



NEBRASKA WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY MAGAZINE

# ARCHWAYS

STAY SHARP | SPRING 2022 | VOLUME 22, ISSUE 1

## HOW TO HANDLE A TOMAHAWK

The Ponca make a moral case for a better handling of American history.



# FROM THE PRESIDENT

*[T]his is a necessary  
roadmap to help us  
thrive—not just survive—  
beyond the pandemic.*



## Dear Alumni and Friends,

It's human nature to resist change. It's uncomfortable and unfamiliar, yet the pandemic has forced us to embrace it—or, at the very least, accept it.

You might know the saying, "The only constant is change." A year ago, the Board of Governors approved the framework for the university's multiyear strategic plan. Our initiatives surround four themes: academic innovation, engaged belonging, transformational relationships and elevated facilities and resources. None of the initiatives allows the university to maintain the status quo. Rather, the exact opposite is true. The strategic plan drives us to evolve as we strive to be even more excellent.

Evaluating current practices requires deep reflection and can lead to some difficult decisions. For example, we recently made the decision to discontinue our physical presence in Omaha where, for nearly 17 years, Nebraska Wesleyan offered a limited suite of both adult undergraduate and graduate programs.

The decision to offer in-person classes in the state's largest city was without a doubt the right one at the time. It allowed us to respond to the marketplace and provide our outstanding liberal arts education beyond the Lincoln campus.

We are proud of our 420 alumni who earned degrees through our Omaha programs. Of those, 265 earned bachelor's and master's degrees in nursing. What a remarkable impact on our state's healthcare! However, the needs and expectations of adult and graduate students have been changing over the last few years. And this trend accelerated during the pandemic.

We must respond to the realities of the market. Therefore, this fall we will launch our first online graduate program with our Master of Science in Nursing degree. This change makes a Nebraska Wesleyan education more relevant, accessible and flexible to nurses in greater Nebraska, western Iowa, Omaha and potentially throughout the nation.

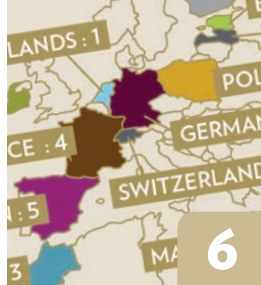
Our traditional undergraduate students will also have access to four new programs next fall. (See our story on page 4.) Nebraska Wesleyan has partnered with a consortium of liberal arts colleges so we can offer new courses and majors through a combination of classes taught at NWU and online by schools and faculty like ours. This opportunity allows us to respond to our students' needs and interests and better prepares them for some additional high-demand careers.

In spring 2020, we paused and asked ourselves whether to forge ahead with our strategic plan at a time of great uncertainty. Our campus community collectively agreed that this is a necessary roadmap to help us thrive—not just survive—beyond the pandemic. I'm grateful for the enthusiasm and dedication of our faculty and staff who are looking for exciting new ways to help us continue to deliver an outstanding, student-centered, transformative education grounded in the liberal arts and sciences.

I look forward to sharing our continued progress.

Sincerely,

Darrin Good  
President



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*Nebraska Wesleyan University is an academic community dedicated to intellectual and personal growth within the context of a liberal arts education and in an environment of Christian concern.*

*Archways is an examination—and, ideally, a conversation—of how Nebraska Wesleyan University and its people relate to the world around us. That examination is academically sound, socially conscious, and continuously curious.*

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# NWUNIVERSE

## NWU Adds Four High-demand Majors

Starting this fall, Nebraska Wesleyan University will add four innovative and in-demand majors: data analytics, digital marketing, financial planning and project management. These new programs will be available to traditional undergraduates and working adults.

NWU becomes just the second school in Nebraska to offer a financial planning degree. Financial planning and digital marketing will be offered as a major and minor, while project management will be offered as a major and a certificate program. People who have already earned bachelor's degrees in any subject can pursue this valuable four-course project management certification.

All four programs will feature the traditional Nebraska Wesleyan experience enhanced with select online courses taught by national experts. These advanced online courses are offered through NWU's membership in a consortium of fellow Council of Independent Colleges members. This partnership enables schools to enhance their own offerings through a national network of faculty teaching specialized courses.

These new offerings are progressive responses for students seeking academic options connected to careers in high-demand fields. "It's one more way we respond to our changing environment to continue positioning our students for career success," said Provost Graciela Caneiro-Livingston.

### New majors offered at NWU:

- > Data analytics
- > Digital marketing
- > Financial planning
- > Project management

## High-performing HHP Professor Is NWU's Faculty Mentor of the Year

Health and human performance attracts team players—professionals deeply driven to help others maximize their potential. Professor **Patricia Dotson Pettit** is NWU's quintessential example.

"Pat is wonderful," said one colleague. "She's the first to volunteer for any assignment, and she tries to match up everyone with opportunities that align with individual interests and needs."

For her commitment to the development of her colleagues, peers and students, Pettit received NWU's Faculty Mentor of the Year Award. "She offers to help wherever and whenever she is needed in order for the faculty and students to be successful," said her nominator.

It's what team players do.



