

GREAT PLAINS FUTURES

SCHEDULE AT A GLANCE

- A** Banquet Hall **C** Room C
B Room B **D** Room D

MARCH 31: Lied Center for Performing Arts

6:30 p.m.: Shaylyn Romney Garrett, Opening Keynote

Presented in partnership with the E.N. Thompson Forum on World Issues. Additional free tickets required.

APRIL 1: Nebraska Innovation Campus Conference Center & Sheldon

8am: Check-in opens

9–10am: Ness Sándoval

A Banquet Hall

Demography as an Analytic Lens

10:15–11:30am: Concurrent Session 1

A *Imagining Futures Together through Games and Scenarios*

B *50 Years of Moving from Chicano to Latino at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln*

C *From Parallel to Interwoven: Building Interdisciplinary Art and Science Collaborations*

D *Diverse Futures of Great Plains Agriculture*

11:45am–1:30pm: Danielle Boyer, lunch keynote

A Banquet Hall

From Bytes to Bright Futures: Meet the SkoBots

1:45–3pm: Concurrent Session 2

B *The Future of Indigenous Entrepreneurship on the Great Plains*

C *Asian American Histories of the Heartland: Pasts and Presents in Conversation*

D *Growing Farmers, Growing Community*

3:15–4:30pm: Concurrent Session 3

A *Joining Forces: Working Across Organizations to Benefit Nebraska's Conservation Mentorship Network*

B *Indigenous Language Futures on the Great Plains*

C *The Future of Great Plains Regional Studies*

D *Rural Reconciliation Project*

5:30–7pm: Teach-In

with Otoe-Missouria tribal members at the Sheldon Museum of Art (open to all, no registration required)

APRIL 2: Nebraska Innovation Campus Conference Center & The Ross

8am: Check-in opens

9–10am: Neil Linscheid

A Banquet Hall

Designing Communities for People (And Not the Other Way Around)

10:15–11:30am: Concurrent Session 4

B *Beyond the Company Town: Reimagining Rural*

C *Governance and Politics in Nebraska and the Great Plains*

D *Great Plains Energy Futures*

11:45am–1:30pm: Carol Graham, lunch keynote

A Banquet Hall

Success in Conservation; Partnering with Producers and Private Landowners

1:45–3pm: Concurrent Session 5

B *Futures in Rural Health: Digital Apps + Multicultural Humans = Tomorrow's Route to Access*

C *Envisioning the Future of Indigenous Reconnections to Ancestral Lands*

D *Creative Conservation for the Future*

3:15–4:30pm: Concurrent Session 6

B *Futuring Methods Workshop*

C *Stories from the Rural Past for a Resilient Great Plains Future*

4:30–5:30pm:

A Poster session and reception

7:30pm at the Mary Riepma Ross Media Arts Center: *Oyate Woyaka* documentary with discussion afterward by Susana Geliga



1976-2026

50 YEARS

AT THE CENTER FOR GREAT PLAINS STUDIES

The Center was established at the University of Nebraska in 1976 by a group of scholars who valued a place-based approach to knowledge and education. Science, art, history, literature — all subject areas would come together to convey the vitality and dynamism of the Plains. In 2026, the Center is celebrating its 50th year with special events, exhibitions, and more.



See all our special events and stories about the 50th.

go.unl.edu/gp50



SUPPORT THE NEXT 50 YEARS!
We've set a goal to raise \$50,000 to help us continue our work.



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GREAT PLAINS **FUTURES**

For five decades, the Center for Great Plains Studies has elevated the region as a place worthy of study, appreciation, and conservation. For our 50th anniversary, the annual Great Plains conference will celebrate our past and look to the next 50 years and beyond. This conference invites us to dream big about the future of people and land in our region. Join us for an interdisciplinary conference featuring keynotes, panels, workshops, and special events in Lincoln, Neb. As we explore the future of the region, keynotes and panels will focus on four interconnected themes: environmental futures, re-imagining the rural, Indigenous futures, and demographic change and migration.

PLANNING COMMITTEE

Andrew Husa, Lecturer, School of Global Integrative Studies, University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Johnnie Jae (Otoe-Missouria and Choctaw), journalist, artist, speaker, and the founder of *Red Pop! News*, a media outlet that celebrates Indigenous joy

Brooke McWherter, Research Assistant Professor, Agronomy & Horticulture, University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Athena Ramos, PhD, MBA, MS, CPM, Associate Professor, Department of Health Promotion of the University of Nebraska Medical Center College of Public Health

Thomas Sanchez, Associate Professor of Sociology and Latino/Latin American Studies, University of Nebraska at Omaha

Michelle Warren, Professor, Spanish, University of Nebraska at Kearney

CONFERENCE SUPPORT



University of Nebraska-Lincoln:

E.N. Thompson Forum on World Issues

Department of Sociology

Office of Research and Innovation

School of Global Integrative Studies

Johnny Carson Center for Emerging Media Arts

Department of Biological Systems Engineering

Faculty Senate Convocations Committee

Dean of Engineering

School of Natural Resources

The Mary Riepma Ross Media Arts Center

Sheldon Museum of Art



Canada



Editor World

Your Words. **Perfected.**



Funding is provided by Humanities Nebraska and the Nebraska Cultural Endowment and Editor World LLC. Presented in partnership with the Consulate General of Canada in Minneapolis.



The Center for Great Plains Studies is a regional research and outreach program established in 1976 at the University of Nebraska. The Center, with its Great Plains Art Museum, is an interdisciplinary educational and cultural hub that cultivates awareness of and engagement with the diverse people, cultures, and natural environments of the Great Plains.

The Center for Great Plains Studies is a four-campus entity with Fellows from the University of Nebraska campuses in Lincoln, Kearney, and Omaha. This is the Center's 51st annual Great Plains conference, an interdisciplinary event that examines important topics in the region.



PAST CONFERENCES

- 2025: Wild Great Plains
- 2024: Confronting the Legendary Great Plains
- 2023: Plant to Table: Food Production, Culture, and Consequences on the Great Plains
- 2022: Reckoning and Reconciliation in the Great Plains
- 2020-21: Climate Change and Culture in the Great Plains
- 2019: Wakanyéja: A Conference on American Indian Behavioral Health
- 2018: Plains Safaris
- 2017: Flat Places, Deep Identities: Mapping Nebraska and the Great Plains
- 2016: The Epic Neihardt
- 2015: Standing Bear and the Trail Ahead
- 2014: Drought in the Life, Cultures, and Landscapes of the Great Plains
- 2013: Gains and Losses from School Consolidation in the Great Plains
- 2012: 1862-2012: The Making of the Great Plains
- 2011: Diverse Faces, Shared Histories: Immigrants on the Great Plains
- 2010: Czech and Slovak Americans: International Perspectives from the Great Plains
- 2009: Celebrating Darwin's Legacy
- 2008: Death, Murder, and Mayhem: Stories of Violence and Healing on the Plains
- 2007: Homesteading Reconsidered
- 2005: Changing Natural Landscapes: Ecological and Human Dimensions
- 2004: The Nature of Lewis and Clark on the Great Plains
- 2003: Religion on the Great Plains
- 2002: Great Plains Migrations
- 2001: Five Voices, One Place
- 2000: Bison: The Past, Present, and Future of the Great Plains
- 1999: The Great Plains Music & Dance Festival and Symposium
- 1998: Health & Lifestyle, Sport & Recreation on the Great Plains
- 1998: Edward S. Curtis's Photographs of Plains Indians
- 1997: Literatures of the Great Plains
- 1996: Politics and Culture of the Great Plains
- 1995: African Americans and the Great Plains
- 1995: Willa Cather's University Days: A Centennial Celebration 1895-1995
- 1994: Great Plains Grasslands
- 1994: Winter Council
- 1993: Architecture of the Great Plains
- 1992: Exploring the Great Plains
- 1992: Healing the Hoop
- 1991: Law, the Bill of Rights and the Great Plains
- 1990: Climate Change on the Great Plains
- 1989: The Hispanic Presence on the Great Plains
- 1988: The Arts on the Plains: The Role of Institutions
- 1987: Women's Culture in the Great Plains
- 1986: Plains Indian Cultures: Past and Present Meanings
- 1985: Social Adaptation to Semi-Arid Environments
- 1984: European Influences on the Visual Arts of the Great Plains
- 1983: Mapping the North American Plains
- 1982: Intersections: Studies in the Canadian and American Great Plains
- 1981: American Pioneer Landscapes
- 1980: Man and Changing Environments in the Great Plains
- 1979: The Great Plains: Perspectives and Prospects, A Symposium on the Future of the Plains
- 1978: Ethnicity on the Great Plains
- 1977: Cultural Heritage of the Plains

