

HSU ANTHROPOLOGY NEWSLETTER

Volume I, Number 1 — October 2008

• Introducing the Newsletter

This is the first issue of the departmental Newsletter of Humboldt State University's Anthropology Department. It will appear three times during the academic year, in October, January, and April. In addition to news and announcements, issues will contain longer articles contributed by students and faculty. Interviews, book reviews, letters from distant places, are all welcome. Submissions should be sent to the Editor, Victor Golla (golla@humboldt.edu).

• Departmental Announcements

—All Anthropology majors should plan to attend a **departmental group advising session** in BSS 166 at 4:00 pm, Friday, October 24. This group meeting will replace the routine appointment with their faculty advisor that majors have been required to make each semester to get their registration codes and learn the date/time they can register. All advisors will attend the group session and will be available for individual consultation after the general presentation and discussion. Pizza will be served.

—**Dr. Mary Scoggin** is being evaluated for promotion to Professor this fall. You are invited to offer testimony in a letter, addressed to Llyn Smith, Chair of the Personnel Committee, Department of Anthropology by Friday October 24. Please deliver your letter to the Anthropology Department, BSS 518.

• New, Special, and Infrequently Taught Courses, Spring '09

ANTH 306.1: *Cultures of Alaska* (3). Curious about the far north? This course will introduce students to the diversity of Native cultures across Alaska through an exploration of Alaska Native history, politics, economies, arts, traditional knowledge and belief systems. MWF 9:00-9:50 am. Alexis Bunten.

ANTH 306.3: *Peoples of Africa* (3). This course explores the diversity and richness of the peoples and cultures of Africa. It provides a deep understanding of stereotypes and misrepresentations of the continent through history, politics, religion, art, music and customs. MW 3:30-4:50 pm. Hermine Amoussou.

ANTH 339.2: *Paleoanthropology* (4). This course explores the evolution of the human lineage. We will use human fossils, artifacts and evolutionary principles to interpret our ancestors' ecology, diet, anatomy, locomotion and social behavior. Assignments include debates about human origins, cultural history and human nature. TTh 9:30-10:50 am. Mary Glenn.

ANTH 359.1: *North American Archaeology* (4). Survey of the archaeology of North America from initial colonization through European contact and colonialism. Reviews the archaeology of most major regions of North America and examines ethical issues in North American archaeology and prospects for employment in the field. TTh 11:00 am-12:20 pm. Todd Braje.

ANTH 359.2: *Cultural Resource Management* (4). Introduces the practice of cultural resource management in the US; historical and legal background, federal, state and local programs. We will discuss laws that protect and govern Native American cultural resources and archaeology. TTh 2:00-3:20 pm. Jonathan Damp.

ANTH 379: *Anthropology of Tourism* (4). As one of the fastest growing industries worldwide, tourism is the main means of cross-cultural interface. Drawing from case studies from around the world, this course explores the meaning of tourism from an anthropological perspective. Topics include tourist motivations, the construction of a destination, cultural representation, and the political, economic, and cultural impacts of tourism on host cultures and communities. MWF 1:00-1:50 pm. Alexis Bunten.

ANTH 390.2: *Chinese Cultural Heritage* (4). This course examines what is meant by Chinese cultural heritage through the study of cultural institutions. Using classic literary works (*Journey to the West*, *Dream of the Red Chamber*, *Three Kingdoms*) as a lens, we will examine family, politics, religious systems, ritual and artistic practices. TTh 12:30-1:50 pm. Mary Scoggin.

ANTH 485.2: *Coastal Archaeology Field Trip* (1). Students will visit several shell midden and village sites in Humboldt county, discuss the history of maritime adaptations in NW California site formation processes, coastal geomorphology, and preservation and protection of cultural resources. Students interested in attending a summer field school are encouraged to enroll. Friday, April 10, 5:00 to 8:00 pm and Sat. April 11, 9:00 am-5:00 pm. Todd Braje.

ANTH 485.3: *Activism and Conservation* (1). This one-unit seminar considers conservation with an emphasis on activism. Topics include human impacts, biodiversity and biogeography, conservation education, and conservation strategies/management plans. Many interesting local and international guest speakers. Friday, Feb. 6, 4:00-7:00 pm and Saturday, Feb. 7, 9:00 am to 4:00 pm. Mary Glenn and speakers.

