

# ARTIFACTS

Vol. XI, No. 2, Winter 1983

The American Indian Archaeological Institute

## DREAMS AND VISIONS

### *Their Significance in the Native American Cycles of Life*

Smoholla stated: "My young men shall never work. Men who work cannot dream, and wisdom comes in dreams."<sup>1</sup>

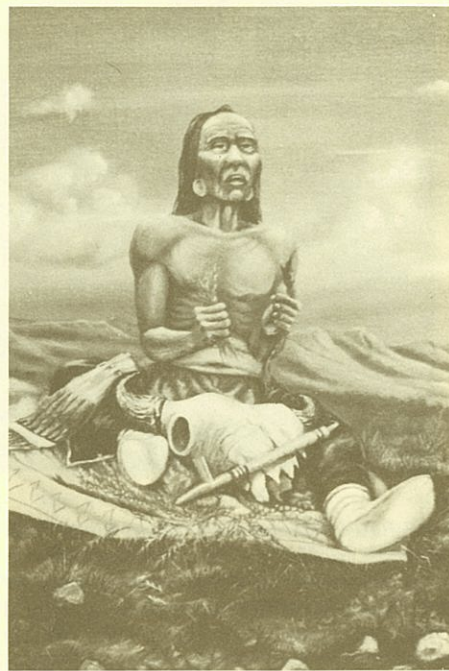
A Lakota warrior chanted: "You cannot harm me, you cannot harm me—one who has dreamed a dream like mine."<sup>2</sup>

A Sioux vision song went: "Friends, behold, Sacred I have been made. Friends behold, In a Sacred manner I have been influenced. At the gathering of the clouds, Sacred I have been made."<sup>3</sup>

Dreams and visionary experiences have a great significance and value to traditional Native Americans. They have been revered as a source of wisdom, protection and power, and regarded as the most valuable of one's possessions.

A dream or vision was the vehicle for entrance into the spiritual or supernatural world, that other world of beauty and mystery, which has a deeper meaning and a more profound reality. It was a place where one was met by ancestors and animals spirits and given knowledge, instructions or warnings to be considered seriously and heeded after one's return.

Young children were admonished to remember and pay attention to their dreams and visionary experiences. The deliberate seeking out of a vision, called a *vision quest*, which usually occurred during adolescence, was a widely practiced custom among Native American tribes. It has been recorded among the Iroquois, Delaware, Pamunky, Ojibway, Winnebago, Chippewa, Sioux, Cheyenne, Crow, Comanche, Apache, Blackfoot, Nez Percé, Salish and Kwakiutl. Though visions were universally important, the vision quest



Medicine Man by Roscoe White Eagle, The Museum of the Plains Indian and Craft Center, Browning, Montana.

was not a custom among other tribes such as the Navajo, Hopi or Pueblo. Commonly a male puberty ritual, the vision quest also might have been undertaken by girls, as among the Crow and Nez Percé. It might have been undertaken at various times later in life, as was the tradition with the Arapaho. Within some tribes, such as the Eskimo, it was mainly shamans or medicine people who sought visionary spirit helpers to give them power for healing.

After an often long and arduous period of preparation which may have included physical hardships, fasting, purification and a sweatbath, the vision seeker proceeded alone to an isolated spot where spirits were believed to reside. This might have been a mountaintop, a hill, a forest or a setting near water. The seeker remained there a varying number of days,

alone, fasting, sometimes mortifying his flesh or smoking a pipe—all to aid in the procuring of a vision. The fortunate were beckoned and escorted into the spirit world to proceed on a journey, leaving their physical sensations and body behind. It was there one acquired spirit guardians or helpers and from them power and direction for one's life, as well as instructions for appropriate objects for the medicine bundle, a song and a dance. The successful vision seeker was transformed from child to adult, from helpless to powerful and secure, now knowing his path of life and relationship with others.