MARCH 31

LIED CENTER FOR PERFORMING ARTS

6:30PM: OPENING KEYNOTE



SHAYLYN ROMNEY GARRETT

America's Upswing

In collaboration with the E.N. Thompson Forum on World Issues, the opening keynote is speaking as part of the forum's speaker series.

Romney Garrett is a social entrepreneur and coauthor of *The Upswing: How America Came Together a Century Ago and How We Can Do It Again* (Simon & Schuster 2020 with Robert D. Putnam). She has shared her opinions, writing, and research in numerous outlets including *TIME Magazine*, *The New York Times*, National Public Radio, BBC Radio, and the PBS Newshour.

Romney Garrett is a passionate believer that everyday interactions are where we do the "heart work" required to transform our hyper-individualistic culture and reclaim the power of "We." She writes about her personal journey back to community on her blog and newsletter, *Project Reconnect*.

Share the event: Use #GreatPlainsFutures during the event on social media to share photos with others. Tag us on Instagram at @greatplains.unl

WIFI Access at NIC

Network : NU-Guest

Username: April

Password: Innovate2026!

NEBRASKA INNOVATION CAMPUS CONFERENCE CENTER

8AM: CHECK-IN OPENS

9-10AM: KEYNOTE, BANQUET HALL



J.S. ONÉSIMO (NESS) SÁNDOVAL

Demography as an Analytic Lens: Latino Population Growth and the Demographic Transformation of the Midwest

This talk explores how Latino population growth is reshaping the social, economic, and political landscape of the region. By examining historical settlement patterns, contemporary demographic shifts, and projected trends, it highlights how Latindad has become an essential force driving regional transformation. Using demography as an analytic lens, the presentation connects statistical evidence with lived experience to reveal the far-reaching economic and political consequences of demographic change showing how Latinos are redefining the future of identity, governance, and opportunity.

Dr. Sandoval focuses on integrating demography with spatial data science. His work primarily explores the use of big data to analyze socio-economic and demographic trends in American cities. As a founding member of the Taylor Geospatial Institute, Sandoval plays a key role in advancing research in this field. He also writes a newspaper column, *Rediscovering America Through Demography*, where he writes about the demographic changes shaping the U.S. Through his research and public outreach, Sandoval seeks to connect data and statistics with policy, helping communities better understand and adapt to the demographic shifts that affect their lives.

This talk is open to all without registration thanks to support from the UNL Faculty Senate Convocations Committee.

10:15–11:30AM: CONCURRENT SESSION 1

Imagining Futures Together through Games and Scenarios

Banquet Hall

Can writing science fiction, trying to win a ribbon at the state fair, or competing in a tournament help groups of people work together and co-envision the future of the Great Plains? Let's discuss! The panelists will share their experiences developing and leading creative activities and games to improve dialogue and engagement around serious topics. Julia McQuillan (UNL Sociology) will describe a worldbuilding or "co-visioning with stories" process she's helped lead with proponents and opponents of animal agriculture. Kelsey Varisco (UNL National Drought Mitigation Center) will describe the IMPACT2 State Fair online activity, which engages small-scale farmers in discussions about adapting to future climate scenarios. And Deborah Bathke (UNL State Climate Office) will describe using Drought Tournaments to engage diverse stakeholders in planning for future droughts.

Deborah Bathke, UNL
State Climate Office

Julia McQuillan, UNL
Sociology

Kelsey Varisco, UNL
Drought Mitigation
Center

Moderated by **Tonya
Haigh**, UNL

50 Years of Moving from Chicano to Latino at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln*Room B*

This panel will look at the demographics, identity terms, and issues from the early years when Mexican Americans/Chicanos demanded awareness of their presence at UNL to today's campus issues and climate as presented by current leaders of the Mexican-American Student Organization (MASA).

Kevin Aranda-Garcia , MASA member	Rubi Hernandez Ochoa , Primary Programmer for MASA	Marty Ramirez , Vice-Chair of LAS VOCES	Michelle Suarez , former MASA president, former Lincoln City Council member	Moderated by Thomas Sanchez , UNO
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From Parallel to Interwoven: Building Interdisciplinary Art and Science Collaborations*Room C*

This panel brings together practitioners from across the artistic and scientific spectrum to explore the potential and practical challenges of working beyond disciplinary boundaries. Panelists will share insights into what has made their interdisciplinary collaborations work, what has gotten in the way, and why this kind of integrative practice is essential to solving today's complex problems.

Dana Fritz , Art (Photography), UNL	Erin Haacker , Earth and Atmospheric Sciences, UNL	Steve Rossi , Art (Sculpture), Saint Joseph's University	Liz VanWormer , School of Natural Resources, UNL	Moderated by Mike Hayes , UNL
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Cultivating What's Next: Diverse Futures of Great Plains Agriculture*Room D*

This panel brings together diverse perspectives shaping the future of Nebraska agriculture, including expertise in crop futures research, urban farming systems, and on-farm innovation using precision technologies. Panelists will explore emerging opportunities, adaptive pathways, and the multiple futures possible across rural and urban agricultural landscapes.

Andrea Basche , Agronomy & Horticulture, UNL	Angela Knuth , Knuth Farms	Tim Rinne , Hawley Hamlet	Moderated by Brooke McWherter , UNL
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Questions? Find a staff member at the check-in desk.



DANIELLE BOYER

From Bytes to Bright Futures: Meet the SkoBots

Join Anishinaabe (Sault Tribe) youth robotics inventor Danielle Boyer as she explores how culturally grounded technology can reshape education, empower communities, and revitalize languages. Growing up under the poverty line and witnessing firsthand the barriers to technical education, Danielle created the SkoBots, wearable, personal language-learning robots to teach Anishinaabemowin. Built with affordability, sustainability, and cultural relevance in mind, her robots cost less than \$100 to produce and are distributed free to Indigenous youth. Danielle shares how she has reached over one million students globally, disbursed tens of thousands of robots, and built a movement rooted in community, grassroots innovation, and intergenerational knowledge.

Boyer focuses on how emerging technologies can be ethically used to drive Indigenous-led efforts for cultural preservation with an emphasis on language revitalization. In 2019, she founded The STEAM Connection, a youth-led charity that has reached over 1 million youth with free, accessible, and representative technical education. She is a National Geographic Young Explorer, Echoing Green Fellow, two-time MIT Solve Fellow, Washington Post Next Changemaker, and *Teen Vogue* Indigenous Youth Changemaker. She has spoken at the White House twice and addressed the UNESCO Headquarters on Indigenous languages.