• Primate Talks

This fall and spring, the HSU Chapter of the Northwest Primate Conservation Society will host a series of talks by well-known primatologists and conservationists on the latest research surrounding our closest animal relatives. The first talk in the series will be by **Nicholas Malone**, who will speak on "Conservation: Politics, Primates, and Anthropology" on Wednesday, November 19 at 4:00 pm in the Green and Gold Room, Founder's Hall. Dr. Malone has carried out field research in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and his interests include environmental conservation, ecological communities, Bonobos, and the relationship between humans and their environment. For further information on this series, contact Rebekah Dickens (rss18@humboldt.edu).

• Summer Primate Field Program

The 20 students who participated in HSU's field study program last summer at La Selva Biological Field Station in Costa Rica gained unique hands-on experience in field primatology and conservation. Their 16 days at La Selva (located in Puerto Viejo de Sarapiquí, a world-renowned ecotourism destination in the northeast of the country) were preceded by 3 weeks of intensive coursework at HSU. Students earned 12 units of credit for the five-week program, which began on May 26 and concluded on July 2. The instructors were Mary Glenn and Marissa Ramsier.



Kat Fountain in La Selva, June 2008

The program is rigorous, both physically and academically. Although the focus is on New World primate behavior, ecology and conservation, and primatology field techniques, students are expected to learn about Costa Rican culture and about current issues affecting Costa Ricans and their flora and fauna. All lectures are mandatory, and students spend many hours in the rainforest and at the Sequoia Park Zoo conducting their own primate observation research projects.

Applications are already being accepted for the 22 places in the 2009 program, which will begin on May 26 and end on July 1. Interested students should visit the program's webpage (www.humboldt.edu/~anthro/programs.html). The deadline for applications is January 28.

• **Meet Our New Faculty: Alexis Bunten**

(On a sunny Sunday afternoon a couple of weeks ago Alexis Bunten, our new applied anthropologist, invited us over to her place for coffee, cookies, and a get-to-know-you chat. She lives in Eureka, off Harris, in a two-story frame duplex that has been minimally remodeled into a single-family residence. The atmosphere is more graduate-student than faculty—a way-station she's renting while she waits for the mortgage market to sort itself out. Adding to the bohemian ambiance was the clatter and squeal of five Chihuahua puppies chasing their tiny, exhausted dame. Leaving Alexis' mom—down from Seattle for a couple of weeks—to puppy-sit the squirming brood, we retreated to the relative quiet of what had been the upstairs unit for our interview.)

Where did you grow up?

Seattle, with summers and holiday breaks in Alaska. I'm a Native Alaskan living in the diaspora.

What is your tribal affiliation?

In Alaska we have Native-owned corporations, not tribes. I'm a shareholder in the Paug-Vik Village Corporation in Naknek, in southwestern Alaska, where my mom's family came from, and in the Bristol Bay Native Regional Corporation. My family's ethnic heritage is Aleut.

What is a Native Regional Corporation?

In 1972, when the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) went into effect, Native Alaskans were given the choice of belonging to one of a dozen Regional Corporations. The stock you own in your Regional Corporation gives you ownership rights over some of the land and resources in that area. It's kind of like being a member of a large tribe, although it's not a very efficient way of keeping track of your Native identity. The match with traditional language and ethnicity is better with some groups than with others—the NANA Corporation on the North Slope, for instance, is almost exclusively made up of Inupiat Eskimos.

Real identity remains very local. A couple of generations ago most Native Alaskans lived in one of the 250 or so Native villages that dot the state, and although many of these are now organized as Village Corporations within the 12 Regional Corporations, the BIA still considers them to be our "tribal entities." As I said, my mom's family comes from the village of Naknek. But other relatives come from a village on the Kuskokwim River, and I've got

yet other relatives in Anchorage and Sitka. Aleut families such as my own are found all over the place.

Why is this?

The Russians employed a lot of Aleut people as fur-seal hunters and moved them around. There is an especially large Aleut community in Sitka, the old Russian capital. A number of Aleuts are shareholders in the Sealaska Corporation, which people usually think of as the "Tlingit" regional corporation. When I went to Sitka to gather data for my dissertation, one of the first things I did was find out who I was related to there.



Prof. Alexis Bunten

Where did you go to high school?

In Seattle. First to my neighborhood high school, then to Lakeside, a highly regarded private school.

You went to Dartmouth College, where you graduated in 1999. What attracted you there?