Photo by Noah Deist





Photos by Noah Deist

# Holzmeier Wins Exemplary Teacher Award

Across higher education today, not every music department is singing a happy tune. “At a time when many school music programs are struggling, ours is growing,” said one NWU music faculty member. “This comes from caring leadership.” This professor credited Professor of Music **Jana Holzmeier** for providing an abundance of that necessary care and leadership.

“Students tell me how Jana works on more than just their technical ability as vocalists,” said a colleague. “She also focuses on their needs as people. ... They express how much they feel supported, and that is something I look up to and hope to be for my students. She guides them through their undergraduate years with such care and confidence; and it shows in the success of her alumni.”

Holzmeier is this year’s winner of NWU’s Exemplary Teacher Award, an annual honor sponsored by the United Methodist Church’s Division of Higher Education and awarded by the university president. The award is given to an NWU professor each year who exemplifies excellence in teaching, civility and concern for students and colleagues, commitment to value-centered education, and service to students, the institution, community or church.



# Cool News

## Prairie Wolf Pantry adds perishable foods with new commercial-grade refrigerator.

Thanks to a donation from Judith (Trimble) (’69) and Keith (’69) Maurer, Nebraska Wesleyan University’s Prairie Wolf Pantry was able to buy a commercial-grade refrigerator in January. It arrived in February, allowing the on-campus pantry to add perishable foods to its distributions to students and community members in need.

The change adds nutritional value to the pantry’s food distributions, said Professor of Social Work **Lisa Borchardt** (’92). “By giving more wholesome food,” she said, “we’re also uplifting the dignity and sacred worth of each individual in our community.”

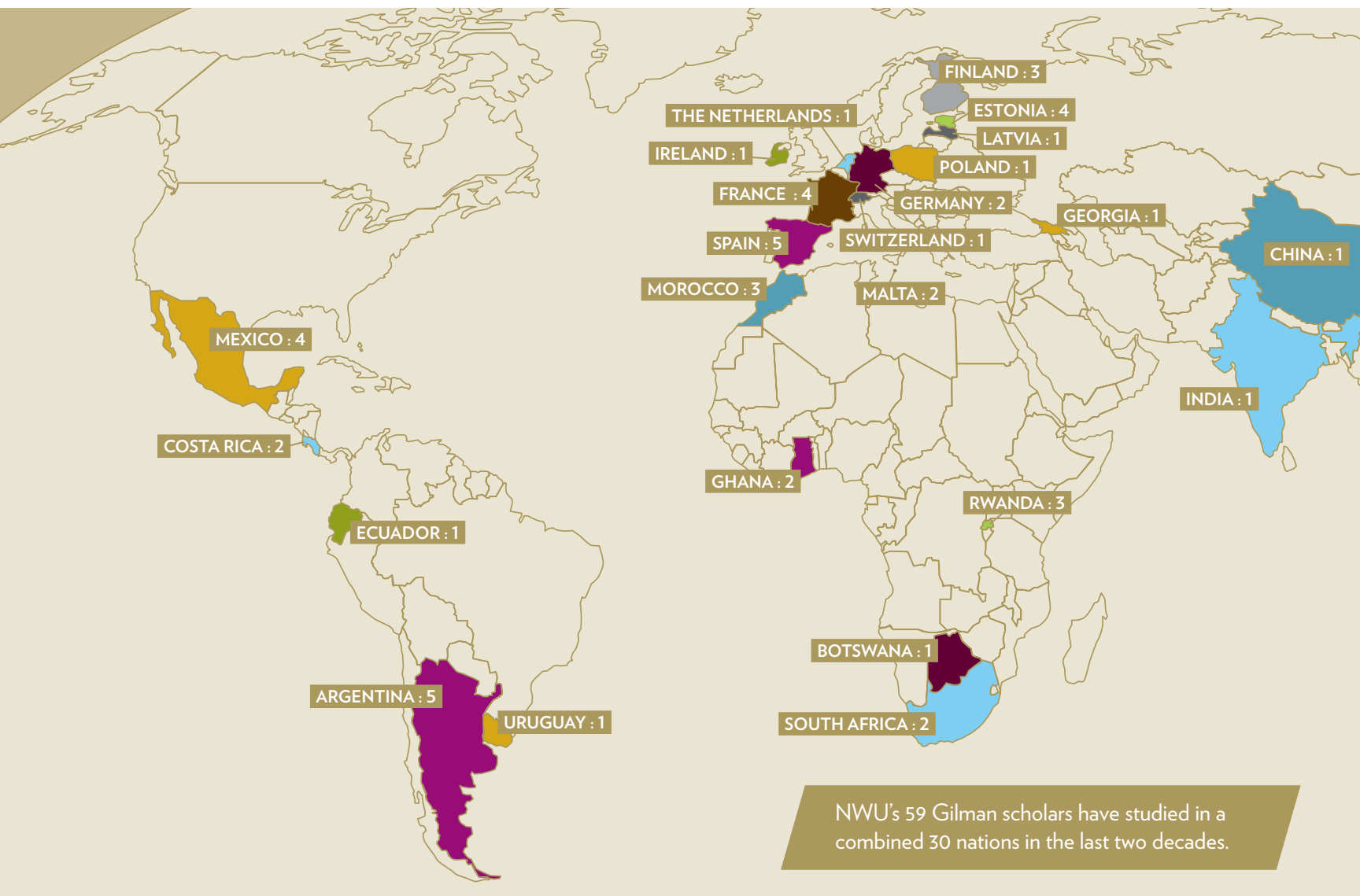
*By giving more wholesome food, we’re also uplifting the dignity and sacred worth of each individual in our community.*