The Future of Indigenous Entrepreneurship on the Great Plains

Room B

Three Indigenous entrepreneurs share the innovative approaches they are taking to promote Indigenous entrepreneurship now and in the future to strengthen Indigenous families, communities, and tribes.

Liz Lovejoy Brown (Omaha Tribe of Nebraska), Picotte Center	Anthony Warrior (Absentee Shawnee/ Mvskoke and Sicangu Lakota), Chef and NICC Instructor	Tony Wood (Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska), HoChunk Community Capital	Moderated by Cory DeRoin (Otoe- Missouria)
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Asian American Histories of the Heartland: Pasts and Presents in Conversation

Room C

By putting the past into conversation with present understandings, this panel engages how histories of Asian American communities residing in the Great Plains and Midwest in the early 20th century counteract dominant myths about the region’s identity. As such, the panelists address: How have Asian American communities shaped Great Plains and Midwest histories? What lessons can be taken from these communities about our present moment and how that informs our futures?

Donna Anderson, History, UNL (moderator)	Emily Binder, PhD Student, UNL	Kelsey Green, Anderson Public Library	Nathan Tye, History, UNK
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1:45–3PM: CONCURRENT SESSION 2 CONTINUED

Growing Farmers, Growing Community

Room D

This panel explores the role that community gardening and farming can play in rooting immigrants and refugees in their new homes on the Great Plains.

Sandro Lopes, NaTerra Farms

Shahab Bashar, Community
Crops

Moderated by **Amy Gerdes**,
Family Service Lincoln

3:15–4:30PM: CONCURRENT SESSION 3

Joining Forces: Working Across Organizations to Benefit Nebraska's Conservation Mentorship Network

Banquet Hall

Nonprofit and government professionals talk about their collaboration to empower individual farmers and promote a peer learning network across the state.

Nick Arneson, The
Nature Conservancy

Alexa Davis, Nebraska
Dept. of Water, Energy,
and the Environment

Andrew Tonnies,
Center for Rural Affairs

Moderated by **Kalee
Olson**, CFRA

Indigenous Language Futures on the Great Plains

Room B

Members of the Otoe-Missouria, Winnebago, and Ioway tribes discuss how their communities see the future of their languages and how Jiwere-Nut'achi, Ho-Chunk, and Ioway-Báxoje language programs have grown in recent years.

Christina Goodson
(Otoe-Missouria),
Walking in the
Footsteps of our
Ancestors project

Rebecca Liberty (Iowa
Tribe of Kansas and
Nebraska), National
Breath of Life

Lewis "Bleu" St. Cyr
(Winnebago Tribe of
Nebraska), HoChunk
Renaissance language
program

Moderated by **Gabriel
Bruguier** (Yankton
Sioux), UNL

The Future of Great Plains Regional Studies

Room C

This panel of geography professors looks at the current state of Great Plains regional studies programs and courses offered among the region's universities and colleges. This Q&A-style session will include a discussion on the biggest challenges and opportunities presented in both teaching Great Plains regional courses and in Great Plains-related research. We hope to be joined by anyone who shares our passion for studying and researching the Great Plains!

John Bauer,
Geography, UNK

Randy Bertolas,
Geography, Wayne
State College

Becky Buller,
School of Global
Integrative
Studies, UNL

Christina Dando,
Geography, UNO

Moderated by
Andrew Husa,
Geography, UNL

Re-Imagining Rural Futures with the Rural Reconciliation Project

Room D

This panel invites conference participants into a conversation with the Rural Reconciliation Project, an interdisciplinary research and engagement initiative based at the University of Nebraska College of Law. The Project is grounded in the idea that re-imagining rural futures requires a clear-eyed and inclusive understanding of rural America’s past and present—one that expands who is invited to the conversation and what counts as knowledge at the table.

Sabrina Ehmke
Sergeant, Ph.D.
(Managing Editor)

Cade Herrmann,
Second-Year Law
Student (Research
Assistant)

Katelyn Rich,
Third-Year Law
Student (Research
Assistant)

Jessica A.
Shoemaker,
Professor, J.D.,
Project Director
(moderator)

Grace Tracey,
Third-Year Law
Student (Research
Assistant)

SHELDON MUSEUM OF ART

Otoe-Missouria History, Activism and Representation — A Panel Discussion

Sheldon Auditorium

Otoe-Missouria tribal members discuss their history in southeast Nebraska, their current experiences, activism and representation, and the concept of “landcestry.”

Lena' Black, UNL student, artist

Johnnie Jae, journalist, artist, and speaker

Cory DeRoin, Walking in the Footsteps of our Ancestors project

Veronica Pipestem, Native Foodways Restoration Alliance

Christina Goodson, Walking in the Footsteps of our Ancestors project

Della Warrior, MICA Group

NEBRASKA INNOVATION CAMPUS CONFERENCE CENTER

8AM: CHECK-IN OPENS

9-10AM: KEYNOTE, BANQUET HALL



NEIL LINSCHIED

Community Usability: Designing Communities for People (And Not the Other Way Around)

What makes a community truly work for the people who live there? Across the Midwest and beyond, communities are moving past simply collecting data about newcomers, residents, and entrepreneurs. They're using that information to fundamentally redesign how their towns and cities function. This talk examines what's working, what's not, and what we can learn from communities that are getting it right. We'll look at communities that have reimagined how newcomers access services, how entrepreneurs navigate systems, and how long-time residents connect with resources. We'll also examine what happens when communities stop designing for an idealized resident and start designing for the real, diverse people already there.

Linscheid is an Extension Professor and Extension State Specialist in Entrepreneurship at the University of Minnesota, where he works with communities to strengthen local economies by supporting entrepreneurs and building vibrant entrepreneurial ecosystems. His Extension work has spanned diverse areas including tourism development, internet adoption, entrepreneurship, market analysis, regional economics, and community development initiatives.

This talk is open to all without registration thanks to support from the Office of Research and Innovation's Invited Scholar program.

10:15-11:30AM: CONCURRENT SESSION 4

Beyond the Company Town: Reimagining Rural

Room B

A discussion about rural communities across the Plains with a special emphasis on those that have been dependent on a large single employer. What happens when the employer leaves? How do communities re-define themselves, see possibilities, and maximize human and social capital?

Rocio Casanova,
Lexington Public
Library

Shawn Kaskie, Rural
Prosperity Nebraska,
UNL Extension

Daniela Mattos,
Community
Development, UNL

Moderated by **Athena
Ramos,** UNMC

Governance and Politics in Nebraska and the Great Plains

Room C

Learn about how Nebraska's political culture leads to its governance at both state and local levels with a panel of experts in the state's political past and present. Nebraska's interesting political history creates structures playing out today both in the state legislature and all the way to city governance in rural communities. Panelists will share their experience studying the politics of the region, running city government, and increasing civic participation.

Chris Anderson, City Administrator for Central City

Robert Blair, Public Administration, UNO

Steve Smith, strategic communications (moderator)

Heidi Uhing, The Good Life Institute

Great Plains Energy Futures

Room D

As a region, Great Plains has both challenges and opportunities surrounding energy generation and usage. Hear from a panel of experts about what's working and what to expect into the future.

