

IAIA ALUMNI

IAIA Alumni Relations Office
83 Avan Nu Po Rd
Santa Fe, NM 87508

IAIA

INSTITUTE OF
AMERICAN INDIAN ARTS

IAIA ALUMNI

Q+A WITH IAIA ALUMNI

with Christine Trudeau & Dylan McLaughlin

GOOD HANDED

with Karita Coffey





IAIA ALUMNI

FALL 2015

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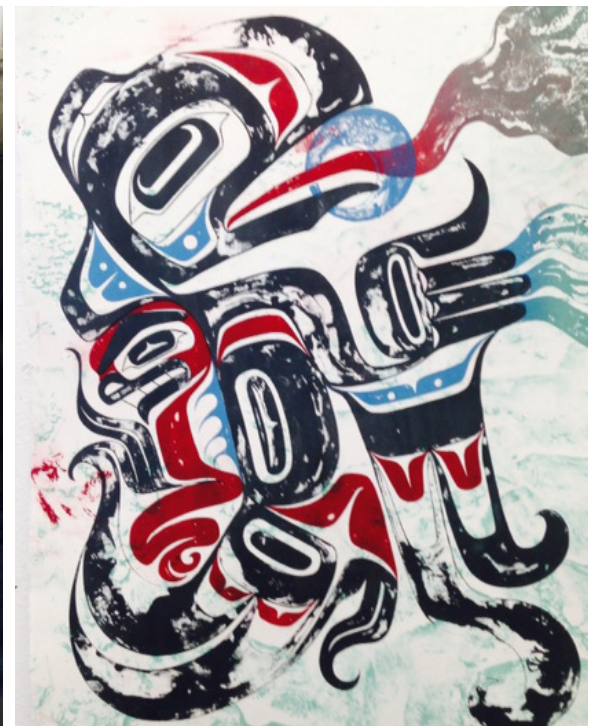
Editor
Chee Brossy '12 Dine'

Design
Digital Navajo

Send address changes to:
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IAIA
83 Avan Nu Po Rd
Santa Fe, NM 87508

ALUMNI ART IN U.S. EMBASSIES

Five IAIA alumni have been chosen to participate in the U.S. State Department's Art in Embassies program. Tony Abeyta '86, Jeff Kahm '92, Courtney Leonard '00, and Dan Namingha '69 each designed prints that will hang in US embassies around the world. In fall of 2015, the State Department will host an opening reception for the artists in Washington. The program has placed art in over 200 venues in 189 countries. According to a statement on the program web site by Secretary of State John Kerry, "Art in Embassies cultivates relationships that transcend boundaries, building trust, mutual respect and understanding among peoples. It is a fulcrum of America's global leadership as we continue to work for freedom, human rights and peace around the world."



ALUMNI NEWS

Joy Harjo '68 (Muscogee Creek) was awarded the Wallace Stevens Award by the Academy of American Poets. Harjo is the first Native American to win the prestigious award.

On September 12, **McKeon Dempsey '12 (Diné)** ended her yearlong run as Miss Navajo Nation in Window Rock, AZ. She used her term as the Navajo ambassador in part to advocate for arts education.

In July, **Jason Begay '96 (Diné)** was elected as President of the Native American Journalists Association. Begay is an assistant professor at the University of Montana's School of Journalism.

Joining Begay on the Native American Journalists Association leadership Board of Directors is **Tristan Ahtone '06 (Kiowa)**, who was elected Treasurer. Ahtone contributes stories to Al Jazeera America.

Monty Little '15 (Diné) was awarded the IAIA Alumni Award at SWAIA Indian Market in August. His painting "Unaccompanied Voices" was recognized by the judges as "pushing boundaries, technically excellent, and conveying a powerful human experience."

John Gritts '68 (Cherokee) received an honorary doctorate from Bacone College in Muskogee, OK. Gritts has been a longtime advocate for Native American education. He has worked for the American Indian College Fund and most recently as a program analyst for the U.S. Department of Education.

In June, **Charlene Teters '86 (Spokane)** accepted the position as Academic Dean at IAIA. Teters served as Interim Academic Dean in 2014-2015. Before serving as Dean, Teters taught studio arts at IAIA.