A vision may never be disclosed or shared, except with a medicine man, in order to retain its power, which might be lost if revealed or not heeded. The acquisition of a vision and spirit helper may be acknowledged in a tribal ceremony. Among the Delaware at the midwinter Big House Ceremony, a young man might have performed the dance and the song he acquired during his vision quest. The Nez Percé held Guardian Spirit Dances where one's guardian spirits were enacted

*Bear Butte, South Dakota mountaintop vision quest site of the Plains Indians.*



*Editors' Note: This article is the result of extensive research and travel to many reservations across the country by Dr. Raelene Gold, a trustee of the Institute. Dr. Gold is a graduate of the University of Washington School of Medicine and the William Alanson White Institute of Psychoanalysis.*

in dance, thereby achieving a oneness with the animal spirits and invoking their power. Because the visionary experience bestowed upon the seeker direction and the power to become a hunter, a warrior or a shaman, the vision song could be sung to invoke the spirit helper and achieve reunion with it and its power before undertaking various essential activities. The visionary experience and the acquisition of spirit helpers were essential to the shaman and the curing process. Shamans utilized their own and the patient's dreams in the healing process, and a dream or vision determined membership in various medicine societies such as the Iroquois False Face Society and the Ojibway Midewiwin Society.

Dreams and visions were widely utilized as sources of knowledge, creative inspiration and solutions to problems in Native American society. Crafts and artwork frequently took inspiration from dreams for designs on basketry, pottery and clothing. Shields and tipis were often painted with images from power visions. False face masks, kachinas and the animal spirit masks of the Northwest Coast were derived from dream images. Eskimo sculpture often depicted visionary experience and guardian spirits, as does much contemporary Native American painting.



Blackfoot tipi, The Museum of the Plains Indian and Craft Center, Browning, Montana.

Dreams and visions were the inspiration for and an intrinsic part of traditional Native American ceremony and dance.

Instructions for the Ghost Dance were delivered in a dream. Dreams were often consulted before selecting the date, location or program of a particular ceremony, as was the case with the Sun Dance. Dream guessing was an important part of the Iroquois Midwinter Ceremony and the seeking of a vision a part of the Plains Sun Dance.

The Sun Dance on exhibit at The Museum of the Plains Indian and Craft Center, Browning, Montana.



Photographs by Raelene Gold.

Finally, Native Americans have traditionally looked to dreams and visions for direction for the tribe. Creation stories and beliefs often found their source in dreams. Codes of ethics such as the Cheyenne Code and the Seneca Code of Handsome Lake were derived from visions. The political direction of a whole tribe could be determined by the wisdom acquired in a vision, as was the case in the vision of Plenty-Coups, which determined Crow political policy toward white society.

Though many of these traditions have been eradicated and suppressed by the dominant white culture, in some areas they have survived and persisted, often shrouded in secrecy. Today there are indications of a reemergence and renaissance of these traditions. Vision quests, medicine-man healing, vision-inspired art and such ceremonies as the Sun Dance and the Iroquois Midwinter Ceremony have survived into the present. And now there are efforts to educate non-Native Americans about the ancient and traditional worldviews and lifeways of America's first peoples and to offer an alternative consciousness to the contemporary world.

— Raelene Gold

### Footnotes

- <sup>1</sup>Spinden, Herbert, J.  
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- <sup>2</sup>Turner, Frederick, editor  
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- <sup>3</sup>Densmore, Frances  
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## What are Shamans?

The following excerpts from "Shamans and Scientists: Sisters and Brothers in Interpretation of Man and Nature," Artifacts Volume 5, Number 4 June 1977, by former staff member Sharon Wirt is presented to further elucidate the role of the shaman and the supernatural in Native American culture.

What are shamans? From an anthropological perspective, a shaman is a specialist who, after a certain length of training and some kind of *rite de passage* (a religious experience, personality change, finding access to the supernatural), becomes an interpreter of Man, supernature, and nature; who uses a little-understood jargon; and who functions in the community as an intermediary between Man, supernature, and nature — for a fee.

The supernatural and natural can be best understood as *attitudes* of mind and feeling. The *natural* is the expected, the familiar, explicable, mundane world, which is more or less taken for granted; while the *supernatural* is the realm of the unusual, inexplicable, awesomely extraordinary, not to be taken casually. The terms themselves are products of European rationalism and were and are used as analytical tools for classifying phenomena. Not everyone classifies this way, however. Many pre-Columbian North American cultures made no sharp distinction between nature and supernature.

Whether a people lean more heavily towards supernature or nature in the playing out of their daily lives is *not* a sign of cultural superiority or inferiority. It simply represents an adaptation to a particular ecologic and cultural history. The supernatural was central to the pre-Columbian Indian's adaptation, in contrast to contemporary America's stress on the natural.