Josh Moenning, New Power Nebraska

Kim Morrow, City of Lincoln

Laura Priest, Center for Rural Affairs

Moderated by **Daniel Padilla**, CFRA

11:45AM-1:30PM: KEYNOTE, BANQUET HALL



CAROL GRAHAM

Success in Conservation; Partnering with Producers and Private Landowners

Manitoba Habitat Conservancy (MHC) has been delivering conservation programs on private lands across southern Manitoba for 40 years. Enhancing habitat for species at risk and managing wetlands for waterfowl has required partnerships with producers, landowners, and industry, and an emphasis on a collaborative approach has resulted in successful securement, enhancement, and mitigation of wildlife habitats in Manitoba. This community approach not only maintains ecological integrity and promotes biodiversity but also ensures ecosystem resilience and long-term ecological stability, beneficial for both producers and private landowners. Graham will speak about lessons learned and successes achieved over the years with programs that target native grassland management for wildlife and livestock production, upland enhancement for nesting habitats, and wetland retention and restoration for waterfowl.

Carol Graham is the Conservation Program Manager with Manitoba Habitat Conservancy. As a Habitat Conservation Specialist, she has been responsible for the enhancement of native grassland habitats in southwestern Manitoba for 15 years. Prior, she developed resource management plans for rangelands and forests. Carol has a Master of Science from the University of Manitoba and spends considerable time hiking, paddle boarding and exploring remote regions of the landscape.

Futures in Rural Health: Digital Apps + Multicultural Humans = Tomorrow's Route to Access*Room B*

A multidisciplinary team will present a three-pronged rural health model implemented in the Great Plains in the years immediately following the COVID-19 pandemic. Integrating a bilingual digital application, at-home testing kits, and a human navigation team—including a nurse navigator and bilingual, bicultural community health workers—we supported more than 400 participants over three years to help sick family members recover safely at home while keeping healthy individuals at work and in school. By combining real-time symptom monitoring, attention to social determinants of health, ready access to testing, and culturally responsive guidance, our approach demonstrates how technology and trusted human support can work together to strengthen rural health resilience.

El Kearns, Health System Sciences, UNMC

Gisela Marfileño, Clinical Research, UNMC

Russell McCulloh, Clinical Research, UNMC

Viviana Gonzalez Navarro, Family and System Navigator, UNMC

Michelle Warren, Spanish, UNK (moderator)

Envisioning the Future of Indigenous Reconnections to Ancestral Lands: The Walking in the Footsteps Project*Room C*

Members of the Otoe-Missouria Tribe share their vision for the future of the Walking in the Footsteps Project, a partnership between the Tribe and the Center for Great Plains Studies that aims to reconnect the Tribe to their ancestral lands in southeast Nebraska while engaging non-Native residents with their history, culture, art, and return to the state.

Cory DeRoin, WFOA project

Johnnie Jae, Multimedia journalist/artist

Veronica Pipestem, Native Foodways Restoration Alliance

Della Warrior, MICA

Moderated by **Angel Hinzo** (Ho-Chunk, Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska), UNL

Creative Conservation for the Future*Room D*

With much of the Great Plains privately owned in ranch or cropland, conservation work must be creative, dynamic, and community-focused. Hear from land owners, educators, and coalition builders who are looking toward the future of Great Plains landscapes.

Cheryl Dunn, grassland educator

Jane Koger, Homestead Range Renewal Initiative

Laura Nelson, Nebraska Grazing Lands Coalition

Moderated by **Ryan Klataske**, Ancient Ocean Beef Co.

3:15–4:30PM: CONCURRENT SESSION 6

Futuring Methods Workshop

Room B

Join us for an interactive, play-based workshop exploring what makes the Great Plains meaningful to you. Through a hands-on activity, participants will reflect on the landscapes, communities, livelihoods, and ecosystems they value most. Together, we will use these insights to spark conversation about the kind of future we hope to see across the Great Plains and how our shared values can help shape it.

Jaime Lopez, Community & Regional Planning, UNL

Brooke McWherter, Agronomy & Horticulture, UNL

Stories from the Rural Past for a Resilient Great Plains Futures

Room C

This panel explores the local ecological knowledge that Nebraska rural producer families and communities possess. It asks whether this knowledge has fostered resiliency in the face of extreme swings in both climate and policy and how it can be retained and extended.

Kurt Mantonya, University of Nebraska Public Policy Center

Will Stoutamire, History, UNK

LuAnn Wandsnider, School of Global Integrated Studies, UNL

3:15–4:30PM: POSTER SESSION & RECEPTION

Great Plains Futures

Banquet Hall

Join scholars, artists, students, and storytellers to participate in a creative poster session, designed to feel like a walk-through exhibition where art, science, and storytelling converge. Poster creators:

Nicole Blackstock, Gabriel Bruguier, Mark Griep, Md Ezazul Haque, Kyndal Hudson, Raquel Johnson, Shawn Kaskie, Sandro Lopes, Zebulun Lund, Melissa Mosier, Samuel Sackey, Becky Young

MARY RIEPMA ROSS MEDIA ARTS CENTER

7:30PM: DOCUMENTARY FILM

Oyate Woyaka

This documentary tells the story of the Lakota language history, loss and revitalization. The film touches on the deep history and spirituality of the language, the shocking history that caused Lakota to be on the verge of extinction, and the modern efforts being made to bring language back to life and the immense challenges this effort faces. Susana Geliga (Sicangu Lakota), Assistant Professor of History and Native American Studies at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, will give comments afterward. Free admission, open to all.

SPEAKERS

Chris Anderson has served as city administrator in Central City for the past 23 years and previously worked in Aurora and Ashland, Neb. He has a Bachelor's Degree from UNL and a Master's in Public Administration from the University of Nebraska at Omaha. Anderson serves on the Board of Directors of the American Public Gas Association, National Public Gas Agency, Public Gas Partners and Nebraska Public Agency Investment Trust.

Dr. Donna Doan Anderson is the Mellon research assistant professor of U.S. Law and Race at UNL. Her research examines the intersections of land policy and immigration within rural Asian American communities in the U.S. Midwest during the late 19th through the mid-20th centuries. She is affiliated with UNL's U.S. Law and Race Initiative, Center for Digital Research in the Humanities, and the Institute of Ethnic Studies. She received her Ph.D. in History with an emphasis in Asian American Studies from the University of California, Santa Barbara.

Kevin Aranda-Garcia is a student at UNL in film studies and history and a member of the Mexican American Student Association.

Nick Arneson is the Row Crop Agriculture Projects Lead for The Nature Conservancy in Nebraska working directly with producers and partners to implement conservation on working lands across the state.

Dr. Andrea Basche is an associate professor in the Department of Agronomy and Horticulture at UNL whose research team studies several aspects of diversified cropping systems, including nutrient cycling, water and weed dynamics, as well as policy and human decision-making. In her role, she also teaches several undergraduate courses in crop management. She is a nationally recognized leader on cover crops, soil health and climate change and has delivered more than 90 invited presentations and media interviews since 2018.

Shahab Bashar is a farm program specialist for Community Crops in Lincoln, Neb. Community Crops provides training, technical assistance and land access to beginning, immigrant and limited-resource farmers. Their goal is to help people create sustainable farm businesses to feed their families and their community. Bashar has worked as an interpreter and translator for many years supporting the Yazidi community in Lincoln. He is fluent in English, Arabic, and Kurdish.

Dr. Deb Bathke is a climate scientist, State Climatologist and National Drought Mitigation Center Education Coordinator at UNL.

Dr. John Bauer is a Professor and Chair of Geography at the University of Nebraska at Kearney whose work focuses on human and cultural geography, mapping, and GIS.

