



Located on the Omaha Reservation, the **Omaha Tribal Historical Research Project, Inc. (OTHRP)** is the cultural authority for the Omaha by Tribal Resolution [law.] As such we have been active since the mid 1970s when Dennis Hastings returned from California to his home reservation in Nebraska and began working to restore the Omaha culture and language.

Hastings started his work with Paul Brill collecting tribal genealogies and information regarding clan kinship systems and clan names using both oral histories and archival information.

In 1982 Joan Mark, Peabody Museum, was researching the papers and works of Dr. Francis La Flesche, Esq. and a friendship was quickly established between Mark and Hastings. This friendship became very useful when she assisted the Tribe in reestablishing relations with the Peabody Museum when the Omaha asked for the return of their Sacred Pole and sacred artifacts in 1989. OTHRP coordinated the Omaha Tribal Council's work with the staff of the Peabody Museum for the return of all the sacred artifacts held by the museum. Their return involved special agreements with the Great Plains Studies and the Museum at the University of Nebraska in Lincoln, until such time the Tribe could assume possession by the completion of its own museum, New Moon Moving. Significant among these artifacts was the Sacred Pole, symbolizing the unity of the people.

In 1985 Indiana University (IU) and the Library of Congress' American Folklife Center (AFC) joined together with Hastings upon a traditional Omaha music project with wax cylinders in order to reintroduce Omaha music in conjunction with Dorothy Sarah Lee, IU, and Dr. Alan Jabbour, AFC. This required the remastering of wax cylinder recordings which crumbled with age as they re-recorded the music. They were able to save all the music. Hastings brought in Omaha singers as part of the project. Once completed, the project presented the music to the tribe in the form of a record and illustrated booklet. Dorothy Sara Lee, and Maria La Vigna, eds. **Omaha Music: Historical Recordings from the Fletcher/La Flesche Collection**. Booklet accompanying Disk AFC L71. Washington, D.C. Library of Congress, 1985. The Wax Cylinder Project caught the imagination of Charles Kuralt and his "Sunday Morning" show featured Dennis Hastings in a documentation on CBS. Roger Welsch's CBS Sunday Morning News feature, "Postcards from Nebraska" also covered the story.

The fight for the right to repatriate Tribal human remains grew hot in 1989. Senator Ernie Chambers, Nebraska's long time and only black legislator for much of that time, volunteered to write LB-340 to permanently resolve the problem for the Omaha. Attorney Robert Perego and Walter Echo-Hawk, a Pawnee lawyer, [current OTHRP Board of Trustees member] both from the Native American Rights Fund, NARF, came to help with the legal fight. The initial fight for the return of the Omaha remains went down in defeat. Echo-Hawk and OTHRP changed plans and focused on the Pawnee remains. In 1989 the Unmarked Human Burial Sites and Skeletal Remains Protection Act was passed by the Nebraska Legislature. The Pawnee Tribe, in a legal war with the same institutions over the same arguments, won their case. A 1989 Certificate of Award was presented to Hastings by the Pawnee Tribe: "Given in recognition of OTHRP's assistance and support leading to the enactment of the Nebraska Unmarked Burial Sites and Skeletal Remains Protection Act."

In 1989 Dennis Hastings had a series of strokes from which he has made a remarkable recovery.

1990 saw a federal law passed, based upon the Nebraska law, called the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA). OTHRP coordinated the Omaha Tribal Council's work with the staff of the remaining state/national museums who also returned their collections of sacred artifacts and human remains in response to NAGPRA. Significant artifacts for the Omaha were the Sacred White Buffalo Robe, symbolizing the buffalo hunting society that defined the Omaha and one of the Sacred Pipes. Dennis Hastings received his Masters Degree from Western Institute for Social Research for work done on the manuscript for **Blessing for a Long Time: The Sacred Pole of the Omaha Tribe** which he coauthored with Dr. Robin Ridington and was published in 1997. [University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln] OTHRP worked hard with the Nebraska institutions. In 1991 the Nebraska State Historical Society created their Omaha archival photograph project with staff member John Carter. OTHRP

assisted with the collecting, documenting, cataloging and identifying archival photographs along with analysis of photographs for cultural information.