The pantry is led by a steering committee of staff and faculty including Borchardt, University Minister **Eduardo Bousson**, Assistant Director for Diversity and Inclusion **Wendy Hunt**, Development Officer **Susy (Martin) Miller** (’90) and Professor of Communication Studies **Rachel Pokora**.

Any community member experiencing food needs can stop by Smith-Curtis 124 or email [nwupantry@nebrwesleyan.edu](mailto:nwupantry@nebrwesleyan.edu).

You can support the Prairie Wolf Pantry by designating a gift at [nebrwesleyan.edu/give](http://nebrwesleyan.edu/give).

# NWU Marks Two Decades of Gilman Scholarship



In November, the U.S. Department of State named Nebraska Wesleyan University one of its top-producing institutions for Gilman Scholarship winners over the last 20 years. NWU is the only Nebraska institution to receive this recognition.

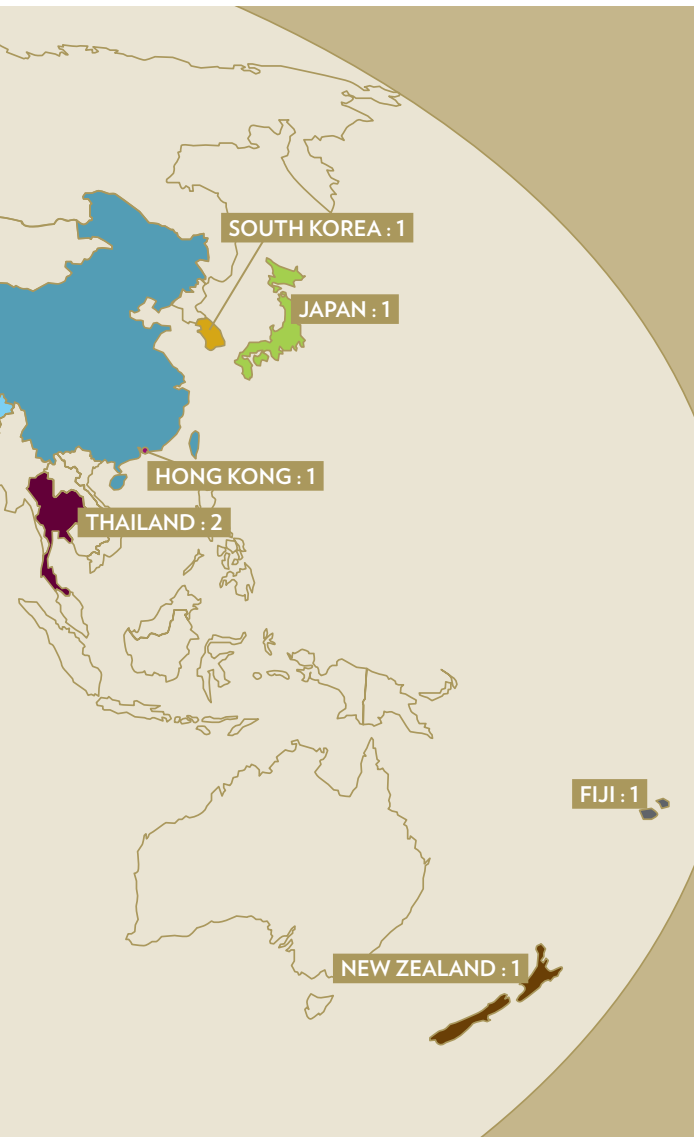
The prestigious Gilman Scholarship is a federal program designed to make study abroad more accessible and inclusive to outstanding undergraduates with financial need. It seeks to expand diversity in both the people studying internationally and the destinations they choose.

Fifty-nine NWU students have earned the award since 2001. You can read about our two most recent Gilman scholars on page 15.

The State Department identified the top 20 Gilman-producing institutions in four categories: small, medium and large institutions and schools awarding associate degrees. NWU was recognized in the category of small institutions.

"This scholarship makes learning and growth possible for some students who might not be able to go abroad without it, and that is truly impactful," said Director of Global Engagement **Sarah Barr** ('93). "We're honored by this recognition, and it fuels us to continue our efforts."

# Scholarship Success



*This scholarship makes learning and growth possible for some students who might not be able to go abroad without it, and that is truly impactful.*



Photo by Kyle Goeken (24)

## University Choir Announces Midwestern Tour

Nebraska Wesleyan University's award-winning University Choir is hitting the road the day after commencement.

The Music Department announced the choir's spring "Hold Fast to Dreams" tour with performances in Kansas, Missouri, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa and Nebraska. Come hear them in your area.