Dr. Randy Bertolas is professor of geography and chair of the Department of History, Politics, and Geography at Wayne State College in northeast Nebraska. He is a three-time recipient of the WSC Student Senate's Professor of the Year Award and was recognized with the Nebraska State College System's Teaching Excellence Award in 2018. Bertolas' research interests include geography education, natural disasters, and tourism. His teaching interests include world, regional, political, and human geography as well as regional study of Russia, Nebraska, the U.S. and Canada.

Emily Binder is a Ph.D. student studying 19th and 20th century American history as well as ethnic studies. She is particularly interested in the history of immigration and issues of citizenship, whiteness, and transnational identity. Her research is centered on emigrants from Empires at the end of the 19th Century and the communities they created in Nebraska. Binder received her B.A. in history from Creighton University in 2022. Before beginning her studies at UNL, Binder worked as a research assistant for the Roots of Justice project, researching the experience of Asian Americans in Nebraska.

Lena' Black (Otoe-Missouria and Osage) is a student at UNL in graphic design. She is an artist and also works closely with the Walking in the Footsteps of our Ancestors project.

Dr. Robert Blair, Professor Emeritus, School of Public Administration, University of Nebraska at Omaha. Prior to joining the University in 1989, he worked in city management, economic development, and community development for 14 years. In 2014 the International City/County Management Association recognized him for contributions to the field of professional local government management. In 2022 he was awarded a Fulbright Fellowship in Canada, working with the Elliott Trudeau Foundation, McGill University, and the University of Ottawa. His most recent book, edited with

colleagues, is *Nebraska Government and Politics*, second edition.

Danielle Boyer, see page 12

Liz Lovejoy Brown is the Executive Director of the Picotte Center, which celebrates the life of Dr. Susan La Flesche Picotte, the first Native American doctor. A distinguished member of the Inkesabe Clan of the Omaha Tribe of Nebraska, Lovejoy Brown holds a Master's degree in Social Work from the University of Iowa and has 17 years of experience in social work, financial and grant management, and non-profit leadership with expertise in tribal finance, grant management, and advocacy for Native American youth.

Dr. Becky Buller, a cultural and historical geographer, serves as an Associate Professor of Practice within UNL's School of Global Integrative Studies Geography Program. Her activities focus on geographic and experiential education, justice, the Great Plains, and Iceland. At the CGPS, she is journals Book Review Editor and Fellow. Her work has appeared in *Great Plains Quarterly*, *Historical Geography*, *Journal of Cultural Geography*, *Journal of Family History*, *Journal of Geography*, *Nebraska History*, and in the 2024 Nebraska Library Commission's "Nebraska as Place" book award winner Fritz et al. (2023) *Field Guide to a Hybrid Landscape*.

Rocio Casanova, originally from Mexico, has been a resident of Lexington for 25 years. She is a dedicated mother to two children: Milenzy, a second-grade student, and Josue, a sixth grader. Casanova and her husband Anuar, are actively involved in their community, volunteering with various nonprofit organizations and serving as founders and active members of El Camino PDL. She is the Youth & Family Services Librarian at the Lexington Public Library. Casanova is passionate about reading, she is particularly passionate about inspiring others to read and be involve, especially adults, to cultivate a love for reading and staying informed. She currently leads a Spanish Book Club. and is committed to empowering young children and teens to achieve success and develop into effective leaders within their community.

Dr. Christina Dando is the Peter Kiewit Professor of Geography at the University of Nebraska Omaha. She received her B.A. in Geography and English from the University of North Dakota and her M.S. and Ph.D.s in Geography from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, with her thesis and dissertation both on the

construction of Great Plains landscape in the early 20th Century. Her teaching and research interests include landscape (the Great Plains), gender, and media and the various intersections of these elements, both historic and contemporary. Dando is the author of *Women and Cartography in the Progressive Era*. Her recent research focuses on Omaha's 20th century housing history and issues of spatial justice.

Alexa Davis works at the Nebraska Department of Water, Energy, and Environment helping the implementation and coordination of multiple funding and soil-related programs across the state. Davis has earned two BS degrees in Water Science and Environmental Science and a MS in Natural Resources from UNL.

Cory DeRoin, a member of the Bear Clan of the Otoe-Missouria Tribe, has dedicated much of his life to supporting the growth, healing, and resilience of tribal communities. Guided by a deep belief that anything is possible through prayer and teamwork, DeRoin works to bring people together in unity and purpose. His efforts focus on strengthening connections, uplifting communities, and creating opportunities that inspire progress. Through collaboration, faith, and a commitment to service, DeRoin strives to help build a stronger future for tribes and the broader society.

Cheryl Dunn is the Grassland Specialist-Herbarium Curator in the Department of Agronomy and Horticulture at UNL. She teaches wildland plant identification, range management, and grassland ecology courses, advises grassland ecology and plant biology students, conducts research in range ecology, and curates the department's herbarium. She is dedicated to advancing education in grassland ecology through teaching, mentoring, and Extension outreach. She earned her M.S. in Biology from Fort Hays State University in 2004. She previously taught at FHSU and worked for the Kansas Department of Transportation and has co-authored plant identification books and Extension guides.

Dr. Sabrina Ehmke Sergeant is the Managing Editor for the Rural Reconciliation Project. An early love for Willa Cather novels prompted Ehmke Sergeant to leave her hometown in Pittsburgh and head westward. She completed her doctorate in English literature at the University of Nebraska and has worked in academic publishing and as an editor in academic, legal, and

freelance settings. A first-generation American of German and Belgian parents, she has a lifelong interest in exploring the role of place in shaping identity and the relationship between land and community.

Through photography, **Dana Fritz** explores how we shape and know land, engaging ideas about climate change, environmental history, and ecology in a place-based practice. Fritz's work has been exhibited and collected widely across the United States, Europe, and Asia. She published *Terraria Gigantica: The World under Glass* with University of New Mexico Press in 2017 and *Field Guide to a Hybrid Landscape* with University of Nebraska Press in 2023. Fritz is a Professor of Art and a Center for Great Plains Studies Fellow at UNL.

Dr. Susana Geliga is an enrolled member of the Sicangu Lakota and is of Borinken Taino descent. She received her PhD and M.A. in History from UNL and her BS degrees in Education, and Native American Studies from the Oglala Lakota College in Rapid City, SD. Before graduate school, she taught Lakota language in the Rapid City public school system for eight years, and Lakota language at the Oglala Lakota College in Rapid City, South Dakota for two years. She also created the Little White Buffalo Project, a Lakota language and cultural preservation non-profit youth program that she operated for 10 years. She is a Professor of the Department of History and Native American Studies at the University of Nebraska-Omaha.

Viviana Gonzalez Navarro is a Family and System Navigator at the University of Nebraska Medical Center.

Christina Goodson (Jiwere-Nut'achi/Báxoje) is an educator, historian, and linguist interested in helping her community build sustainable, effective education programs which seek to strengthen language use, historical and cultural knowledge, and civic engagement. It is also a priority of Goodson's to connect traditional ecological knowledge and Indigenous knowledge to STEAM fields so that future generations can cope with the rapidly changing climate and world around us. Goodson holds an M.A. in Applied Linguistic Anthropology from the University of Oklahoma and a B.A. in History and Native American Studies from Dartmouth College. She is also a Co-Primary Investigator and Co-Director of the Walking in the Footsteps of our Ancestors project at the Center for Great Plains Studies.

