

# Cotlow Award Application Form 2009

Department of Anthropology

The George Washington University

Washington, DC 20052

## 1. Personal Information

Applicant's name: Matthew LeDuc

Degree sought: MA

Field of study/major/minor/concentration: Anthropology (International Development)

Expected date of graduation: May 2010

Faculty Advisor(s) (who have served as your mentor or mentors for this proposal):  
Barbara Miller

## 2. Language Skills

Does the proposed project involve the use of a "field language"? yes or no

No.

## 3. Title of the Project and Abstract

Project Title:

Hopi Perspectives on Identity, Traditional Culture, and the Preservation of Intangible Heritage

Abstract of the Project (provide a summary description of the project's goals, location, methods, and relevance to anthropology) [80 word maximum]:

The proposed study will explore Hopi ideas about heritage, tradition, and identity through an examination of the Footprints of the Ancestors Project, a cultural heritage program jointly run by the Hopi Tribe and Northern Arizona University. By connecting Hopi youth with their traditional culture, the Footprints Project addresses concerns, expressed by many Hopis, of culture loss and language shift. This study will explore how Hopi elders and youth perceive the benefits of preserving *intangible* cultural heritage.

**4. Description of the Project** (describe your overall research goals, what the project is generally about, and where you will conduct the research and why) [250 word maximum]:

Many Hopis are concerned that fundamental aspects of their cultural heritage—including the Hopi language and traditional practices—will not be passed down to future generations (Levo-Henriksson 2007; Nicholas 2005). Today, the Hopi live across three mesas in a pocket of northern Arizona, an area much smaller than their ancestral homeland (Bernardini 2005). Despite centuries of immense outside pressure, the Hopi have successfully maintained their unique identity (Whiteley 1998). Yet for a variety of reasons, including poor job prospects on the reservation, lack of financial support for education, and the appeal of mainstream American culture, the desire to sustain this identity is flagging, particularly among Hopi youth. (Nicholas 2005).

Now in its third and final year, the Footprints of the Ancestors Project seeks to address this problem by connecting Hopi youth with their traditional culture. In this collaborative effort between the Hopi Tribe and Northern Arizona University, Hopi youth learn about their history and culture from Hopi elders and anthropologists, visit ancestral sites across the Southwest, give back to their communities through service projects, and develop media resources (such as films, websites, and museum exhibits) for a wider public (Joelle Clark, personal communication). The youth participants (about 13 to 17 years old) generally remain in the program for at least one year.

Through a combination of participant observation and in-depth interviews, I will learn about participants' perceptions of the effectiveness and benefits of the Footprints Project. I will also explore Hopi elders' and youths' ideas surrounding the English-language terms *heritage* and *tradition*—how the Hopi define them, who defines them, and what they mean for Hopi identity construction. My findings will contribute to understanding the perceived benefits of the project for the Hopi people and its potential as a model for other cultural heritage programs. My findings will have benefits for the Hopi people and other indigenous peoples facing the challenge of maintaining identity in a rapidly changing world.

**5. Significance of the Project to Anthropology** (in this literature review describe how the proposed research relates to other anthropological research on the topic, and/or region as relevant; use social science style citation--no footnotes) [400 word maximum]:

The proposed study relates to research about “intangible” cultural heritage preservation, indigenous ideas of heritage, and identity. My study of the Footprints of the Ancestors Project is part of a discussion within and beyond anthropology about the complex issues involved in preserving intangible cultural heritage. Though Hopis derive immense pride from material heritage like their ancestral homes, many consider less tangible cultural features—such as the Hopi language, prayers, and dances—to be their most sacred possessions and irreplaceable components of Hopi identity (Levo-Henriksson 2007; Nicholas 2005).

The idea that intangible culture can (and should) be preserved in much the same way as monuments and archaeological sites is not particularly old; not until 2001, in fact, did UNESCO add “masterpieces” of intangible culture to its World Heritage List (Nas 2002). This development is not without its detractors; some wonder if it is even possible to preserve intangible heritage, while others worry that preservation efforts will stifle cultural innovation (Nas 2002). The

Footprints Project, itself a cultural heritage program, is an ideal forum for exploring Hopi perspectives on cultural heritage preservation.