What I mainly wanted was something as radically different from Seattle as possible, and I only applied to colleges on the East Coast. Maybe this attraction to distant, exotic places was the anthropologist in me starting to come out! I chose Dartmouth largely because of what I had heard about its Native American support network, and I'm glad I did. My experience there was pretty good.

Dartmouth has a long history of "educating the Indians" that goes all the way back to the 18th century, doesn't it?

That's right, Eleazar Wheelock, the founder, intended it to be a school for the Indians of what was then a fairly remote part of New England. Although it ended up being an Ivy League college dedicated to educating elite families, it managed to hold on to some of its original mission, and this commitment was considerably expanded during the years of the Civil Rights movement. It's a very Native-friendly place.

Dartmouth is where Sergei Kan teaches, an authority on Tlingit culture. Was it he who got you into anthropology?

No. I took courses in anthropology, but my major was art history. In fact, what I really wanted to do was just plain *art*—studio art. I almost had enough credits for a (studio) art minor, but they wouldn't let me transfer some digital art classes I'd taken in California. So I graduated with an art history degree, with special emphasis on Native North America. But, anyway, by that time I had come to realize that I didn't really want to struggle in the workforce as an artist or art entrepreneur.

Sergei Kan has been an amazingly supportive mentor for me since I first began taking his classes and seeking his mentorship as a sophomore. He was on my undergraduate honors thesis committee

as well as my doctoral committee, and we're now collaborating on a publication he is editing. So, although he didn't get me interested in anthropology, he has been a major influence and support.

So when did you decide to do graduate work in anthropology?

After Dartmouth I lived for a while in Alaska—in Juneau, where I worked for the Sealaska Heritage Institute, and then Anchorage, where I worked as the Programs Supervisor for the then newly established Alaska Native Heritage Center. I loved those jobs! What finally got me thinking about anthropology were some interesting connections I began to notice between art products and Native identity.

Such as what?

It seemed to me that it might be worth while studying “tourist art” on its own terms instead of always disparaging it as “fake” and decontextualized. This dismissive view seemed to conflict with the frequency with which such “kitsch” was turning up in the living rooms of native people. The inauthentic “commodities” that had been created to sell to ignorant tourists were being consumed by the very people who ought to have had the clearest idea of their inauthenticity. Somehow, the inauthenticity of tourist art was being transformed into the secondary authenticity of “anti-commodities.” I made this the focus of my M.A. thesis, for which I collected the data back in Alaska.

For my Ph.D. I decided to carry out a more general study of the phenomenon, less narrowly focused on material culture. Basically I asked, “How and why do people commodify their identities?” My approach was to see this in the light of the “self-branding” that pervades our media-saturated culture. People such as Oprah, “The Donald” Trump, and Paris Hilton seem to consist of nothing but layer after layer of constructed inauthenticity. They put themselves up for sale. Might not members of native communities similarly construct public identities out of commodified projections of their cultural “brand”? Could they be putting aspects of themselves, including some of their most important personal and political beliefs, up for sale to the tourist trade? The positive outcome would be a certain degree of economic success: they could make money out of being themselves. The flip side, however, is that you end up playing to what the consumers want, which is ultimately derived from media stereotypes. It comes down to the question: How do you sell yourself without selling out?

I've gotten very interested in the concept of “emotional labor” that the sociologist Arlie Hochschild has developed. In her book *The Managed Heart* she describes how flight attendants, for example, are expected to conjure up genuine feelings of concern for the people they serve, like method actors, instead of merely smiling and being helpful. Native people are more and more playing such roles in the commodification of their identities.

For my M.A. and Ph.D. I carried out my research in southeastern Alaska. Last year, when I had a postdoc at Berkeley, I made a comparison study of the Maori in New Zealand. I'm interested in extending the study now to Southeast Asia or China. The commodification of indigenous identity in China, where the state plays so important a role, especially interests me.

Are there many other anthropologists interested in this kind of research?

Not too many, and I'm trying to get to know all of them! I recently assembled 15 scholars doing important work in this area for a symposium on Worldwide Indigenous Tourism. The rest, I'll be seeing at a similar session I organized for the Association of Social Anthropologists titled, “Selling Culture Without Selling Out: Producing New Indigenous Tourisms.”

Do you consider yourself an “indigenous anthropologist” or just an anthropologist who happens to have ties to an indigenous community?

