American Indian Studies master's cohort students present research at national conference

American Indian Studies faculty and master's cohort students presented their research at the 55th annual meeting of the Western Social Sciences Association Conference that was recently held in Denver.

ASU American Indian Studies faculty members Professor Leo Killsback (Northern Cheyenne) and Faculty Associate Cheryl Bennett (Navajo/Comanche) coordinated the American Indian Studies section of the event.

“I encouraged graduate students enrolled in my Research Methods course at ASU to submit and present research papers at this meeting. The conference is an opportunity for future American Indian Studies scholars to share their research, network with experts in the field and promote the discipline, especially graduate degrees in American Indian Studies,” Killsback said.

He chaired an “American Indian Studies Paradigm and Research” panel that included ASU American Indian Studies master’s students, Naomi Tom (Tohono O’odham and Kaibab-Paiute) who discussed oral histories in relation to the paradigm, Laura Medina (Ojibwe) who presented her research on contextualizing the paradigm through scholarship and Justin Hongeva (Hopi), whose research examined the paradigm’s integration into high school curriculum.

“I conducted an oral history project when I was an undergrad and it is something I continue to work on,” Tom said. “The conference broadened my understanding of the way people talk, write and research American Indian Issues. I left the conference feeling inspired to do more and now I can’t wait to put together a proposal for next year’s conference.”

Presenting at the conference reinforced Medina’s confidence in the cohort’s research work and provided her with an opportunity to network with peers.

“The conference was an awesome opportunity to build a better relationship with my cohort and to see what other American Indian Studies majors are doing. It also made me proud of the AIS program at ASU because it gave me the confidence of knowing we are doing important research,” she said.

Topics that were discussed at the conference included promoting the development of the discipline and scholarship of American Indian Studies. Killsback participated in “Rules for ‘Civilizing’ American Indians and their Reverberations into the Modern Era,” which addressed the assimilation-based policies of the U.S. Bennett presented a chapter of her dissertation titled “Responding to Hate Crimes
and Racism in Farmington, New Mexico."

Another panel, organized by Bennett, was “Diné Decolonization and Indigenous Knowledge Recovery,” which featured ASU American Indian Studies master’s students Eric Hardy (Navajo), who presented information on “Language Recovery and Healing Trauma” and Waquin Preston (Navajo), whose research focused on “Decolonizing Navajo Education: Intersection of Assimilation and Contemporary Navajo Education.”

“The conference was a success and our ASU AIS graduate students fully embraced the opportunity to present their research to a national audience and, more importantly, engage in networking and develop as professionals of the academy,” Killsback said.

Julie Newberg, julie.newberg@asu.edu
Media Relations