That same year an Encounter Kit was created with Peggy Hunt, education coordinator and environmental educator, and Patty Amgwert, a University of Nebraska graduate student at the University of Nebraska State Museum, using both the Omaha Tribal resources and those of the University of Nebraska. Coordinated by Hastings, the Encounter Kit included a series of books of simple stories written in both English and the Omaha Indian language, illustrated by Omaha elder, Thurman Cook, and developed by the Macy Public School Print Shop. It also included Indian made items such as moccasins, roach headdress, etc. The kit was made available to elementary school teachers to help teach all Nebraska schoolchildren, including those from the Omaha Tribe, about the traditions and history of the Omaha Indian people. In addition to the kit at the Macy and Walthill Schools. Two others are located at the state museum on the UNL campus and at Educational Service Unit 13 in Scottsbluff. The kit was developed with annual grants from the Nebraska Federation of Women's Clubs.

OTHRP had supervision for the repatriation of human remains and sacred objects during temporary storage of the Omaha Tribal Collection from 1991-2004 at the University of Nebraska — Lincoln. In 2004, at the request of the University, OTHRP moved the collection to the Nebraska State Historical Society where it currently resides under Tribal care.

From 1992-1995 OTHRP and Dr. Stephen Cobb, University of Iowa and State Historical Society of Iowa, created a project to consolidate all available ethno-historic records on the Omaha Tribe and archive them at the University of Iowa with duplicate files to be kept in the proposed Interpretative Center/Museum, New Moon Moving.

June 1992 Omaha Tribal Historical Research Project, Inc. (OTHRP) became officially a federally recognized 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

1993 brought a very special musical multicultural performance with the production of "West Meets West" by the City of Omaha Symphony Orchestra and the Omaha drum group "The Rough Riders." OTHRP coordinated a collaborative performance between contemporary Omaha tribal and symphonic music. A film interview about "West Meets West" was made with OTHRP participating. The performance itself won the 1993 Nebraska Arts Council's Governor's Art Award.

1995 New Moon Moving, Interpretive Center/Museum the proposed Omaha Interpretive Center/Museum was designed by native Nebraskan architect, Vincent Snyder with an actual model of the design completed in 2002. Mr. Snyder's professional career includes associations with the noted architects Michael Graves (1986-88), where he was a design team member for the Walt Disney Headquarters Building in Burbank, California; and with Frank Gehry and Associates (1988-94), where he served a number of roles as design team member, Project Designer and Senior Associate, most notably with projects such as Festival Euro-Disneyland, Paris, France, and the Vitra Headquarters, AG, Basel, Switzerland. Snyder spent time with Hastings and on the Reservation in preparation for this award winning design.

Snyder's design for New Moon Moving Learning Center and Museum started winning awards in 2002. The first award was the ACSA Faculty Design Award 2001-02 from the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture national awards program and the second was from Boston Society of Architects Unbuilt Architecture Award, an International awards program. The Progressive Architecture Award was given to New Moon Moving Learning Center and Museum in 2003. It was the 50th year of Architecture journal's venerable international awards program. Also in 2003, by invitation, a 90-second movie of the museum project was used as an exhibit in Verona, Italy along with many famous American and European architects also designing projects in stone. New Moon Moving qualified for this exhibit as it is to be covered in slate. In 2005 the Architecture classes of Sohag University in Egypt studied Snyder's New Moon Moving museum design incorporating it into their regular studies.

In 1995 artist Margery Coffey moved onto the Omaha Reservation from the Winnebago Reservation. She started painting the Omaha, first using her own experiences and then, when she joined OTHRP in 2002, she was granted permission to use historic photographs as subject matter. The work done on the Reservation resulted in **Coffey: the Omaha Years 1995-2006** — twenty nine oil paintings. Margery Coffey joined OTHRP in 2002 as a Fine Arts and Graphic Artist. With her came her work on the language with Thurman Cook and a partnership with Black Prairie Dog Woman Studios which included space on the Internet.

**Black Prairie Dog Woman Studios** online gallery, Jackalope Arts <<http://www.jackalopearts.org>> created an online presence for OTHRP within its site in 2002. <<http://jackalopearts.org/othrp.htm>> In 2004, OTHRP's website became bilingual with the addition of a French translation. In 2006, with the addition of an Arabic translation, OTHRP's website became trilingual.