Carol Graham, see page 15

Kelsey Green's scholarship explores the lived experiences of Chinese immigrants in Indianapolis and

how immigration policy influenced Midwestern identity. As a public historian, she is involved in several Indiana history organizations and has conducted research for the State Historical Marker Program, led the Indiana History Collaborative, and contributed to several state and local publications. She currently works as the local history & genealogy coordinator for the Anderson Public Library in Anderson, Indiana.

Erin Haacker is a groundwater hydrologist in the Department of Earth & Atmospheric Sciences at UNL. Her research focuses on the depletion of the High Plains Aquifer, particularly through construction and interpretation of computer models of groundwater movement. Water is a great connector that transcends disciplinary boundaries, and she strives for her research to reflect the nature of water as a natural phenomenon, a resource, and a cultural and environmental good.

Dr. Tonya Haigh is a Research Assistant Professor in SNR and the Social Science Coordinator for the National Drought Mitigation Center. Her research focuses on the adaptive capacity of agricultural producers and others to cope with drought. She is interested in connecting social science with climate science by informing the development of stakeholder-driven resources and tools. She's worked with ranchers, advisors, and researchers to develop the Managing Drought Risk on the Ranch website and has provided social science expertise to the development of climate decision support tools for corn belt producers and specialty crop growers.

Cade Herrmann is a Research Assistant for the Rural Reconciliation Project and a second-year law student at the University of Nebraska College of Law. Before law school, Herrmann earned a BA in Political Science from Illinois Wesleyan University. During undergrad, he interned for a municipal legal department, which developed his interest in local government law.

Dr. Andrew Husa joined the School of Global Integrative Studies as a lecturer of Geography in Fall 2020. He is a proud three-time graduate of the UNL Geography program and teaches courses on regional and global perspectives. Husa is also a Center for Great Plains Studies fellow and Chair of the American Association of Geographers Rural Geography Specialty Group. A native of rural Nebraska, his research focuses on small town and rural identity, and attachment to rural landscape, especially on the Great Plains.

Johnnie Jae is an Otoe-Missouria and Choctaw multimedia journalist, artist, speaker, advocate, and community builder. Jae is the founder of A Tribe

Called Geek, an award-winning media platform for Indigenous Geek Culture and STEM. Jae has also made significant contributions as a writer, editor, podcaster, commentator, and producer for various media outlets, including *Truthout*, *Native Max Magazine*, Real News Network, Prism, Complex, Last Real Indians, and CBC. Jae also co-founded Not Your Mascots and LiveIndigenousOK to address the misappropriation of Indigenous imagery and histories through Native mascots and stereotypes.

Shawn Kaskie is a Community Economic Development Educator, leadership facilitator, coach, and researcher passionate about partnering with organizations and stakeholders to define and achieve their visions. His “day job” is a Rural Prosperity Nebraska Extension Educator for the University of Nebraska, serving an eight-county rural area surrounding Broken Bow, Neb. He was the Director of the Center for Entrepreneurship and Rural Development at the University of Nebraska at Kearney and the founding director of an Economic Development organization in Sherman County, Neb. He is a CGPS Fellow and is conducting applied research as a Doctoral Candidate at UNL with the International Economic Development Council.

Dr. El Kearns is the director of research informatics for UNMC’s Child Health Research Institute and division chief of pediatric health system sciences. She also serves as a data scientist for Children’s Nebraska, directs the Nebraska site of a trials network focused on expanding research participation of rural and underserved children, and is director of UNMC’s informatics service core entitled Research Education Administration and Development in Health Informatics. Her research interests are in leveraging technology to augment health decision-making and optimizing the efficiency of research by making better use of existing data sources.

Angela Knuth farms with her husband, Kerry, and son, Gregory, in Mead, Neb. Knuth started working on the farm in 2000, operating equipment and handling computer duties. Since then, she has moved into the role of agronomist and precision software technician for the farm and is a graduate of The Soil Food Web School Foundation Courses. Knuth Farms, since 2005, has migrated from full tillage to strip-till, and then to no-till in 2019. They certified their first organic field in 2020, and in 2024 composted and extracted their first biologicals on the farm.

Jane Koger is a fourth-generation Chase County rancher who has been the owner and operator of the Homestead

Ranch near Matfield Green for over 40 years. She began the Homestead Range Renewal Initiative and experimental burning program in 2004, using patch burning to enhance wildlife habitat, especially for the Greater Prairie Chicken. Koger hopes to leave the land in such a condition that it would be recognizable to her great-grandfather who homesteaded there. She is also working on a succession plan for her nephew.

Rebecca Liberty is a citizen of the Ioway Tribe of Kansas and Nebraska and the granddaughter of the late Ethil Liberty (Ioway–Campbell and Omaha–Barada), whose dedication to cultural preservation inspires Liberty’s commitment to revitalizing Báxoje ich’e, the Ioway language. A 2017 participant in the National Breath of Life Archival Institute, Rebecca is now an apprentice in the National Breath of Life Apprentices & Fellows Program. She works with community and mentors to organize historic Báxoje language materials through the Indigenous Languages Digital Archive. She is dedicated to strengthening intergenerational language learning and community revitalization efforts. Liberty holds dual master’s degrees in Integrated Humanities and Education and has more than 40 years of service in education, nonprofit leadership, health care, and tribal advisory roles.

Neil Linscheid, see page 14

Sandro Lopes was part of the third cohort of the Center for Rural Affairs Beginning Farmer Conservation Fellowship. His interest in conservation began at a young age when he encountered the effects of habitat destruction in his local community in Brazil. This led him to pursue studies in agricultural and natural resources science and engage in various conservation projects. His farm, NaTerra farms or Huerto Regenerativo NaTerra, in David City, Neb., honors the traditional knowledge passed down through generations, rooted in Indigenous practices, inspired by the methods of his ancestors, who farmed in the heart of the Amazon rainforest.

Dr. Jaime I. Lopez is an Assistant Professor in the Community and Regional Planning program at UNL. His research and teaching methods prioritize marginalized communities in the context of urban and rural challenges, using media tools practically to amplify their voices and pedagogically to comprehensively examine cities and communities. With a human-centric emphasis, Lopez is currently developing research in the Great Plains exploring how communities engage with, understand, and shape their futures through planning, media, storytelling, and public dialogue.

Dr. Kurt Mantonya, is a Research Manager at the University of Nebraska Public Policy Center, where he has worked since 2021. He holds a B.S. from Kansas State University and an M.A. and Ph.D. in Anthropology from UNL. With over 25 years of experience bridging applied cultural anthropology and community-engaged research, his work spans disaster behavioral health, emergency preparedness, rural and community development, and qualitative research methods. Mantonya brings a practitioner's perspective to his research, grounded in extensive ethnographic fieldwork and a commitment to translating findings into real-world policy and practice.

Gisela Marfileño is a Research Project Associate at the University of Nebraska Medical Center's College of Medicine in the division of Health Science Systems.

Dr. Daniela Manhani Mattos is a Professor of Practice in UNL's Department of Agricultural Economics and Coordinator of the Master of Applied Science in Community Development. With nearly 20 years of experience in community and economic development, she is an applied economist focused on community analysis. She uses local and regional data to explain how economies are structured, what is changing, and what those trends mean for practical development decisions, especially in rural places. She earned her Ph.D. in Community and Economic Development from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Dr. Russell McCulloh is the Associate Vice Chancellor for Clinical Research at the University of Nebraska Medical Center and Vice President for Research at Nebraska Medicine. He is also a professor in the Department of Pediatrics in the Division of Hospital Medicine.

Dr. Julia McQuillan is a Professor of Sociology at UNL whose work focuses on social inequality, wellbeing, science education, and health.