The Alumni Council is entering the second year of its two-year term and the election for the next Council will be held in August and September of 2016. The inaugural seven-member Alumni Council of President **Karl Duncan '09 (San Carlos Apache/Mandan/Hidatsa/Arikara)**, Vice-President **Nancy Fields '06 (Lumbee)**, **Selina Farmer '98 (Cherokee)**, **George Greendeer '86 (Ho-Chunk)**, **Wayne Nez Gaussoin '09 (Picuris Pueblo/Diné)**, **Ryan Rice '87 (Mohawk)**, and **Terry Snowball '96 (Prairie Band Potawatomi)** have been meeting regularly as the principal liaison of IAIA alumni.

LOOKING AHEAD

December 12, 2015
Holiday Art Market

January 2-9, 2016
IAIA Writer's Festival

March 5, 2016
Alumni Reception at Heard Museum Indian Market

May 7, 2016
Alumni Lunch at IAIA Powwow

May 14, 2016
Commencement

August 19, 2016
Alumni Luncheon at Indian Market

August-September 2016
Alumni Council Election

NATURAL BORN JOURNALIST

JOURNALISM TAKES CHRISTINE TRUDEAU '14 FROM IAIA TO NPR

Christine Trudeau (Prairie Band Potawatomi) is a freelance journalist, producing and writing stories for Native Peoples Magazine, National Native News and the Santa Fe New Mexican. Her most recent position was at National Public Radio in Washington, DC, where she began as an intern and later was hired as staff in the company's diversity department. She has since been accepted to Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism, where she began work on a master's degree in the fall of 2015. Here, the 30-year-old creative writing major talks about mainstream media and what she learned at IAIA.

How has your time at IAIA influenced your current work?

My initial goal when I came to IAIA was to tell stories and study creative writing. Then I realized there was an option to do journalism. I love both news and creative writing—writing is still writing. Story writing is a big part of who I am now, and I was exposed to that at many levels at IAIA. I learned there are different ways of storytelling. At IAIA I was taught to read all kinds of things from novels to short stories to essays. I was able to explore different genres of writing and see the long view of writing as a career.

I studied with Tristan Ahtone [2007 IAIA alum], who was my Journalism 1 professor. He helped me get an internship at KUNM in Albuquerque and that was a big step for me toward a national media platform. KUNM was my introduction to a newsroom—I learned how to write for deadlines and create good working habits for a radio program.

What was your experience like working at NPR?

It was amazing. Growing up I didn't have TV and so I listened to a lot of radio and NPR. To see [NPR radio hosts] Scott Simon and Robert Siegel in the elevator—these voices I had heard so often on the radio—was surreal. At first I was shy and didn't know how to talk to people. NPR has a massive building with so many people working there and such a tremendous history of news. As one of the younger employees, I felt like part of a new voice coming up at NPR and it was exciting.

NPR taught me to become quicker at communicating my ideas because you have such a quick turnaround for the work you do. In journalism it helps to be sharp and concise in communicating—so it's best when you can cut away the excess material.

What was it like being Native American in Washington, DC?

In this mainstream environment you have to be ready to be the only Native person in the room. You have to say, "This is my voice as a Native person and this is what I say." It's scary. It's a lot of work to be the only Native person in a room of non-Native people. But I get a lot of support from my family and my mentors.

What advice do you have for aspiring journalists?

Always ask for help. Make it a habit, even if you're not used to it. You're already ahead of the game if you're asking for help. Find your resources at IAIA. IAIA made journalism possible for me. Opportunities are out there. Be open to talking to people who don't know anything about Native people. It's worth it. It's worth having a voice out there. As a Native person you can cover news in ways non-Natives can't—you have a totally different understanding of story and community. If anything, we're more natural-born journalists than anyone else out there. We really take time to consider all sides to a story, and that doesn't come as readily to other people. That's another good thing about learning journalism at a Native school. 🦋