Sunday, May 8 at 7 p.m.  
Village Presbyterian Church  
[Prairie Village, Kan.](#)

Friday, May 13 at 12:10 p.m.  
Fourth Presbyterian Church  
[Chicago, Ill.](#)

Monday, May 9 at 7 p.m.  
Kirkwood Baptist Church  
[Kirkwood, Mo.](#)

Friday, May 13 at 7:30 p.m.  
First Presbyterian Church  
[Davenport, Iowa](#)

Tuesday, May 10 at 7 p.m.  
Second Presbyterian Church  
[Indianapolis, Ind.](#)

Saturday, May 14 at 7 p.m.  
Countryside Community Church  
[Omaha, Neb.](#)

Wednesday, May 11 at 7 p.m.  
First Presbyterian Church  
[Fort Wayne, Ind.](#)



# HOW TO HANDLE A TOMAHAWK

American history can be a weapon or a gift—  
depending on how we handle it.

## A chief, a chairman and a tomahawk (spring 1879, fall 2021)

On May 12, 1879, a Nebraskan delivered one of the most consequential civil rights speeches in American history. He did so in a language now spoken fluently by just 15 people.

Chief Standing Bear spoke to a U.S. District Court in the Omaha-Ponca dialect of Dhegihan. The Ponca chief was challenging his arrest for escaping Indian Territory in present-day Oklahoma.

The U.S. military had forced the Ponca to march across Nebraska and Kansas to Indian Territory in 1877. Standing Bear's son died in the squalor there. And Standing Bear had set out on foot to bury his son's remains back home near the Niobrara River. He was recaptured near Omaha.

The government argued Standing Bear couldn't challenge his arrest because, as an Indian, he wasn't a person under the law. His legal humanity was the question before the court. A young Omaha woman, Susette Bright Eyes LaFlesche, interpreted as Standing Bear raised his hand to address Judge Elmer Dundy:

*This hand is not the color of yours, but if I pierce it, I shall feel pain. If you pierce your hand, you also feel pain. The blood that will flow from mine will be the same color as yours. I am a man. The same God made us both.*





Larry Wright, Jr. (MAHS '07) is determined to protect Standing Bear's Dhegihan dialect from extinction. Last October, Wright was in his 11th year as the elected chairman of the Ponca Tribe of Nebraska.

"COVID has taken some of our speakers," Wright said. It has isolated other elders, making it harder for them to share their knowledge.

There are also barriers for Dhegihan learners. "It's harder to learn a language when you're worried where you'll live next month," Wright said.

In this way, Wright's work as tribal chairman is a two-handed task. He must manage as Ponca history pulls and today's needs press.

For Native people, those pushes and pulls of cultural history and current basic needs aren't as opposing as they might sound, said Professor of History **Sandra K. Mathews**. "To many Indigenous people, culture and health, they're not even separate concepts. Like society and the land, they're the same thing." Protecting one requires a hold on both.

The story of Wright's hold as chairman happens to wrap around the handle of an unusual 160-year-old tomahawk.

Standing Bear's tomahawk has been both lost and found. Technically a weapon, it has never, to anyone's knowledge, been swung in anger. It's been sold at least once. But it has also been given freely—in expressions of respect and gratitude—four times over.

Follow its peculiar story as it moves across the country and back. Handle it properly, and this piece of America's history will point us a peaceful way home.



Larry Wright, Jr., served for 11 years as the elected chairman of the Ponca Tribe of Nebraska.

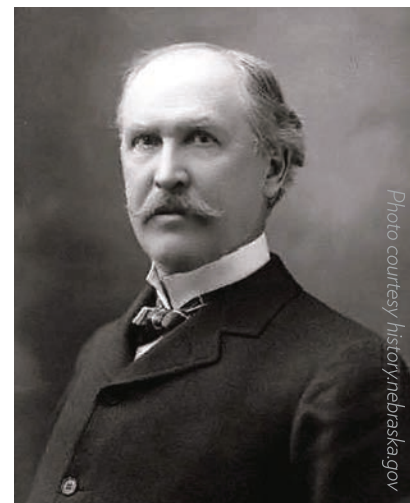
## A gift (spring 1879)

You may know that Standing Bear won his case in U.S. District Court. But Wright—a former Lincoln High School history teacher—can give a fuller understanding of the true extent (and limits) of Standing Bear's victory.

The immediate impact was the chief's ordered release from custody. The U.S. could no longer hold him, nor force him back to Indian Territory.

The broader civil rights impact was the judicial precedent for Native personhood. The case extended 14th Amendment rights to Native people.

Standing Bear's lawyers in Omaha—Andrew Poppleton and John Webster—handled his case for free. In thanks, Standing



John Webster represented Standing Bear in court in 1879, and received his tomahawk as a gift of thanks.

Bear gave Poppleton a prized 200-year-old Ponca headdress. Then he went to Webster's home.

Historian and Standing Bear biographer Joe Starita described this visit:

*He shook hands with the ladies first, and then the lawyer, and told him he had a beautiful home, and he thanked him for all he'd done for his people. Then he took out a tomahawk with his name engraved on it, one that signified his rank in the tribe, and laid it on the floor. "I have no more use for it," he told John L. Webster.*

Wright was realistic about what Standing Bear and his lawyers had actually won in court. "He won his release, but not his home. He was free to go back—but there was no 'back' to go to."