That's an interesting question! Last year the AAA started a new section, called the Association of Indigenous Anthropologists, and I'm certainly part of this group. But I don't think I would say that “I am” an anthropologist, indigenous or otherwise, at the expense of any other identity category. I don't put my career before everything else. I compartmentalize my life. When I'm at school or in the field doing anthropology things I'm the anthropologist Alexis, but when I'm at home doing domestic things I'm the domestic Alexis.

Also, I've got to say, I have problems both with the term “indigenous,” which has political and social implications that I'm not fully comfortable with, and the term “anthropologist,” which can have some unattractive meanings for native people. We had a long debate about what we were going to call the AAA section, and to my mind it's not completely resolved.

I'm going to be thinking and writing about these questions a good deal in the coming years. For now, I guess the best answer to your question is that I consider myself a Native Alaskan who does a lot of different things.

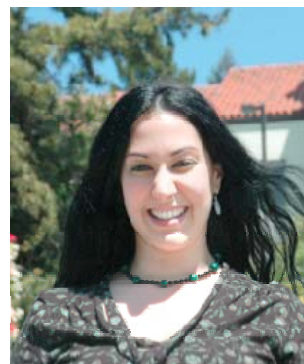
Do you speak an Alaskan language?

No. But this is a more complex matter than you might think for people of Aleut origin. Many families switched to Russian in the 19th century, and then they resettled in areas where other Native languages were dominant—Yup'ik at Bristol Bay, for example, or Tlingit at Sitka. From that perspective I guess my heritage language should be Yup'ik, but I've never had the chance to learn it.

Actually, the indigenous language that I've had the most contact with is Native Hawaiian. I lived in Hawaii for a couple of years when I was little, while my mom was getting her Master's degree. Hawaiian was formally taught in the school, and I used both Hawaiian and Pidgin with the other kids. I thought I'd forgotten most of it, but when I was in New Zealand recently I found Maori—which is close to Hawaiian—very easy to pick up. Hawaiian must have stuck in my head somewhere.

—Interview conducted and edited by Victor Golla

*(Interviews with **Todd Braje** and **Jonathan Damp** will appear in the Winter and Spring issues.)*



Rani Ram

• **Student accomplishments**

Anthropology major **Rani Ram** recently received a William Randolph Hearst/CSU Trustees Award for Outstanding Achievement (<http://now.humboldt.edu>, Sept. 16). The \$3,000 award assists financially distressed students who combine superior academic performance with out-standing volunteer community service, in particular those who have achieved success in spite of severe personal hardship.

Rani is active in the Global Connections Club, which sponsors HSU's annual International Education Week. During this year's IEW (Nov. 17 to 20) she will give a presentation on her experiences last summer in Costa Rica with the Primate Field Program [see page 1], and will model Indian clothing in a fashion show.

In addition to anthropology Rani double majors in wildlife conservation. In 2006 she took a month-long course in ethology and wildlife population management at South Africa's Kruger National Park, earning a certification from the Field Guide Association of South Africa that qualifies her to guide tours in the park.

• **Review: *Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull***

Since much attention has been paid to the inaccuracies of the film *Apocalypto* and other mainstream representations of Native Americans, a harsh critique of the new Indiana Jones film may not be warranted. We know that *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom* verged on stereotypical and prejudiced depictions of Indian peoples, and that Biblical powers trumped all in the first and third editions. The effect was entertainment value and welcome boosts to archaeology student enrollment. However, the fourth installment probably deserves a word or two.

A major gripe for us Mesoamericanists is that "the end of the world," "the Maya collapse," "2012," and "alien intervention" as mainstream concepts, have inserted themselves into American and world consciousness. We have tried, to a certain extent, considering that media hype only will increase as 2012 approaches, to quash the growing fixation on the next and newest, perhaps more "spiritual," end-of-the-world phenomenon. *Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull* does nothing to aid this endeavor.

Native American cultures are depicted via a mélange of culture traits and artistic traditions. Invoking Mayan languages and Classic period Central Mexican and Maya mural and sculptural characteristics, the film introduces the viewer to a mix of Native American artistic motifs to produce an authentic ambience. The most serious issue, however, is that these elements are used to depict indigenous style, and physical traits are exaggerated in order to demonstrate extraterrestrial influence. The primary message of the film is that space aliens allowed for "civilization" to occur in the Americas (Indy says as much). The depiction in the film of natives as insane spear-handlers, Mesoamerican pyramids in South America, and ultimately Maya and Teotihuacan-style thrones for alien skeletons tends to perpetuate already biased and inaccurate perceptions of Native American groups from North and South America. Once again, we see Native Americans portrayed as violent aggressors against the heroes of the film, a film based on the premise of crystal skulls being attributed to space or interdimensional aliens that graced indigenous peoples with social complexity. Quite clearly these groups have no power or resources to produce a popular image of themselves on the scale of Indiana Jones. Is there a problem with this kind of exploitation?