2003 brought the news that Margery Coffey had breast cancer. Successfully treated by the Sioux City, IA medical centers, Coffey and Hastings decided it would be appropriate to donate some of Coffey's artwork on the Omaha through OTHRP to the medical facilities as a way of giving thanks. We included the Carl T. Curtis Health Center as well since it was the first stop for Omaha patients who had cancer and because OTHRP is about education, we gave an art piece to the *Umo-ho* Nation Public Schools. Coffey's artwork was donated by OTHRP on a permanent loan basis in both Macy NE and Sioux City IA. It is hoped that the work would mitigate the trauma of the experiences of Indian patients in the facilities and at the same time introduce a positive note for the Omaha in Sioux City. There are paintings in both Mercy and St. Luke's hospitals, the Siouxland Health Clinic and the June

E. Nylen Cancer Center.

2006 Margery Coffey received her Masters Degree from Western Institute for Social Research in Berkeley, CA. When Coffey finished her MA degree at Western Institute for Social Research she was asked to go on for a PhD. She replied that the only way she would consider it was if she could do a joint PhD with Dennis Hastings. WISR agreed. It was their first joint PhD as well. In 2009 Hastings and Coffey successfully submitted their dissertation.

## LOCAL WORK

Representing OTHRP in 1986, Hastings became a Member of Common Ground, an interracial working group started by the Center for Rural Affairs in Thurston County. Through this group and especially the Center for Rural Affairs, the Restoration of National Heritage sites program was used to restore the Dr. Susan La Flesche Picotte Hospital in Walthill in 1985. OTHRP served as the primary researcher for the newly restored hospital which was renamed the Susan Picotte Center.

Hastings also served as the primary researcher, in 1987, for the creation of a mock earthen lodge designed by the Big Muddy Workshop, Inc. at Blackbird lookout point on Highway 75. This was done under the care of the State of Nebraska and the Papio/Missouri River Natural Resource District.

In Macy, NE, OTHRP created their **Bringing the past to the future** project which over a 20 year period starting in 1990 brought historic photographs restored, enlarged and reprinted at museum quality for the walls of the reservation's institutions. Sixty pictures have gone up in the *Umo-ho-* Nation Public Schools including a special "Hall of Honor" for Hampton Institute students. Ten pictures were placed at the Carl T. Curtis Medical Center's Dinning Room and Lobby. Five pictures were also placed in the Omaha casino Lucky 77 in Walthill NE and 30 more pictures in the Walthill Public Schools. There is a total of 105 pictures of the historic Omaha on the Reservation. Nebraska State Humanities Council grants helped this project.

With OTHRP's arrangements, in 2004, Dr. Karl Reinhard, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Dept. of Natural Resources and Sara Leroy-Toren, Lincoln Public Schools, taught a workshop at *Umo-ho-* Nation Public Schools called "Learning from the Ancestors," based upon the forensic work of Dr. Reinhard for the Omaha Tribe.

## FILM

At the Department of Education in the University of Nebraska at Omaha in 1983 Professor John Millard and OTHRP created a documentation of the 1983 Omaha Pow-Wow explaining Pow-Wow symbols and practice. Nebraska Educational Television Films produced the 50 minute document.

In 1988 The Metropolitan Museum of Art asked Hastings to be a consultant for "Views of a Vanishing Frontier." The film was a documentation of the historic journey of Prince Maximilian zu Wied, a German aristocrat and the Swiss artist, Karl Bodmer, to the American West in 1832-1834.

In 1989 "Dancing to Give Thanks," a film about the Omaha Powwow of 1989, was produced by Nebraska Educational Television Films. This film was the focus of a successful collaboration among film makers, anthropologists and the Omaha Tribe. The film presents the still deeply felt spiritual and traditional values of the Omaha. Although the values may seem under constant change from generation to generation, they are strongly present in both young and older dancers. OTHRP served as cultural consultant on this film. It won the Visual Anthropology Award of Excellence of the American Anthropology Association meetings in 1990.

"We Are One," a film of traditional Omaha life in 1800 was created in 1990. It was designed for 4th and 5th grade curriculum in Nebraska public schools to educate both Indians and non-Indians. Wes Studi and Rodney A. Grant began their cinematic careers through their appearances in this film. There are eight segments in the series: "Morning Comes," "Turning of the Child," "The Dare," "Preparing for a summer hunt," "The Buffalo Hunt," "Becoming a Warrior," "Learning from Others," "Storytelling." This project reunited OTHRP with John Millard, Department of Education, University of Nebraska — Omaha and was produced by Nebraska Educational Television Films.

1991 brought a new project, "Return of the Sacred Pole" which is the documentation of the return of the Omaha's "*Umo-ho-Ti*: Venerable Man," in writing, film and audiotape. Based upon the Tribe's collaboration with the Harvard University's Peabody Museum with Joan Mark, Robin Ridington, and museum officials for the return of the Sacred Pole to the Tribe in 1989. The discussions centered primarily on how the last Keeper of the Pole, in 1888, allowed Fletcher and La Flesche to remove the Pole to the Museum for safekeeping. It was produced by Nebraska Educational Television Films. It won the Visual Anthropology Award of Excellence of the American Anthropology Association meetings in 1991.