*He won his release, but not his home. He was free to go back—but there was no “back” to go to.*

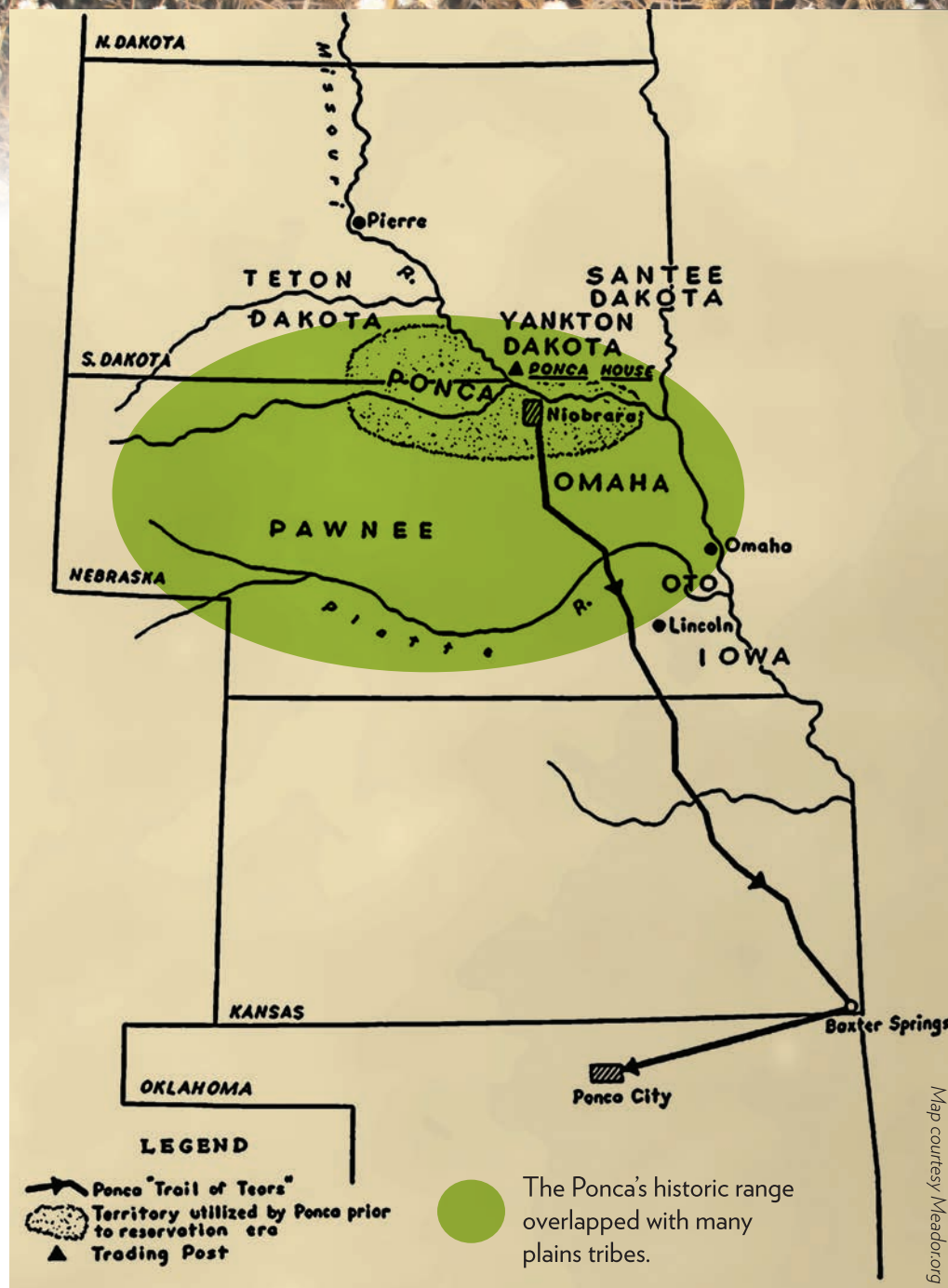
## A mistake (spring 1868)

To understand how the Ponca lost their home—and how Wright came to lead a reservationless tribe—we must leave the tomahawk with Webster for a time and look instead at the land.

At Standing Bear’s birth in 1829, the Ponca’s range spanned millions of acres with the White, Missouri and Platte rivers serving as rough northern, eastern and southern boundaries. Buffalo hunts took the Ponca as far west as the Black Hills. But the bulk of the Ponca’s daily life took place in the Missouri and Niobrara river valleys near the present-day Nebraska-South Dakota border.

An 1858 treaty with the U.S. narrowed the Ponca’s reach to a 126,000-acre tract near the confluence of those two rivers. Another treaty carved 30,000 acres off that reservation in 1865. And a range that once covered huge swaths of Nebraska and South Dakota shrank to a region roughly the size of Omaha’s city limits.