Shamans are men or women who diagnose and cure illness; find lost objects or people; predict the future; read and control weather; locate the enemy and aid in overcoming him; help in finding or attracting game animals or influencing the weather for successful food production. Many shamans were not only excellent weathermen but shrewd, finely-tuned observers of nature. Speaking of medicine, shamans treated successfully many real and psychosomatic ills, and many, like the Iroquois, practiced sophisticated psychiatry. The Iroquois believed that people harbored deep, dark soul wishes which were not revealed to a person during waking hours but most often in dreams. The cure essentially consisted of having the patient "act out" his or her soul wish. In short, shamans understand and influence events in nature, supernature, and Man.

Among traditional Native Americans today these beliefs and practices continue.

## Collections Spotlight

In recent months, several collections have been accepted for donation by the Collections Committee. Besides significant contributions to our growing woodsplint basket collection by Lyent Russell, Mr. and Mrs. Blaine A. Cota, Jr., Mrs. Henry M. Clark and Ken Mynter, important local lithic collections have been accepted from Miss Dorothea Cramer, Mr. and Mrs. Fred Roos and John Hallaway. Lyent Russell continues year after year to share and entrust his invaluable New England lithics and baskets to the Institute. Other recent donors include Mrs. Sidney Colborne and Mrs. C. Gordon Grimes.

In particular, the Hallaway collection is notable for its research and exhibit potential. Largely surface collected from sites in Bethlehem, it contains Early Archaic bifurcate-based projectile points (8000-8500 years ago), Late Archaic stemmed points and Woodland triangle points. In addition to these are water-polished flint chunks, retouched and utilized flakes and debitage. Representative collections like this one provide valuable information and aid the Research Department in its study of the archaeology of Litchfield County.

— Ann McMullen  
Collections Manager

## Field Notes

Summer 1982

The excavation at the Templeton site (6LF21) in Washington Depot began in early April and ended in August. The plethora and diversity of bifaces, finished and unfinished projectile points, knives and scrapers was unexpected. The extension of the Paleo-Indian occupation area first uncovered in 1977 revealed that that camp was nearly four times the size first estimated. The Late Archaic component is by far the most intriguing, since it has the most diversity of any other seen in the field and is probably the result of a single short-term encampment. This will require a year or more of study before we can actually determine how much of this occupation occurred at a single point in time and how much was added years later. The biggest surprise was an apparently Early Archaic feature consisting of two bifaces broken in the process of manufacture and associated with chunks of water-polished flint, primary cortical flakes and hundreds of retouch (sharpening) flakes. The analysis is just beginning on all of these occupations, so there will be many more surprises.

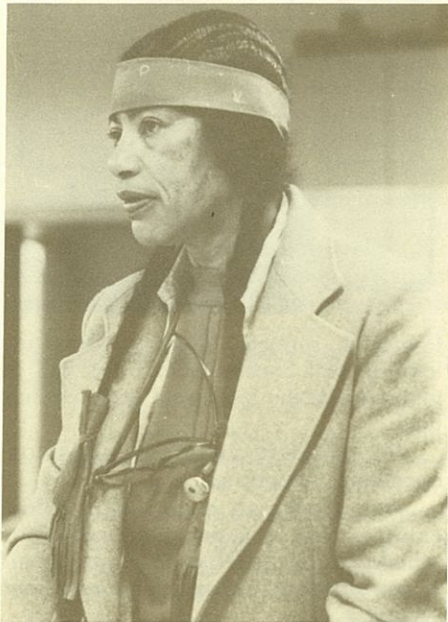
Fall 1982

A mastodon has been uncovered in western Massachusetts during the back-

hoeing of a bog to make a farm pond. The Research Department has undertaken this project because of its possible cultural implications: one of the large bones recovered has what appear to be butchering marks. The bones of the animal recovered to date include sections of long bone (humerus?), teeth, and tusk chunks and fragments. Seeds from the water plant, *Najas flexilis*, and white spruce cones were also recovered from the associated bog matrix. The plan is to implement a three phase project over the next two years. The first stage will be completed this winter with the collecting of flotation samples and the sifting of the existing spoil pile from the initial backhoeing. The second phase in early spring is an archaeological survey of the surrounding terraces and ridges to determine the presence of any prehistoric camp sites which may be associated with the demise of the beast. The third phase will be a multi-disciplinary research and excavation project to recover the remainder of the beast, associated faunal, floral, geological and palynological remains, as well as any artifacts.

