

## **Native Eyes Project faq**

### ***What is the Native Eyes Project?***

The Native Eyes Project is a curriculum development initiative at the Institute of American Indian Arts. The new course sequence, known as Indigenous Perspectives on Knowledge and Culture, will incorporate social, cultural and intellectual contributions of Indigenous peoples into mainstream teaching in the Humanities, Sciences and Social Sciences. All teaching materials will be taught online and will be innovative in both content and format. While Indigenous Perspectives courses will pay special attention to needs and interests of the broader Native American community, they will also have a major outreach to people of all races and cultures.

### ***How many courses are currently available?***

Two one-semester courses are currently being offered online: "Indigenous Perspectives: Concepts of Humor" and "Indigenous Perspectives: Concepts of Knowledge". It is hoped that two additional courses, "Concepts of Nature" and "Concepts of Culture" will be approved for offer in 2006. Subject to funding and accreditation approval, IAIA also hopes to offer an Associate Degree (that is, 63 credits) entirely online within the next few years, and eventually a full four year Bachelor's Degree in Indigenous Studies.

### ***How can I learn more about existing Native Eyes courses?***

If you click on the Tour Courses button, you can take a guided tour through some of the course materials. Also, a descriptive overview of the Indigenous Perspectives courses was published in the online student newspaper IAIA Chronicle.

<http://www.iaiachronicle.org/archives/nativeeyes.html>

You are also welcome to write Wade Chambers (nine\_bear@yahoo.com) for more information about the Project.

### ***How does the new curriculum differ from other native studies courses?***

Native Eyes courses do not attempt to teach systematic surveys of the many tribal histories and cultures. Instead, they explore a range of issues central to the social, political and cultural progress of native peoples. They offer a new answer to the question: what is the best college-level, general education for Native American students? They are also ideal for non-Native students wishing to learn more about indigenous cultures around the world.

A range of indigenous methodologies for structuring knowledge and for knowledge preservation and transmission will be reevaluated in order to throw light on how native peoples view the world and how other cultures understand and mis-understand indigenous perspectives. Oral narratives, material culture, and visual thinking will be integrated with more traditional approaches to learning. New partnerships with the Peabody-Essex Museum (which houses one of the earliest and largest collections of indigenous material culture) and the IAIA Museum (which holds a remarkable collection of contemporary American Indian Art) have been set up to expedite these objectives.

The teaching materials are also set apart from standard American Indian Studies courses in that the visual and performative arts (the traditional strength of IAIA teaching) will be used as a springboard to investigate a variety of native issues. For example, issues of land rights, biodiversity, culture and development, governance and intellectual property may be clarified by treating painting, maps, medical ritual, song, story and dance as knowledge

texts. Finally, the viewpoint will be globally indigenous rather than simply North American in perspective. At the same time, the methods of teaching and approaches to the material will be aligned with the traditional aims of American Indian education, including mentoring, reciprocity, commitment to community service, and a respect for individual, cultural and ecological diversity.

### ***Who is on the Native Eyes Course Development Team?***

The Director of the Native Eyes Project is **Dr. Wade Chambers** Cherokee ancestry, (PhD, Harvard, History of Science), who conceived and drafted the initial proposal. While working in Australia, Dr. Chambers wrote and edited a national award winning series of textbooks, comparing Western and Indigenous Knowledge Systems. He also designed one of the world's first fully online degree programs. Other members of the original Course Team include **Dr. Nancy Marie Mithlo** Chiricahua Apache, (PhD, Stanford Anthropology); **Dr. Dave Warren** Santa Clara Pueblo, (PhD, University of New Mexico, History); and **Dr. Laurie Whitt** Mississippi Choctaw ancestry, (PhD, University of Western Ontario, Philosophy). Other contributors to the project include **LaDonna Harris** Comanche, Director of Americans for Indian Opportunity, **Dr. Greg Cajete** Santa Clara Pueblo, (PhD, UNM, Education), **Dr. David Turnbull** (PhD, University of Melbourne, Cultural Studies of Science) and **Gabriel Lopez-Shaw** (Kuyuitcutta) artist and web designer. The "Native Eyes" project will continue to utilize the expertise of the **IAIA community** and will draw on consultants from many disciplines and from Native American scholars and professionals and tribal leaders across the country.