In popular usage, the concepts of “tradition” and “heritage” are portrayed as static and unchanging, anachronistic holdovers from a distant past. Yet the paradigm of heritage and tradition as fixed entities is beginning to shift (Clifford 2004). Many scholars (e.g., Silverman 2002; DiGiovine 2009) recognize that the past is continually contested and reshaped in the present. Individuals and even entire communities constantly rework their traditions and heritage to suit changing needs and circumstances (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983). In addition, both anthropologists and the communities they study employ the terms *tradition* and *heritage* as boundaries of identity (Nevins in press 2009; Dole and Csordas 2003). The Footprints Project is a process of affirming (and perhaps redefining) Hopi identity through recourse to the past.

As Miller (in press 2009) notes, cultural heritage preservation is a low priority for many policymakers, who often fail to recognize the benefits of such programs. My findings will add to the growing body of research showing the benefits of cultural heritage preservation to local peoples. Some research, for example, suggests a link between participation in cultural heritage programs and greater self-esteem and improved health (Whitbeck et al 2002). In addition, cultural heritage preservation often benefits tourism programs, generating increased income for local communities (Cernea 2001; DiGiovine 2009). Other researchers contend that linguistic and cultural revitalization efforts are integral to political movements seeking greater local control and sovereignty (Henze and Davis 1999; Suina 2004). Finally, several researchers argue that cultural heritage programs should play a greater role in schools, noting that students with strong attachments to their traditional culture often outperform their peers (Whitbeck et al 2001; Coggins et al 1997). My research will build on this anthropological literature by providing an important case study of Hopi perceptions of cultural heritage and their efforts to preserve it.

**6. Methods** (clearly outline or list your research questions; describe the data you will collect and how you will collect it; discuss your analytical methods; and show how the data will address the research questions) [300 word maximum]:

I will consider several broad questions in this study: How is cultural heritage defined and who defines it? Can intangible heritage be preserved in the same manner as tangible objects? How is past heritage reworked to construct present identity? Through both participant observation and in-depth interviews, I will explore how members of the Footprints Project answer these questions and draw on their rich cultural heritage to define Hopi identity.

In mid-June, the Footprints Project will travel to Washington, DC, for nearly a week. The 15-20 participants will receive training in how to design museum exhibits at the Smithsonian’s Museum of the American Indian (this exhibit will eventually be displayed on the Hopi reservation). I will be assisting the project staff and will therefore be able to get to know and spend time with the participants. Thus, I will establish rapport and begin to gain some understanding of the Footprints Project and participants’ views of it.

Throughout July, I will do fieldwork in the Flagstaff area of Arizona. I intend to interview all or most of the project's current participants (15-20 youths), members of the project staff and Hopi elders (8-10 individuals in all), parents of some of the participants, members of the Hopi Cultural Preservation Office, and perhaps some past participants as well, if time allows. In accordance with the Footprints Project's established procedures, all interviews will be video recorded. I hope to analyze the interviews in GW's Discourse Lab.

The interviews will last approximately 45-60 minutes each and will be semi-structured. I will provide the participants with a list of questions beforehand and then ask them to elaborate on them, and other topics of their choice, during the interviews. My questions will prompt information on: how long, and in what capacity, the person has been involved in the Footprints Project; the perceived benefits and effectiveness of the Project; perceived weaknesses in the Project; the participants' degree of connection to the Hopi language and other aspects of traditional culture; thoughts about Hopi identity and key aspects of Hopi "cultural heritage" as personally defined; and aspects of Hopi culture that are currently endangered, and if (and how) they should be preserved. I will allow ample time for participants to add their own topics. I will also attempt, with discretion, to gain background information on place of birth, age, and educational level.