— Roger Moeller, Ph.D.  
Director of Research

## Ella Thomas/Sekatau Narragansett



Ella Thomas/Sekatau wears many hats. By that we mean she is a woman with many jobs and responsibilities, but she also admits to a passion for attractive adornment of the head. Sporting a new hat she may turn up at a meeting of the Narragansett Tribal Council, the Tomaquag Rock Shelter Society or the Rhode Island State Preservation Commission—all of which she is a member.

Since 1973 Ella has been working to obtain federal recognition for her people, the Narragansett. Finally, in August of this year the recognition was awarded. She was also instrumental in land claims action which was successful in 1978.

One of her more strenuous current activities is that of grant-writing. She recently spent several days in Washington, D.C. presenting and preparing a grant request for administrative monies for the Narragansett. She will also be preparing a grant to obtain funds for archaeological research of the Tomaquag Rock Shelter, a circa 8000-year-old site in

Rhode Island. Besides being the Narragansett Tribal Coordinator, Ella is an ethnohistorian, a medicine woman and an accomplished craftsperson who works in basketry, pottery, weaving and leatherwork.

Ella Sekatau was instrumental in establishing the Wampanoag encampment at Plimoth Plantation and frequently presents programs at the Haffenreffer Museum of Anthropology at Brown University in Rhode Island.

Another hat she wears is that of member of the AIAI Native American Advisory Committee. Members can also look forward to seeing her at AIAI in July during our Indian week of crafts demonstrations when she will be fingerweaving.



*Ella Sekatau explains twining to workshop participants while holding a partially woven bag. Such bags were common Woodland Indian containers and were made of bemp and other native fibers.*



## Volunteers Needed

The "Friends of the Institute" newly appointed chairperson, Mary Anne Greene, plans a volunteer rally in early 1983. Each year the Institute benefits from thousands of donated hours resulting in many extra things being accomplished. And many other things remain undone.

Volunteers are needed as

- ... a librarian for the Education Library
- ... a children's storyteller
- ... a shopkeeper
- ... an artist

- ... a book designer
  - ... an artifact cleaner-and-sorter
  - ... a receptionist
  - ... a typist
  - ... an exhibits designer
- Items are also needed
- ... clippers and rakes
  - ... turkey feathers
  - ... antlers and deer bone
  - ... venison roasts to freeze for Founders' Day 1983

Call AIAI at 868-0518.



## Siftings

AIAI's Occasional Paper Number 3, *Practicing Environmental Archaeology: Methods and Interpretations*, edited by Dr. Roger Moeller, is a compilation of papers presented at the Middle Atlantic Archaeology Conference and is now available in the Museum Shop for \$10.

1982 has been a year for *national* awards for the Institute: in October AIAI received an Award of Merit from the American Association of State and Local History and in November the National Society of the DAR awarded AIAI their History Medal.

For a fifth year, the Institute has been awarded an Institute of Museum Services grant for general operating support in the amount of \$35,000.

The Publications Committee met on November 13, 1982 and reviewed plans for an exhibits guide to be published by the Institute with grants from Reader's Digest and the George Dudley Seymour Trust.

The Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees adopted a motion of commendation for Stephen Post, Director of Education, for his service to the community as an Emergency Medical Technician.

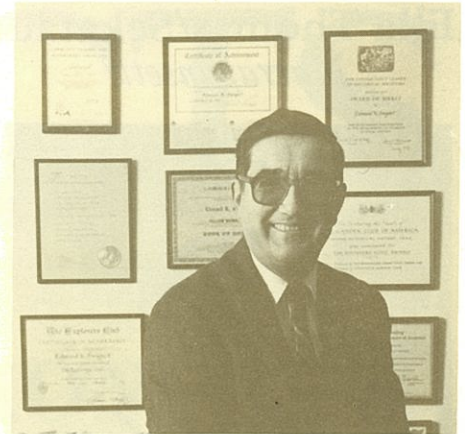
A new monthly Native American newspaper is being published by Eagle Wing Press, 60-2 Roundtree Drive, Naugatuck, CT 06770. Subscriptions are \$5/U.S. per year.

Ned Swigart, Stephen Post, and Roger Moeller attended the 49th annual meeting of the Eastern States Archaeological Federation in Norfolk, Virginia, November 4-7. Ned was elected to another term as treasurer; Roger is the outgoing president having served two years, but will continue as ESAF business manager. Roger presented a slide talk on the recently completed excavations at the Templeton site in Washington Depot and the mastodon project in western Massachusetts. His comment that the latter was truly a mammoth undertaking was received with a unanimous groan.



