take two predetermined classes, a college teaching class and an interdisciplinary theories class. The rest of their classes are made up from the four concentration areas, but are not pre-determined. This would make

it easier for the Ph.D. students to tailor their own program of study to include their own areas of interest.

In 2009, as AIS enters a new era and has already entered its 40<sup>th</sup> year as a program, reflections are being made on the origins of AIS. Many people credit Vine Deloria Jr. as the creator of the AIS Program at the UA. However, ten years before the arrival of Deloria at the UA, Edward Dozier began the funding process to set up the program, becoming the catalyst for generating faculty lines which are still in use today. Almost 40 years has passed since Dozier became the first AIS chair in 1970. With the creation of the MA program in 1982, the Ph.D. minor in 1984 and the Ph.D. in 1997, AIS has seen many changes since its conception in the 1970s. 11 program heads and 259 graduates later, AIS has evolved into one of the leading Indian studies programs in North America.

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