In a bureaucratic mistake three years later, the U.S. granted these same acres to the Ponca’s adversary, the Sioux, as part of the larger Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868. As a result, the Sioux intensified raids on the “intruding” Ponca until they could hardly leave their villages to tend crops.



The Ponca’s forced march to Indian Territory in 1877 was the government’s solution to its error. The U.S. evicted the peaceable Ponca in part to placate the larger, more bellicose Sioux.

The Ponca Trail of Tears dripped south. That sickly walk into famine would kill a third of Standing Bear’s tribe. And those 96,000 acres of the Ponca’s homeland wiped to zero.

## A shift (1880s)

Standing Bear’s court victory didn’t address the Ponca’s land claims, Wright said. But it would trigger a fundamental shift in U.S. policy toward tribal lands. Ironically, the legal elevation of Native Americans from rightless wild animals to individual people would unleash new means for their exploitation.





The late Sioux author Vine Deloria described the shift this way:

*Animals could be herded together on a piece of land, but they could not sell it. Therefore it took no time at all to discover that Indians were really people and should have the right to sell their lands. Land was the means of recognizing the Indian as a human being. It was the method whereby land could be stolen legally and not blatantly.*

Standing Bear's case shocked white America's conscience. Public outrage over the Ponca's mistreatment led to an 1880 Senate investigation. Its report to President Hayes determined that the Ponca should be given land in Nebraska.

But instead of the 96,000-acre reservation established by treaty in 1865, the U.S. would grant each of those Ponca who wished to return an individual land allotment. Together, these allotments totaled just 26,236 acres. And if these new Ponca landowners—survivors of the Trail of Tears and the famine and pestilence of Indian Territory—ever found themselves in economic hardship, well, they now enjoyed the individual liberty to sell their land.

This action split the Ponca in two. Roughly 600 chose to remain in Indian Territory, where life was slowly improving. They became the Ponca Tribe of Indians of Oklahoma. And 225 chose to receive individual allotments near Niobrara, Neb. They became the Ponca Tribe of Nebraska—Wright's tribe without a reservation.

These 1881 allotments to the Ponca served as a template for a new national model of disingenuous generosity. The Dawes Act of 1887 applied similar allotments to tribes across the country. By design, many Native landowners quickly found themselves

unable to pay taxes on their allotments. "And in short order," Mathews said, "two thirds of tribes would lose two thirds of their land."

These policies would pull 91 million acres—more land than Nebraska and Iowa combined—out of Native ownership. "It was devastating," Mathews said.

*These policies would pull 91 million acres—more land than Nebraska and Iowa combined—out of Native ownership.*

## A termination (fall 1962)

Native Americans who sold their allotments often scattered to find livelihoods wherever they could. Many Ponca left the Niobrara area to find work in other regional cities, like Omaha, Lincoln, Norfolk and Sioux City. Others moved across the country.

This dispersal began immediately and deepened over decades. It complicated work for tribal officials like Wright, who became responsible for service delivery across a scattered tribe. "It isn't efficient," Wright said.

If allotment policies scattered tribes, Wright said, the era of "legislative terminations" that followed in the 1950s and '60s set out to erase them entirely.

The termination era purported to free Native Americans from the "limitations" of their tribal identities. It also erased treaty obligations and moved still more tribal lands into the general economy.

The Ponca Tribe of Nebraska was legislatively terminated in 1962. Half a

century after his death, Standing Bear—the man responsible for the legal personhood of all Native Americans—no longer had a people.

## A restoration (fall 1990)

This 1962 legislative reality—that the Ponca didn't exist—was as absurd as the legal reality prior to 1879—that Indians weren't human. Within a decade, the Northern Ponca began organizing to reverse their termination.

Progress was slow. A bill to restore the Ponca's tribal status wouldn't reach Congress until 1990. In the House, that bill met resistance from the Ponca's own congressperson. Rep. Doug Bereuter (LL.D. '10) of Nebraska was ambivalent about the Ponca's tribal status. But he firmly opposed any future reservation in the state. The fact that the bill proposed no such reservation did not assuage his concerns. He wrote in a 1990 letter to the House Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs:

*It is one thing for Ponca adults to choose to segregate themselves off from the rest of society on a reservation. ... However, their born and unborn children and grandchildren and great grandchildren who have no choice about the matter shouldn't be condemned to live in the kind of deprivation that will undoubtedly continue to exist on our nation's Indian reservations in the future.*

Bereuter's 1990 belief that tribal land would condemn Ponca children to deprivation struck Professor of Social Work **Jeff Mohr** as backward. Tribal land hadn't impoverished Native families, he said. The theft of tribal land did that.

"It just reflects deeply held myths and

*In the last three years, we've bought back about 2,000 acres. We have a buffalo herd grazing on hills we own. It's been amazing.*

stereotypes that remain pervasive in our society with regard to Native people," Mohr said.

And Professor of History Kevin Bower suggested that Bereuter's position overlooked the damage that the tribe's dispersal had already done to families.

"Native concepts of family obligations differ from what's maybe typical in a white family," he said. Where a white family would define an aunt specifically as a parent's sister, a Native family might give that title to any woman close enough to the parent to be of particular help with the kids. In the same way, a friend might become a cousin, or a cousin a sibling.