# AFTER HOURS

## Message from the President



*I cannot believe another year has passed since I last had the privilege of sharing with you my own personal thoughts about the present exciting developments and future challenges at AIAl.*

### Program

Both our education and research departments continue their invaluable roles in the life of the Institute. The Education Department has served 130 of the 169 towns in Connecticut, plus increasing numbers of students from New York, New Jersey, Massachusetts and Rhode Island. With the help of a scholarship challenge grant from Reader's Digest Corporation matched by thirty-seven area corporations and foundations many inner city schools are now being reached. Among the new educational offerings are a teacher loan kit for a week's activities about Indian lifeways, a slide lecture entitled "Connecticut Indians of the Historic Period," a one week summer program of visiting craftspeople and two outdoor Indian Seasonal Survival Trails. Work progressed this summer on the Indian village with Jeff Kalin completing a wigwam. The development of the outdoor Indian Village is supported by a grant from the Connecticut Department of Economic Development and the Committee for the Restoration of Historical Assets, The Waterbury Foundation, The Edgerton Foundation, The Cigna Corporation and The Anne Richardson Fund.

In research we excavated a site containing well-stratified 4,000, 7,000 and 10,000 year-old campsites on the Shepaug River. Initial survey work located twelve sites in Robbins Swamp in northern Litchfield County and an ancient lake. Fieldwork will continue in this area in 1983 as we seek to understand the changing Connecticut environment and human settlement patterns during the past eight to ten thousand years. We are grateful to our many benefactors such as the Friends of Research, private foundations and the Connecticut Historical Commission, who support our research program.

After a year of preparation "Woodsplint Basketry of the Eastern Algonkian" opened September 25th. Sixty-seven nineteenth century baskets, many on loan from

local historical societies, other museums and private collections, illustrate the development of this craft in southern New England.

### Support

Thanks to you, our loyal members, we once again balanced our \$347,000 budget in spite of these extremely difficult economic times. You directly contributed over \$151,900 or 41% of this total, heartwarming tangible evidence of your faith in our Cause. The average membership remains over \$100 per member, one of the highest operating membership donation rates in the country. We are also pleased to announce that our first Annual Fund appeal of January 1982 provided extra funds for special new projects; we so appreciate your *extra* gifts to the Annual Fund.

We are very proud of and grateful for the growing support from area corporations and foundations which have helped immeasurably in offsetting AIAl's lost federal research and education funds. These two sources gave \$71,600 during 1981-82 or 19% of our total income. Our twelve endowment funds now total more than \$230,000. In addition we have been informed that we will be the recipient of five bequests, another source of vital assistance. Day-to-day operations are secure with our unrestricted operating fund, guaranteeing two months of cash reserves to offset seasonal cash flow problems.

### Future

We continue to foresee challenging days ahead for 1983. And we pledge to you continuing excellence in our education and research programs.

... We pledge to reach more students annually in spite of increasing school budget cuts. A *second* Reader's Digest scholarship challenge grant has already been matched substantially by area corporations and foundations. We will travel to the Hartford public schools, among others, for the first time in 1983.

... We pledge to maintain our field research at maximum levels in spite of severe reductions in federal aid. The winter will be spent analyzing the summer's

fieldwork, reports will be written, cataloguing will continue, exhibits will be planned and the 1983 field season scheduled.

... We pledge to continue to add to our excellent collections.

... We pledge to change our indoor exhibits with a major new exhibition scheduled for the fall of 1983 and to add to our outdoor Indian village and Trail systems.

... We pledge to remain in the forefront of efforts in our country to present an objective and thoughtful view of our unique Native American heritage to all of our visitors and worldwide audience.

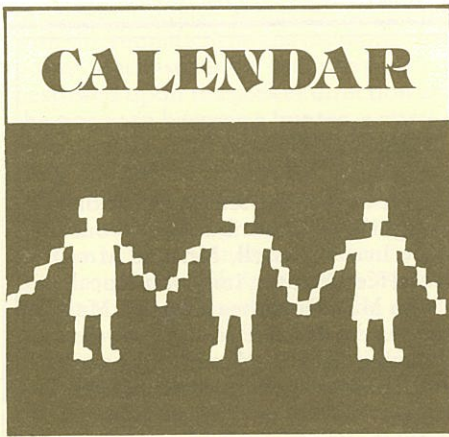
Interest in Native Americans, their philosophy, history and technology is a growing worldwide phenomenon. A testimony to this was our receiving the prestigious Phoenix Award from the Society of American Travel Writers, a worldwide organization, as one of the eight top preservation and heritage tourist attractions in the United States.