THE INDEPENDENT FILMMAKER

DYLAN MCLAUGHLIN '11 FINDS HIS CALLING IN FILMMAKING FOR COMMUNITIES

Dylan McLaughlin (Navajo) is an independent filmmaker based in Santa Fe. His most recent film project, documenting indigenous artists for the Switzerland-based Nordamerika Native Museum, has taken him around the world. In 2014, McLaughlin teamed up with fellow alumnus Cannupa Hanska Luger '11 (Mandan/Hidatsa/Arikara) to make *This is a Stereotype*, a short documentary film that explores Native American stereotypes through the eyes of Native Americans. McLaughlin, 26, grew up on the Navajo reservation in Kayenta, Arizona. He recently took time to talk about his work as a filmmaker and his path to IAIA.

What is your personal background?

I grew up on the Navajo reservation. My mother's family is from Prewitt, New Mexico, but I spent the majority of my time in Kayenta. My dad's side is non-Native from Baltimore. I attended a Navajo and English bilingual school in Kayenta until the fifth grade.

We spoke Navajo in class, sang songs and told Navajo stories. It was great, but I got a lot of teasing for my father being Bilagáanaa [Navajo for "white"]. There was this rhyme I would get all the time from other students, "Bilagáanaa bilasáanaa bilikan" ["white people love the taste of apples"]. I spent weekends at my grandmother's house at Blue Water where we had to haul water and raised goats and sheep and so to be called just another white boy was funny and strange to me.

How do you see your identity now?

I was always so immersed in Navajo culture with the bilingual schooling, traditional stories in the winter time, and spending time after school at the Navajo Cultural Center in Kayenta, where I learned to bead and weave. So there's no real separation between what it means to be Navajo and myself.

Santa Fe is like that, too. There's a Native community, but you can also go see mainstream movies and art. I don't have to question my Navajo-ness. I know my clans and I can live however I choose to.

How did you learn about IAIA?

It was a big accident. Up until high school I did really well in school, to the point where I was mocked for it. But by the end of high school I was over school and was more interested in playing music. I wasn't really motivated to do anything academic. It was

an unclear time in my life.

At this point my dad suggested I look into the summer filmmaking program at IAIA. [From 2004 to 2009 IAIA partnered with ABC Television for a summer film workshop.] I liked the idea, so after my senior year of high school I came out to Santa Fe with my things in a duffle bag.

The mentors in the summer workshop were so open to what we wanted to do as students. I could choose my own creative projects and that was liberating because high school wasn't like that. All of a sudden I was in an environment where I could pursue what I wanted to do.

I started collaborating with friends on my films and their films and even started a film club at IAIA. After my sophomore year, I got involved in nonprofit work. I began growing my own food. I was so convinced that I wanted to focus my energy on the sustainable food movement but at the same time I struggled with my film work. I was working for nonprofits, getting my hands dirty and planting things and then I would come back to school and sit in front of a computer—it was jarring. I almost quit school for the sustainability work. But I stuck it out and managed to find a balance. I realized film is also valuable. I realized I don't have to question my time in front of a computer. I was re-motivated and finished the IAIA film program.

What has life been like after IAIA?

When I finished, doors opened for me because of my filmmaking experience and I found jobs doing films for other nonprofits. For the last three years I've been doing contract film work for nonprofit organizations focused on sustainability. I've done videos for nonprofits, art galleries, and museums around the world.

Doing this video work has inspired me to tell stories about real human life and real Native American communities. Initially the narrative form of filmmaking turned me off. I saw some of my classmates at IAIA doing zombie films or other films that to me didn't seem to have a greater place in the world. Then I found these meaningful stories the nonprofits and museums were telling and that's what I want to do now.

What was the inspiration for *This is a Stereotype*?

It came out of an exhibition by Cannupa Luger at the Museum of Contemporary Native Arts. It was a show called "Stereotype" and featured Cannupa's ceramic stereotypes, which he destroyed at the end of the show. The idea was to make racial stereotyping a physical object. The question we had that spurred our thinking was, "Where do stereotypes come from?"

We wanted to create a piece that opened dialogue instead of closing it off. We wanted to communicate honesty and sincerity—not necessarily "truth." In the film, you get contradictory statements from the people we interviewed, but it's relatable. It encourages you to talk about the issue.