"It's about closeness as much as lineage," Bower said. And tribal dispersal harmed Native children by severing the closeness of extended Native families.

Still, Bereuter demanded an amendment codifying that the Northern Ponca would never seek a residential reservation. He got it.

With Bereuter's obstruction removed, the Ponca Restoration Act passed. President Bush signed it into law on Halloween 1990. And the tribe regained, if not its home, at least a new handle on its identity.

As for land, the Ponca have made patient gains. "In the last three years, we've bought back about 2,000 acres," Wright said. "We have a buffalo herd grazing on hills we own. It's been amazing."

## A collection (1990)

In 1990, the same year the tribe regained federal recognition, another act of Congress would have a positive impact for the Ponca. That year, Congress passed the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA). This act brought new attention to museum collections, which often included human remains. Tribes across the country pushed for the respectful return for reburial of these ancestral remains.

Wright was blunt: "Our ancestors don't belong in your museum drawers."

While NAGPRA prioritized repatriating human remains, the act also covered "funerary objects, sacred objects, and objects of cultural patrimony." Which brings us back to a certain tomahawk.

In the 1880s, as millions of acres slipped from Native hands, it appears John Webster, the Omaha attorney, quietly held onto his gift from Standing Bear. And it's possible it remained with Webster for 50 years until his death in 1929.

The tomahawk reappeared to history in July 1930, when the widow of another Omaha attorney, William R. Morris, sold it as part of a collection of Native American artifacts to William Henry Claflin of Belmont, Mass.

Claflin was an interesting character: an amateur archeologist, Harvard University's treasurer and its hockey coach. When he died in 1982, he bequeathed the tomahawk as part of his estate to the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology at Harvard University. It has remained there since.

NAGPRA applies to museum "objects of cultural patrimony." And the cultural patrimony of the Peabody's tomahawk was



Tulsa attorney Brett Chapman brought public attention to the tomahawk at Harvard University and argued for its return to the Ponca.

nakedly apparent.

Standing Bear often held his tomahawk in portraits, which show the blade's distinctive heart-shaped opening. In an even clearer sign of the object's heritage, a semiliterate person had even incised the Ponca chief's name on the blade's right cheek: "STANDIN BARE".

## A moral case (summer 2021)

"What people probably don't know [about the tomahawk] is the provenance of it," said Tulsa, Okla., attorney Brett Chapman. He spoke with Hrag Vartanian of the arts podcast, "Hyperallergic" last July. Chapman is Pawnee and holds Ponca heritage. His great-great grandfather, White Eagle, was Standing Bear's brother.

"They're probably thinking back on their





Harvard's Philip Deloria advised the Peabody Museum on returning the tomahawk to the Ponca.

stereotypes of Native Americans, like, 'Oh, this guy probably used this tomahawk to kill some people,' Chapman said.

"Well, no. It was a diplomatic gift from the president of the United States. ... It's a diplomatic thing that [Standing Bear] would show people to say, 'Hey, I have this connection with this other person who has the power and authority to help us out.'"

This gift could have come from the Buchanan administration, which negotiated the 1858 treaty when Standing Bear was 29, or the Lincoln administration, which completed the 1865 treaty a month before Lincoln's assassination. Either way, the tomahawk's diplomatic importance elevated its worth as Standing Bear's gift to Webster. "That's the Ponca way, too," Chapman said. "You don't just give something cheap to somebody. You give them something good."

He said, "If it were still in [Webster's] family, there's no way I would have said

anything about it, because, you know, that's the wishes of your ancestor. But [Standing Bear] didn't want Harvard to have it; he didn't even know they got it."

So Chapman spoke out on Twitter. Still, he realized the Peabody Museum had obtained it legitimately. He couldn't argue their legal authority to have it. His case moved in another direction.

"I question the moral authority of [Harvard's] possession of it because, had this event never happened, where they forcibly remove [the Ponca] in violation of treaty, steal all his land and kill his people, he wouldn't have needed a white lawyer."

*That's the Ponca way, too.  
You don't just give something  
cheap to somebody. You give  
them something good.*

## An NWU connection (summer 2021)

Brett Chapman's Twitter posts about the tomahawk caught the Ponca's attention in both Nebraska and Oklahoma. Harvard's Peabody Museum noticed as well. Soon, the tribes and the museum began a formal conversation over Zoom.

Wright knew his colleagues in Oklahoma well. But he was surprised to also see a familiar name on the Peabody's advisory board: Philip Deloria, Harvard's first tenured professor of Native American history.

Wright addressed Deloria in that video meeting. "I'm not sure you'd remember me," he said, "but we met several years ago at Fort Robinson."

Wright had helped lead a conference

for history teachers at the Fort Robinson Museum and History Center in 2010. NWU and Lincoln Public Schools created the conference and landed Deloria as its keynote speaker.

"Oh, you're Kevin's friend!" Deloria said. "Sure, I remember you."

"I just love that story," Prof. Kevin Bower said, "because it's the only time it's happened that direction. Everywhere I go, it's always, 'Oh, you're Larry's friend!'"