Dr. Brooke McWherter is a natural resource social scientist and Research Assistant Professor in the Department of Agronomy and Horticulture at UNL. Her work integrates social science, stakeholder engagement, and systems thinking to support decision-making in agriculture and natural resource management. She studies adaptation and resilience in working landscapes, with projects spanning cropping systems, grassland conservation, and participatory modeling. McWherter's work bridges research and practice to strengthen evidence-informed, inclusive approaches to agricultural

and environmental challenges across the Great Plains and beyond.

Josh Moenning is director of energy group New Power Nebraska and owns and operates a small business in the field of renewable energy development and public affairs. He served as mayor of the city of Norfolk, Neb., where he was elected to the Norfolk City Council in 2012, mayor in 2016, and re-elected in 2020. He's worked in the Nebraska Legislature, for the U.S. House of Representatives, and as executive director of the infrastructure development group 4 Lanes 4 Nebraska. Moenning earned a journalism degree from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. He's served on the boards of the National League of Cities and Nebraska League of Municipalities.

Kim Morrow leads efforts to create a climate-smart, resilient, and equitable community as Chief Sustainability Officer for the City of Lincoln. She oversees a team of six in advancing initiatives that reduce emissions, improve climate adaptation, and enhance quality of life.

Laura Nelson is Executive Director of the Nebraska Grazing Lands Coalition, where she works with ranchers and partners to strengthen grazing management, generational transition planning, and grassland stewardship. Raised on her family's farm and ranch in western Nebraska, she brings deep roots in production agriculture and a background in agricultural communications and rancher-led conservation. She also serves as Statewide Grassland Coordinator for the Nebraska Grassland Alliance, a collaborative initiative uniting diverse partners to sustain and expand Nebraska's grasslands for future generations.

Rubi Hernandez Ochoa is a junior Advertising and Public Relations major with a minor in Spanish at UNL. Previously the social media chair, Ochoa is currently the Vice President and Primary Programmer for the Mexican American Student Association and has been a member for 3 years.

Kalee Olson is a policy manager at the Center for Rural Affairs, where she oversees the organization's agriculture, conservation, and federal policy portfolios. A resident of rural Burt County, Olson assists with the family row crop operation and manages a small cow-calf herd.

Veronica Pipestem is a member of the Otoe-Missouria Tribe, an Osage headright holder, and is of Citizen

and Prairie Band Potawatomi descent. Pipestem owns ItsimiVee, a firm that specializes in contract grant writing and in developing practical solutions for cultural and natural resources organizations. Pipestem serves her community by growing ancestral foods and is a Coordinating Committee Member of Braiding the Sacred, a network of Indigenous growers who are dedicated to preserving and perpetuating Indigenous ancestral seeds. Pipestem is also a co-founder of Native Foodways Restoration Alliance, a nonprofit that seeks to preserve, build, and sustain relationships between Native peoples, land, and foods.

Laura Priest is a policy associate with the Center for Rural Affairs, focused on shaping practical energy solutions throughout the state. Her work includes researching and analyzing clean energy policy, tracking legislation, and helping stakeholders understand how policy decisions impact affordability, reliability, and local economies. She works closely with other organizations, customer-owned electric utilities, community leaders, and advocates to ensure the work is a reflection of the lived experience of people in rural communities. Priest is passionate about expanding renewable energy opportunities in rural areas and supporting an energy future that is community-driven and built to benefit Nebraskans for the long term.

Dr. Marty Ramirez is a retired counseling psychologist, having worked at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln for 38 years. A Scottsbluff native, Ramirez began working at UNL as a counselor for the Department of Minority Affairs in 1973. Upon receiving his Ph.D., he worked at UNL's Counseling Center and for the Department of Counseling and Psychological Services. Ramirez received his B.A. from Chadron State College, his M.A. and Ph.D. from UNL. He has presented numerous workshops both locally and nationally in the areas of mental health, career planning, diversity and cultural competence. Ramirez received Nebraska-Land Day's "Hispanic Man of the Year" and two weeks later received the League of United Latin American Citizens "National Hispanic Man of The Year" in Corpus Christi, Texas. Ramirez has received Omaha's "Mexican Independence Day Veterans Award," the Nebraska State Education Association's Great Plains Milestone Award, and was Nebraska's Purple Heart heroes honoree at the West Point Academy. Ramirez is a son of Mexican immigrants, a Vietnam veteran, and recipient of the Purple Heart.

Dr. Athena Ramos is an Associate Professor in the Department of Health Promotion at the University of Nebraska Medical Center in Omaha, Nebraska and is

affiliated with the Central States Center for Agricultural Safety and Health, the Center for Reducing Health Disparities, and is a Center for Great Plains Studies Fellow. Ramos leads a transdisciplinary research team focused on occupational health and safety within the agrifood system, integration, and community well-being. With nearly 25 years of experience, she has proven ability to envision and implement health and social research and human service programs with culturally diverse populations.

Katelyn Rich is a Research Assistant for the Rural Reconciliation Project and a third-year law student at the University of Nebraska College of Law. Before attending law school, Rich earned a BS in Political Science and Public Administration from the University of Nebraska at Kearney. While attending school, she interned at a rural law practice in Minden, Neb., which fostered a deeper love for rural places.

Tim Rinne is the Co-chair of Lincoln Mayor Leirion Gaylor Baird's Community Committee on Local Food, whose Local Food System Plan 2023-2027 was the first Urban Agriculture blueprint in Nebraska. With his neighbors, he also co-founded and manages the national award-winning Hawley Hamlet Neighborhood Garden just a mile from downtown Lincoln. In a standard residential block with 16 domiciles and no vacant lots, four-fifths of an acre of grass lawn has been converted to horticulture to grow fresh produce for the 20 annually participating households. "We're on a mission to demonstrate that city folks can do more than just eat."

As an artist and educator, **Steve Rossi** has broad overlapping interdisciplinary interests that are reflected in his creative practice and pedagogy. His most recent work involves exploring how we live in relation to water in our built environments and is informed by natural resource stewardship considerations, labor histories, and geological formations. His work has been exhibited at the Francis M. Maguire Museum of Art, the Jule Collins Smith Museum of Fine Art, the John Michael Kohler Art Center, and the Hudson Valley Museum of Contemporary Art among many others. He is currently a Center for Great Plains Studies Affiliate Fellow and Associate Professor and Sculpture Program Head at Saint Joseph's University in Philadelphia, Penn.

Dr. Thomas Sanchez is an associate professor in the Department of Sociology & Anthropology at the University of Nebraska Omaha and Associate Director of the Office of Latino and Latin American Studies (OLLAS). He has conducted research on ethnic identity and the incorporation of Latino immigrants in places

like Schuyler, Nebraska, and the plight of DACA college student and agricultural worker access to legal aid in the state. His current research agenda includes an examination of the history and future of Latino students at UNO. His teaching interests include Chicano and Latino studies, race and ethnic relations, and sociological theory.

Ness Sandoval, see page 10

Dr. Jessica Shoemaker is the Steinhart Foundation Distinguished Professor of Law at the University of Nebraska and Director of the Rural Reconciliation Project. Shoemaker researches how systems of land tenure adapt over time and shape human communities and natural environments. She has a special interest in issues of justice and sustainability across the American countryside, including Indigenous land tenure and governance. She has been an Andrew Carnegie Fellow and a Fulbright Canada Research Chair in Aboriginal Legal and Resource Rights. She has also served as a Founding Fellow of the Rural Futures Institute, President of the Association of Law, Property, and Society, and has sat on the Board of Governors for the Center for Great Plains Studies.

