The Liberal Arts Program presents

History Lecture

“Bringing the Old Ways Back to Life: Arikara Language and Cultural Revival by Members of the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation, North Dakota”

Loren Yellow Bird

24 April 2013
12-1 pm
LH 238

ABSTRACT INFO:

{TatanuuNlixtaahnaawaaRlii’It noohunaacituu’u’ niiniisuuxUhuunaawaanu sahnis acitaanu. Taku’tiwekaneenuhneswaawiisu’. Cituu’u’nuuwenaaNltaana’iWA niiniisuxteswaaWIsu.}

“We had sacred ways—all the rituals that the Arikara tribe used to perform. Now no one knows those ways. Now dust has covered all the old traditions.” (Ella P. Waters or Yellow Bird Woman in Parks 1991, vol.4.)

This lecture examines (1) Arikara culture change in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, (2) the stresses of assimilation experienced by the tribe that resulted from a near total loss of language, history and cultural practice, and (3) the processes of cultural recovery and revitalization. It is important to recognize that not all traditional knowledge was totally forgotten. What survived became the seeds of contemporary culture and language revival. Key to understanding this recovery is an illumination of traditional Arikara values and belief, which are summarized to demonstrate how they are being re-discovered by a new generation. Specifically, I will discuss the three things that keep the Arikara people “right” and are central to cultural revitalization and how we as a people implemented them or if they are being followed in a new intuitive way: “Corn, the office of the Chief and the secrets that were revealed in the medicine lodge. These three things you must preserve always. Never let them die.” (Curtis 1905 (vol. 5)

BIO: Loren Yellow Bird is a member of the Sahniish (Arikara) nation. He is a traditional Arikara singer and historian who works as an American Indian cultural interpreter at Fort Union Trading Post National Park, North Dakota. He has published in the Wicazo Sa Review, the Journal of Shamanism, and the Plains Anthropological Journal, and was featured on the PBS film, “Lewis and Clark Pathways” and the History Channel’s “The Taming of the West.” He also received the 2005 and 2007 “Arikara Young Warrior Award,” which honors tribal members who continue to promote, honor, and reflect a positive image of the tribe.

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