In 1992 "Indian Handgame" was filmed at Metropolitan Community College in Omaha with OTHRP's collaboration. It was featured on CBS's "Sunday Morning News," as part of a general look at Plains Indians. Hastings was the cultural consultant.

"Bones of Contention" a documentary film made in 1994 was produced by the British Broadcasting Corporation on the repatriation of human remains and the study done on them by Dr. Karl Reinhard, University of Nebraska — Lincoln. OTHRP was

the cultural consultant.

New York Educational Television in 1996 created "Maximilian and Bodmer," a Greg Fisher Film. It recreated the German Prince Maximilian of Weide and Swiss artist Karl Bodmer's contact with the Omaha and their *He'dewachi* dance. It includes interviews with Dr. Dennis Hastings to facilitate cultural awareness.

## BOOKS

Jeri Ferris wrote **Native American Doctor, The Story of Susan La Flesche Picotte**, with an introduction by Hastings. [Carolrhoda Books, Inc., Minneapolis, 1991]

Michael Tate compiled **Upstream People: An Annotated Bibliography of the Umo·ho·** working in collaboration with Hastings. [Scarecrow Press, Metuchen, NJ, 1991]

That same year, Marion Marsh Brown wrote **Susette La Flesche. Advocate for Native American Rights.** with cultural help and commentary from Hastings. [Children's Press, Chicago, IL, 1992]

**Blessing for a Long Time: The Sacred Pole of the Omaha Tribe** was published in 1997. [University of Nebraska Press] Co-authored with Dr. Robin Ridington, University of British Columbia, it is the story of the return of *Umo·ho·ti*, the sacred pole of the Omaha. It is a classic in its field and is being used as a textbook for college level anthropology classes. **Blessing** received Honorable Mention in 1998 Victor Turner Prize and a Five Star review on Amazon.com. "Excellent work in history and (material) culture," December 3, 2011 by Dr. Frederic Gleach, Cornell University.

Benson Tong wrote **Susan La Flesche Picotte, M.D., Omaha Indian Leader and Reformer** in 1999. The Foreword is by Dennis Hastings, he was also cultural consultant. [University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, OK]

Gail Liberman and Alan Lavine published **Rags to Retirement.** [Alpha Books, New York City, NY] They featured the work of Dennis Hastings as an entire chapter in this book.

In 2006 Neil Philip published **The Great Circle, A History of the First Nations** with a Foreword by Dennis Hastings. [Clarion Books, NY]

## OTHRP

A compilation book, **Indian Child Welfare**, was created on the Omaha culture including web sites on the Omaha and a language workbook by OTHRP for the Indian Child Welfare Agency, in 2002. The project, underwritten by funds from the Bureau of Indian Affairs, was designed as a basic background for children who were adopted out of the tribe and their adoptive parents as well as adults who were finding their way back to the tribe.

**198th Omaha Tribal He'dewachi**, a pictorial booklet, was designed by OTHRP in 2002 giving the history of the modern Powwow which was first documented with the Omaha Tribe by Lewis and Clark. Featuring historic photographs of past *He'dewachi* and including excerpts from classic anthropological interviews by Dr. Francis La Flesche, Esq., this booklet gives history back to the people. It was funded by the Nebraska Humanities Council, CasinOmaha and the tribal-owned Fuel Plaza.

In 2007 OTHRP was asked by the Superintendent of Macy's schools to design a workbook on **Omaha History, Culture and Language**. It was presented in a formal two-hour faculty and staff workshop at the *Umo·ho·* Nation Public Schools in Macy, NE, so that the faculty could begin to incorporate same into their classrooms — a first in the history of the *Umo·ho·* Nation Public Schools. Hastings and Coffey co-authored a paper about the project for their joint PhD program at WISR.

OTHRP experimented in 2012 with two booklets both published in a limited edition through funding by the Nebraska Humanities Council.

The first book was **Everybody! Read To Me** by Gretchen E. Goodman and Drs. Hastings and Coffey. A Reading Coloring Book, **Everybody! Read To Me** is a guide for new mothers and mothers-to-be on how to introduce their babies to books. Handy tips are included on making reading a fun game for infants and small children. The reader can personalize their book by coloring the black and white illustrations. Cultural information on Clan haircuts is included with the haircuts featured in the illustrations.