Steve Smith is a strategic communications leader working in the democracy-building space, with more than three decades of experience across journalism, higher education, and nonprofit civic leadership. Over the course of his career, he has helped people and organizations articulate their “why,” translate democratic values into public-facing narratives, and build trust through clear, principled storytelling. His communications leadership roles have included serving as director of communications at Civic Nebraska and also at Citizen University, a national nonprofit organization that equips Americans to practice and spread citizenship.

Lewis “Bleu” St. Cyr (Ho-Chunk/Oglala Lakota) is an enrolled member of the Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska and resides in Winnebago, Neb. He is a proud member of the Bear Clan and a descendant of Chief White Cow Killer (Kills White Buffalo) and Chief Red Cloud. A graduate of Winnebago High School, St. Cyr went on to earn a Bachelor’s and Master of Business Administration from Wayne State College. He is a dancer, a traditional singer and flute player, as well as a bead and quillwork artist. St. Cyr currently serves as the Language Preservation Director for the HoChunk Renaissance Program of the Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska. Under his leadership, the program has developed a range of resources to promote and preserve the Ho-Chunk

language. These include children’s books, a 250+ page language resource book, a mobile app, a dual-language classroom, community-based classes, and more. He contributes to the development of an ongoing curriculum and plays an active role in restructuring the Language Apprentice Program, an initiative dedicated to revitalizing and sustaining the Ho-Chunk language for future generations.

Dr. William F. Stoutamire is an associate professor of History at the University of Nebraska at Kearney, where he directs the undergraduate minor in public history and the online Public History MA program. Prior to joining the faculty at UNK, he worked as a contract historian for the National Park Service and served as director of UNK’s G.W. Frank Museum of History and Culture. His research interests include the history of early museums and preservation activities in the American West, with special emphasis on the role these efforts played in the larger settler colonial project.

Michelle Suarez has a long record of service to the Lincoln community through her work as an elementary school teacher and principal with the Lincoln Public Schools. After her retirement from LPS, she was the Early Childhood Developer for the Prosper Lincoln initiative, which works to increase cross-sector initiatives and resources to improve early childhood development. Michelle held an interim appointment on the Lincoln City Council in 2023. Her service continues through her current board and volunteer work. She earned a Masters of Educational Administration degree and a Bachelors of Science degree in Elementary Education from UNL.

Andrew Tonnies is a policy associate at the Center for Rural Affairs. He coordinates the Conservation Mentorship Network for the Center. He also owns and operates a small, diversified farm that focuses on specialty hogs, chickens, and fruit.

Grace Tracey is a Research Assistant for the Rural Reconciliation Project and a third-year law student at the University of Nebraska College of Law. Before law school, Tracey earned a BS in Anthropology and Classical Studies from Iowa State University. As an undergrad, she had the opportunity to research classical societies and develop her interest in law.

Dr. Nathan Tye is an associate professor of history at UNK. Tye was born and raised in Kearney, Neb. He holds a BA from Creighton University and a PhD from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Tye specializes in Nebraska history, the history of the

American West and Midwest, labor history, gender and sexuality history, as well as digital and public history.

Heidi Uhing is the executive director of The Good Life Institute, a new nonprofit that serves as a communications hub for organizations advocating for the common good of all Nebraskans. She previously served as the public policy director and registered lobbyist for Civic Nebraska, communications director for the ACLU of Nebraska, and director of the Nebraska Legislature's Unicameral Information Office. Uhing studied English at the University of Iowa and journalism and public relations at UNL.

Dr. Liz VanWormer works with interdisciplinary teams to enhance the health of people, animals (both domestic and wild), and our shared environments. She coordinates the Nebraska One Health program, working with students, researchers, and government and community partners from diverse backgrounds and perspectives to address complex health challenges. VanWormer collaborates on One Health projects ranging from studies of land-to-sea parasite transmission to using art-science approaches to explore interconnected biodiversity and health. She is a veterinary epidemiologist in the School of Veterinary Medicine & Biomedical Sciences and the School of Natural Resources at UNL.

Kelsey Varisco is a Drought Social Science Associate at the National Drought Mitigation Center at the School of Natural Resources at UNL. Her work focuses on engaging local communities and collaborating with climate experts on drought resilience projects.

Dr. LuAnn Wandsnider is a Professor and Associate Director at the School of Global Integrative Studies at UNL. She is an anthropologically trained archaeologist and methodologist and a Center for Great Plains Studies Fellow.

Dr. Michelle (Evers) Warren is a Kearney, Neb., native and proudly teaches her passions—Spanish language, film, culture, and literature—at University of Nebraska at Kearney, where she also completed her undergraduate degree. Her literary criticism examines issues of human rights and identity, including the intersections of ethnicity, nationality, gender, and race. She collects and disseminates oral histories of Spanish-speaking immigrants who have made Central Nebraska their home, and contributes to a National Institute of Health-funded research team that advocates for medical access and social supports for non-English speaking neighbors in the region. Her work extends to

the public humanities, in sharing international films at Kearney's World Theatre through UNK@TheWORLD, and coordinating other cultural events in the area.

Della Warrior (Otoe-Missouria) is President and CEO of MICA Group, which she co-founded in 2006 with Cherokee Chief Wilma Mankiller. The MICA Group is a Native-led non-profit that works with tribal nations and Native communities nationwide to support their cultural survival and sovereignty. Warrior was the first (and to-date, only) woman to serve as chairperson of the Otoe-Missouria Tribe. She served as the Executive Director of the Museum of Indian Arts and Culture from 2013-2021. Warrior was president of the Institute of American Indian Arts (IAIA) from 1998-2005. Warrior holds a master's degree in education from Harvard University and is a former board member of the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian, the President's Advisory Board on Tribal Colleges and Universities and the American Indian College Fund. In 2007, Warrior was inducted into the Oklahoma Women's Hall of Fame. In 2018, Warrior received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Association of Tribal Archives Museums and Libraries, and in 2025 she was inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Anthony Warrior (Sicangu-Bad Nations and Absentee Shawnee/Mvskoke Creek) is the chef and owner of Warrior's Palate Catering and is the Human Resource Director at Nebraska Indian Community College.

Tony Wood (Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska) is a Financial Services Coordinator with HoChunk Community Capital who has 20 years of experience working on the Winnebago Reservation in financial services, real estate, and small businesses.

SUBMISSIONS ARE OPEN

Great Plains Quarterly publishes articles for people interested in history, culture, and social issues relevant to the Great Plains, which include Colorado, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas, Wyoming, and the Canadian provinces of Alberta, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan.

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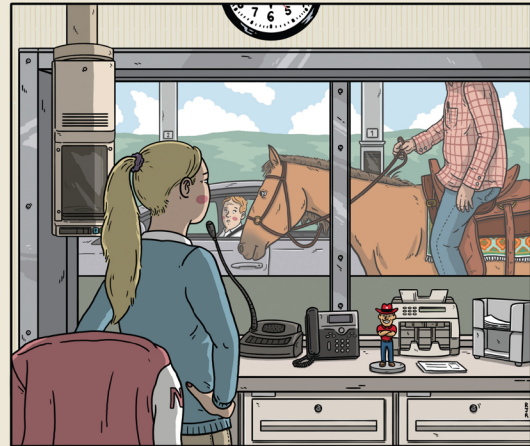
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Next year, the Center for Great Plains Studies will host the annual Great Plains conference on the themes of health and wellness, both for the inhabitants of the Great Plains and for the land itself. Join us for two days of speakers, panels, workshops, networking, and health and wellness activities.