What are you working on now? For the last year I've been working with an art museum in Zurich, Switzerland, on a series of artist portraits. I get to travel to where these artists live, spend a few hours with them and then film a glimpse into their worlds. I love telling people's stories. In the future I'd love to take these ideas into Native community storytelling. There are a lot of opportunities there to create meaningful work. 🎥





GOOD HANDED

By Chee Brossy

KARITA COFFEY '65 RETIRES AFTER OVER 25 YEARS OF TEACHING AT IAIA

You know you're on the right track when you can get Karita Coffey to laugh. When she laughs you're let into her world a little at a time, to what she holds dear, to the reasons why she teaches, to why she is an artist. Each laugh opens up a window into what drives her. And you can tell she loves to laugh—her whole face breaks open into a smile when she tells a joke, and sometimes, if you're lucky, she will place her palms to her cheeks in the middle of her laugh and tilt her head just so and she could be 16 again at the old IAIA campus and just starting out on her path to being an artist.

In 1963 when she was 16, Coffey (Comanche) moved from Lawton, Oklahoma, to Santa Fe and attended IAIA when it was still an arts high school. She knew in her first IAIA ceramics class that she wanted to work with clay the rest of her life.

"It was like love at first touch," she says. "I really liked clay. I liked the way it felt. I still like the way it feels."

But the roots for her life as an artist started even earlier. When she was 12, a Comanche elder gave her the name Tsat-Tah Mo-oh Kahn, or Good-Handed.

"You could almost say it was destiny," Coffey says, smiling.

In May 2015, Coffey, who is 68, retired after twenty-five years of teaching at IAIA. She is well known for her excellent classes and rigorous teaching style, always encouraging her students to push the envelope with their art. In 2012, IAIA students voted Coffey Faculty of the Year, and this past spring she received the Honored Educator Award from the renowned art organization SITE Santa Fe.

Coffey says the act of creating is what has always inspired her. "I'm more whole when I'm doing work and making art," she says. "We glow when we're really immersed like that."

In turn, her teaching approach has always been to emphasize the creative process with her students. "I teach students that the point isn't so much the end product but how you feel when you create."

Coffey's own work displays the full range of her skills as a ceramicist, sculptor, and metalsmith. While she admits resisting metal-

work, saying the material is "too hard, too inflexible," Coffey has been incorporating wax-cast metals into her art for years now. Coffey's teaching style mirrors the way she works on her own art. When she pushes her own students to work conceptually, to incorporate metaphors into their work, it's because she strives to do the same.

In some of her recent work, Coffey took on the subject of violence against children and used the iconography of dolls in small-scale works of ceramic, wood, and cast metals. One piece, "Just a Plaything," is a toy, but it's unlike any toy you've ever seen. A doll's head of carved and fired ceramic accentuated with glazes rides atop two model car wheels and the face is attached to a cocoon-shaped body, also ceramic. On top of this body is a small cast-silver faucet knob, much like one you would find connecting a garden hose to a house. It's obvious that a keen and creative mind is at work: there is an artist here, the piece seems to say. The object is beautiful, but also unsettling in the way the soft face contrasts with the wheels, like a wild animal, at once beautiful and dangerous when you look it in the eye.

Coffey says she was trying to show how helpless children can be in the world of adults. She has created a series of these toy-like sculptures, each one involving the same mix of media, from found objects to worked ceramic to cast metals, and all with the same attention to detail. These pieces are the work of a master artist. But they might not be the first pieces a casual art collector might reach for. Coffey admits with a wry smile that "they don't sell," but she continues to make the art nonetheless. She seems driven to make them. Given her advice to students, Coffey can't exactly back down when facing the challenges of making her own art. Working on a recent project, it took her 27 hours to carve a doll's head out of wax to cast into metal. She had doubts she could finish it, but she pressed on.

"I could go without sleep when I was working on these pieces," Coffey says. "I'd get so immersed, I'd go to the grocery store and it was all I was thinking about. I dreamed about it. It's because the artwork is so much a part of you."