The second book was **Josephine Erlin Barnaby von Felden — Nurse, Teacher Interpreter** by Drs. Hastings and Coffey. An OTHRP Comic Coloring Book, Josephine, tells the story of a brave young Omaha woman who spent her life giving her skills not only to her people but also to other tribes as well. The first of a proposed series, it is created in a comic book format with games and puzzles as well as an authentic Omaha traditional story "Coyote and the Buffaloes."

"*UMO·HO· IYE TE EDE'NO·YA?*" [How do you say in Omaha?], a 5,000+ word *Umo·ho·*/English Dictionary and Workbook on the *Umo·ho·* language based upon Dr. Francis La Flesche, Esq.'s Phonetic Alphabet, 1906 and the late Thurman Cook's artwork, including the work he did for the Encounter Kit, and his lesson plans. Compiled by Dr. Coffey, et al., with Dr. Hastings as cultural



consultant, 396 text pages, 306 illustrations including puzzles and word games.

"Completely Illustrated: Grandfather Remembers — Broken Treaties/Stolen Land: The Omaha Land Theft." It is a two volume set containing the history of the Omaha Tribe from the Omaha point of view. It covers four centuries in 1,500 pages with 1,500 illustrations. It was accepted by Western Institute for Social Research, Berkeley, CA as the required dissertation for Hastings and Coffey's joint PhD. A Tribal Council resolution was passed endorsing this manuscript, a first in the history of the tribe for a written work. It was submitted to the Tribal legal team for their use in documentation in the recent court case with Pender, NE. The dissertation documents the town's behavior towards the Omaha starting with the illegal actions to grab the land for the town site. The Omaha Tribe won the case in three courts: Tribal Court, Federal Court and 8th Circuit Court.

The above cultural trilogy is to be published by WISR Press in 2015.

#### PRINT

The January/February 1984 edition of NEBRASKAland, Lincoln, NE, published "The First Voices." It includes the article "*Umoꞩho* Chronology" by Dennis Hastings.

Between 1992-2002 Dr. Karl Reinhard, University of Nebraska–Lincoln and Hastings, OTHRP created and published "Learning from the Ancestors" in Humanities magazine. [National Humanities Council, December 2002] The article was based upon the Learning from the Ancestors Project results of Dr. Reinhard's studies of the repatriated bones of the Omaha before they were reburied and the cultural data they revealed concerning the historic period of the Omaha from which the remains date and the report of Reinhard's forensic reports.

NEBRASKAland, Lincoln, NE, in 1995 published *Umoꞩho* **Tribe of Nebraska, The present . . . The past. . .**, a documented study of the Omaha Tribe of Nebraska with the cultural approval of OTHRP.

In the July/August 2002 Nebraska Report, Nebraskans for Peace newspaper, carried a center spread on the museum. "*Tae'ah'thee* (New Moon Moving) The Omaha Cultural and Interpretive Center."

In September 2002 Yapi, a monthly journal on art, architecture and culture, Istanbul Turkey, featured an article by Mimari Tasarim and Vincent Snyder. It was a seven page display of the proposed museum designed by Snyder entitled "Omaha Kültür ve Tanitim Müzesi, Nebraska."

Humanities, published an article by Paulette W. Campbell on the work done by Dr. Karl Reinhard entitled "Ancestral Bones: Reinterpreting the Past of the Omaha," December 2002 National Humanities Council.

The January 2003 issue of architecture magazine in New York carried a feature article by Vincent Snyder, on the "Omaha Cultural and Interpretive Center."

The January/February 2003 issue of My Generation, AARP carried a feature article "Sacred Quest" on the life and work of Dennis Hastings by Fergus M. Bordewich. [current OTHRP Board of Trustees member]

The 2005 201<sup>st</sup> Umoꞩho: He'dewachi Harvest Celebration booklet published OTHRP's article on Lewis and Clark as the main feature of their Powwow program.

October 11, 2011 Indian Country Today published "Ambitious Museum to Use Past to Preserve Omaha History — and Brighten Its Future," covering the proposed Omaha Cultural and Interpretive Center, New Moon Moving.

OTHRP Staff is an all volunteer staff and always has been since the beginning.

Dr. Dennis Hastings, Founder/Director

Dr. Margery Coffey, Assistant Director/Artist-Writer

richard chilton, Project Facilitator

Gretchen E. Goodman, Development Director

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Dr. Dennis Hastings



Dr. Margery Coffey