**7. Research Ethics** (describe how you will ensure that your research project is conducted in accordance with anthropology guidelines and the guidelines of your particular field within anthropology, and in the case of "Human Subjects Research," according to the criteria of GW's Institutional Review Board. For the former, consult the Web site of the American Anthropological Association (<http://www.aaanet.org>). For the latter, discuss requirements with your faculty mentor and/or with Professor Barbara Miller, the IRB rep in the Anthropology Department. Most student projects involving living humans fit in the IRB category of "excluded," meaning that IRB forms do not need to be submitted, if they follow AAA ethical guidelines in terms of informed consent and avoidance of harm to participants, do not involve medical topics and do not identify particular individuals. In some instances, the IRB approval does need to be sought, usually in the "expedited" category." Information on these categories is also available at <http://www.gwumc.edu/research/human/aboutus/html>) [150 word maximum]:

This study belongs to, and must ultimately benefit, the Hopi people. I will therefore make any presentations and publications resulting from this research available to the Hopi Tribe. I have reviewed both the American Anthropological Association's Code of Ethics and GW's IRB guidelines. This study does not involve medical issues, and I will follow all necessary steps to ensure that it in no way harms any of the participants. The participants in the Footprints Project will be informed of my study during their stay in Washington, DC. Participants will remain anonymous, unless an individual wishes recognition, in which case I will receive consent to use their names.

I will submit my proposal to GW's Institutional Review Board for approval. Because I plan to video record all interviews (see methods section), my proposal may not be exempt, but should fall under the "expedited" category.

**8. Research Product** (discuss how you will use and present your findings including, for example, a presentation at a professional meeting, a film, a museum exhibit, a publishable paper, a thesis) [150 words maximum]:

I will present highlights of my research at the 2009 Cotlow Conference. In addition, I hope to present a formal paper at the 2009 meeting of the American Anthropological Association, perhaps in conjunction with George Gumerman and Joelle Clark of NAU. This research will likely form the basis of my integrating essay. Finally, I hope to produce a publishable paper from this research, to be submitted perhaps to *Human Organization* (in their competition for best student paper), the *Journal of International Cultural Heritage*, *Heritage Management*, or the *International Journal of Cultural Heritage*. Any written reports will be made available to both the Footprints Project and the Hopi Tribe.

**9. Timetable** (provide a brief description of the schedule of your research activities week-by-week or as appropriate):

June 14 – 20: Washington, DC—participant observation with Footprints Project at the Smithsonian Institution

Approximately 5 – 6 weeks in July and early August: Flagstaff area, Arizona

Because of the many people I intend to interview, as well as the considerable distances in the Southwest, I anticipate spending all of July and perhaps some of August in the Flagstaff area of Arizona. At this time, however, I cannot provide a week-by-week schedule.

## **10. Budget Amount and Projected Expenditures**

Total Amount Requested: \$1800

Projected Expenditures (list the expenditure categories for your project, for example, transportation--international, domestic, local; room and board; and research supplies). Funds from a Cotlow award cannot be used for tuition, academic fees, or for purchasing equipments such as a laptop or camera [awards range from a few hundred dollars to \$1800]

Round-trip airfare, Washington, DC to Phoenix, AZ: \$300 (in general, flights to Phoenix are cheaper than to Flagstaff).

Room and board: \$30/day for approximately 35 days = \$1050 (I plan to camp for at least a portion of this time).

Car rental and gas (one month): \$450 (I will need a car throughout July, as many of the people I intend to interview live in remote, rural areas, which simply are inaccessible by public transportation; the car rental and gas will, of course, cost more than \$450, but I will cover the additional expenses).

**11. Staff** (if others are to participate in the project as researchers or research assistants, please give their name and qualifications):

George Gumerman and Joelle Clark, both of Northern Arizona University, lead the Footprints of the Ancestors Project. I will, however, be the only person conducting the research described in this proposal.

**12. Outside Financial Support** (list any other sources of funding for the project, either obtained or applied for, with amounts and restrictions):

N/A

### **13. References Cited/Select Bibliography**

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1983 *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

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- Nicholas, Sheilah  
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2001 Traditional Culture and Academic Success among American Indian Children in the Upper Midwest. *Journal of American Indian Education* 40(2):49-60.
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- Whiteley, Peter M.  
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**14. Permits** (demonstrate that you have, or are seeking, any necessary permits such as a research permit, a research visa, an antiquities permit, letter of welcome from an institution, etc. Attach copies to this proposal).

N/A

**15. Transcript** (submit a copy of your transcript with this proposal; it can be either official or unofficial. Without a transcript, your proposal is incomplete and will not be considered).

See attached file.