Generally speaking, instead of achieving more accuracy and more humanistic portrayals of indigenous peoples and representations of their ancestors, mainstream film and television appear hellbent on moving images of native peoples into a more savage and violent light. Many twentieth century depictions of indigenous people are actually less violent and biased than those produced today. Aside from more ridiculous depictions of indigenous peoples in *Apocalypto*, abstractly in *King Kong*, and of course, in the present film, a more dangerous realm is that of the half-hour or hour-long television program that seeks to produce more dramatic depictions of archaeological cultures for the sake of public consumption. The apparent problem for producers: the real stories are simply not interesting enough, so they are distorted and pushed into more extreme realities than archaeologists report. The result is shows like *Bone Detectives* that align indigenous practices with Western notions of the New World peoples, for example, bloodthirsty decapitators or sacrificers of virgins, and even mass murderers. In the most recent iteration on Maya caves, the host, Scotty Moore, is practically mocked by resident archaeologists in Belize because he attempts to place his own uninformed plot on previously unseen

and unanalyzed data. The problem is that some concepts of sacrifice are removed from their historical and cultural contexts, and all we are left with are flash images that relate native peoples to violence and apparently irrational behavior.

I suggest that we, as archaeologists, bring our own filmmakers into the field: filmmakers who are schooled in the art of ethnographic film, and who are prepared to record the happenings of the excavation, but also the social relationships that archaeologists actually have with indigenous communities. These stories are more interesting than any preconceived notion of "virgin sacrifice" or "societal collapse." With the growing thirst for reality in television and websites such as Youtube.com, there may be an opening for such films if they are edited and formatted in a way that can be downloaded on the Internet. In any case, it is time for archaeologists to stand up to the mass media through self-produced films or organized critical bodies. Mass-produced and inaccurate television garbage should no longer be allowed to masquerade as "science," "discovery," "learning," or archaeological fact.

—Zach Hruby, Research Associate

• **Anthropology Department Directory**

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Humboldt State University
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Photo credits: A Howler Monkey, one of the three monkey species at La Selva Field Station, Costa Rica (masthead), courtesy of Kat Fountain. Students in Costa Rica, courtesy of Kat Fountain. Alexis Bunten, courtesy of Alexis Bunten. Rani Ram, courtesy of *Humboldt Now*.

HSU Department of Anthropology Alumni Survey

Date _____

Name _____ Year graduated _____

Name when enrolled at HSU (if different) _____

Current address _____

City State Zip

Employer _____

Title and nature of job _____

Date employed _____ Phone () _____ () _____
Home Work

Previous jobs _____

Spouse/Partner name: _____ Did spouse/partner attend HSU? _____

Spouse/Partner occupation _____

Children? Names and ages _____

Civil, social, honorary and other activities _____

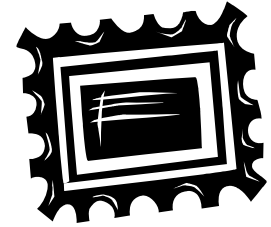
Professional or other awards or honors _____

Travel, hobbies, projects and work in progress _____

E-mail address _____

Additional comments _____

**Please return A.S.A.P to:
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Humboldt State University
Arcata, CA 95521 - (OR) fax (707) 826-4418**



Graduate's Name
Address
City State, Zip

This Fall



**Ring!
Ring!!**

Is that your phone?

Remember that you can designate your Humboldt Loyalty Fund donation specifically for Anthropology.

Many companies will match your gift, or even double it. Contact the Human Resources or Employee Benefits Office at your company to discover if they offer a matching gift program. Send the completed form to: Office of University Advancement, Humboldt State University

Stay Connected

It was great to hear from those who returned our Alumni Surveys. Whether it's been months or decades since you were last on campus, won't you share your news for our future newsletters? Current and prospective students are asking what you have done with your degree. Please go to www.humboldt.edu/~anthro/contact.html and look for the link to: Alumni Survey. Just fill it out and send it back.

If you are in the area, call and visit a class and answer current students' questions.