Our plans are indeed ambitious, but we feel they are both realistic and essential, if we are to fulfill the very reason for our existence as an education and research center. Some 1982 programs already have financial backing but others, especially our research projects, are still largely unfunded. To carry out these projects we will need the continued invaluable support of our members. In that regard we will hold our second Annual Fund appeal in late January to present specific needs in the hope that you might once again consider an extra gift to support one of them.

For your great generosity, interest and partnership in the preservation of the Past we are eternally grateful.

*Ned Swigart*

- Edmund K. Swigart  
President



The Small World Film Festival is now sponsored by United Technologies Corporation.

JANUARY

2 & 3/Sun & Mon, 2:30 pm film, *I Heard the Owl Call My Name*.  
 8/Sat, 1 pm slide lecture, *The First Peoples of Connecticut*, by Steve Post.  
 8 & 9/Sat & Sun, 2:30 pm film, *Black History, Lost Stolen or Strayed*.

15 & 16/Sat & Sun, 2:30 pm film, *I Have a Dream (Life of Martin Luther King)*.  
 22 & 23/Sat & Sun, 2:30 pm films, *Life in the Woodlands Before the White Man Came* and *Hunter of the Seal*.  
 29 & 30/Sat & Sun, 2:30 pm film, *Longhouse People*.

FEBRUARY

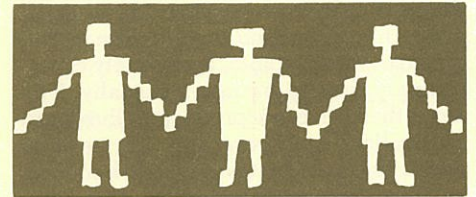
5 & 6/Sat & Sun, 2:30 pm film, *Mysteries of the Great Pyramid*.  
 12/Sat, 1 pm lecture *Love Native American Style* by Karen Coody Cooper. Courtship and marriage as practiced by various Native American societies.  
 12 & 13/Sat & Sun, 2:30 pm film, *Nanook of the North*.  
 19/Sat, 1 pm guided *Woodland Indian Survival Walk* led by Edmund K. Swigart.  
 19 & 20/Sat & Sun, 2:30 pm film, *Mystery of the Anasazi*.  
 26/Sat, 10 am - 4 pm *Workshop on Seminole Patchwork* taught by Collette Laico of White Plains, N.Y. Participants will learn techniques and variations of the colorful sewing developed by the Seminole. Samplers will be made from bright colors.  
 \$20/members, \$25/non-members.\*

26 & 27/Sat & Sun, 2:30 pm films, *Mideast: Land and People* and *Mideast: Art, Crafts and Architecture*.

MARCH

5 & 6/Sat & Sun, 2:30 pm film, *Colonial America: The Beginning*.  
 12 & 13/Sat & Sun, 2:20 pm film, *Is There An American Stonehenge*.  
 13/Sun, 1 pm, *The Little People*. Readings of the Irish leprechaun and the Native American little people by Irishman Phil Storey and Cherokee Karen Coody Cooper.  
 19 & 20/Sat & Sun, 2:30 pm film, *Those Who Sing Together (Plains Indians)*.  
 26 & 27/Sat & Sun, 2:30 pm film, *Black Music in America*.

\*Register by calling AIAI at 203-868-0518.



Spring Teachers' Workshop

A Survey Course of American Indians

Derived from a course by Karen Coody Cooper at Western Conn. State College

Thursdays, from 3:30 to 4:45 p.m.

- April 7 - Historic Period of Connecticut Indians including Today.
  - April 14 - Origins: The Paleo and Archaic Peoples.
  - April 21 - Eastern Woodland Indian Lifeways.
  - April 28 - The Southwest and Great Basin.
  - May 5 - Plains and Plateau.
  - May 12 - California and Northwest Coast.
  - May 19 - Subarctic and Inuit.
  - May 26 - Avoiding Indian Stereotypes in the Classroom.
- Fee: - \$55 members; \$65 non-members; \$10 per session if not taking whole course. Register with the Education Department; schedule subject to change.

ARTIFACTS

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