Other artists have also taken notice of Coffey’s art and teaching. Jon Davis, director of the IAIA MFA in Creative Writing, and himself a 24-year teacher at IAIA, has noticed how close Coffey holds her own work.

“Karita has always been a little reticent about showing her work, which is a quality I admire,” Davis says. “I always got the impression that making the work was the important thing. Showing it was secondary. I remember when I first saw the pieces she made investigating childhood. They exceeded their physical dimensions and their craft. They seemed endowed with time and depth and mystery.”

Laura Walkingstick ’14, an IAIA alumna and student of Coffey’s, has won acclaim in her own right recently for her ceramic dolls, and was named a SITE Santa Fe Scholar in 2013. It was Coffey’s teaching that spurred Walkingstick to take her art to the next level.

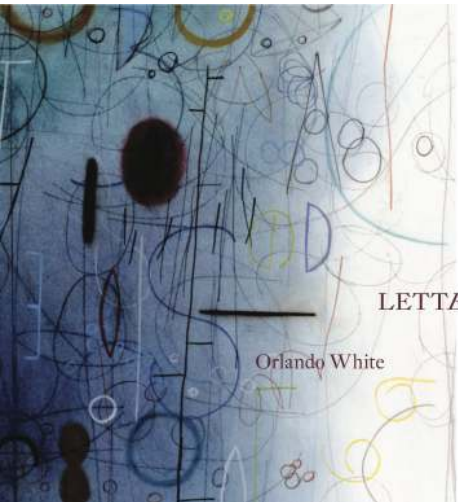
“She taught me a different way of looking at art,” Walkingstick says. “Instead of just saying a piece looks good, [Coffey] encourages you to think about it longer, to let it rest and go to work in your mind. She taught us that there’s always something more to say about a piece—you want the audience not to walk away; you want them to wonder.” For Walkingstick, Coffey’s classes were the turning point in her time at IAIA: “She went beyond what she had to, and that was probably why my work in my senior year was so good. She made me think further and push my work like I never had before.”

“To me that’s the fun part,” Coffey says. “I see it happen. I see it happen. I see them blossom. I see them take risks and that’s what fulfills me as a teacher. I get energy from that.”

This leads Coffey into reflection about her chosen profession. “What other rewards are there as a teacher except when you see they get it,” she says. “That’s what matters. Because when they get it, it lasts. I know what it feels like to get it, too. Teaching is a calling, the same as being an artist is a calling.”

What’s next for Coffey? She says she’ll spend more time with her family, with her daughter in Lawton, Oklahoma, and more time making her own art.

“At a certain point,” Coffey admits, “you need concentrated time to do art regularly. You have to be consistent or else you’ll lose your momentum and outgrow your ideas—you go too long and it’s gone.” Retiring from teaching will give her that time. “I’ve been lifting fifty-pound boxes of clay in the studios for years. Enough.” She pauses, and with a smile that will turn into her signature laugh, says, “I want to lift my own clay now.” 🐦



Thunderbirds in Print

Orlando White ’06

LETTERRS

Nightboat Books (May 2015)

In his second book of poetry, this Diné writer once again delves deep into language, its roots and gets down to the shape and meaning of letters themselves. In his review, poet Forrest Gander says White “cuts across the roots of what we call American culture when, for instance, he asks ‘how does a letter become another when its origin is lost?’”

Laura Da’ ’99

Tributaries

University of Arizona Press (April 2015)

Da’ draws on Shawnee history and the landscapes of the Midwest and Pacific Northwest in her debut book of poetry. Arthur Sze says Da’ “weaves historical narratives with alternate perspectives and voices to create a deeply resonant work. She has a gift for sharp visual images and similes, and these are tough, clear-eyed poems.”

Ungelbah Davila ’11, Laura Da’ ’99, Kateri Menominee ’12, Kristi Leora, Lara Mann

Effigies II

Salt Publishing (July 2014)

Edited by Allison Hedge Coke ’93

Three alumni writers contribute work in this book of five Native women poets. Inupiaq poet Joan Kane says, “From within the pages of Effigies II the essential aspect of light from our indigenous poetics burns brilliant.”