The Delorias, Bower explained, are "an incredibly significant family of Native American scholars and artists." Bower turned to his shelves and pulled books by Philip; his father, Vine Deloria; and his great-aunt, Ella Deloria.

"Phil's amazing," Bower said. "Getting him to speak to history teachers at Fort Robinson—that was a big deal."

While helpful, Wright and Deloria's NWU connection was little more than a happy coincidence. Prof. Mathews focused instead on the significance of Deloria's seat at the table.

"I think it's very important that archeological museums like the Peabody have Native people in leadership and on their advisory boards," she said. Native perspectives change how these museums view their collections and make decisions.

Wright described these meetings as open, productive, respectful and friendly. "They agreed that the tomahawk—and several other Ponca artifacts—belonged with our people," he said.

The discussions then focused on when, how and where the artifacts should move. On each matter, Wright said, the museum sought to follow the Ponca's lead.

"We decided these weren't things you just box up and send FedEx," Wright said. "It was important to us that we come and accept them ourselves."

The Ponca arranged a fall 2021 visit. Then





A growing bison herd near Niobrara and a new health clinic in Lincoln are twin signs of the tribe's ongoing vitality.

came the delta surge.

Wright said COVID-19 has affected people's willingness to travel differently. His peers in Oklahoma were particularly reluctant to travel during a surge. This reluctance has historic roots. Smallpox ravaged the Ponca in 1800. By 1804, the tribe's population plummeted an astonishing 75% from 800 to 200.

So the Ponca canceled the fall trip and asked to come in the spring instead. The omicron surge has since threatened to postpone that visit as well. The Peabody's invitation, they said, is open-ended. Come when you're ready.

## An opening (spring 2022)

In the meantime, tribal life carries on.

In south Lincoln on October 30, Wright dedicated the opening of the Ponca's new \$5 million medical clinic at 1600 Windhoek Drive. It was a major development that strengthened the tribe's grip on its own well-being.

"As we continue to grow, we will evaluate where the need is and expand our services based on that," Wright told the *Lincoln Journal Star*. "We have a long-term growth project here."

Wright's remarks at the clinic were among his last official duties for the tribe. After 11 years as chairman and another four on the tribal council, he resigned his post in November to accept a job in the private sector.

If Wright had already decided to resign when he sat down near campus for an interview in late October, he didn't let on. The NWU alumnus did acknowledge over coffee that his 15 years of civil service had left him both tired and grateful.

"When I'm done, I won't be eligible for many of the services the tribe provides—which is a good thing," he said, "because that leaves more for others."

Stepping down may mean that Wright won't make that trip to Massachusetts to finally bring Standing Bear's tomahawk home. His first look might not come until after it's behind glass again, this time at the small tribal museum in Niobrara.

He may never handle the tomahawk himself. All the same, Wright will be a big reason why this quiet piece of America's civil rights history is back in Ponca hands. **n**



### Theatre Student Improvises with Her Gilman Scholarship

Sierra Smith's ('22) experience as Nebraska Wesleyan's 58th Gilman Scholarship winner was unlike any of the 57 that came before. The U.S. State Department's prestigious Gilman Scholarship is designed to take American undergraduates abroad. And Smith, unfortunately, never left Nebraska.

"Originally, I was supposed to be in Argentina last fall semester," the theatre design and technology and Spanish double major from Lincoln said. "But because of the pandemic, I was unable to travel. The same thing happened again this semester."

Fortunately, her destination school went fully virtual during the pandemic. And Smith was able to attend the University of Palermo in Buenos Aires, Argentina, from Lincoln. It's been about positivity and improvisation—about making the best of a challenging set of circumstances.

"Even though I'm not in Argentina, I've still made lots of contacts and connections abroad with my classmates," she said. "They're just as excited to talk to an American as I am to talk to them."



Photo by Lauren Andres

### Gilman Scholar Works to Show Would-be Travelers What to Expect Abroad

The Gilman Scholarship is a U.S. State Department program designed to diversify the people and places involved in international study. Damicah Burtin ('23) is the 59th NWU student to earn the prestigious award. The international business and Spanish major is studying this semester in Mexico City.

The scholarship helped Burtin clear a financial barrier. "Without it," he said, "I probably wouldn't have been able to study abroad."

Burtin will use his experience in Mexico City to help classmates clear another important hurdle to international study: one of imagination. Before students will pursue global experiences, they need the ability to imagine themselves doing it.

The Gilman Scholarship requires a service project. Burtin is gearing his project toward a video of his experience in Mexico.

"I'll show clips of my host family, university, friends and people I meet there, and different parts of the city while narrating," he said. "This video would serve as a 'what to expect' resource for students who are thinking of studying abroad. I know when I was first beginning my study abroad research, I would've loved something like this."



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**WESLEYAN** *Weekend*

September 29–October 2, 2022

class reunions / family weekend / alumni awards  
NWU sports / music and theatre / carnival and tailgate



Photo by Noah Deist

# The Strategy from Here

After COVID-19's omicron wave, individual nurses and entire hospital systems ask the same question: *How do we make this better?*

Jenny (Lum) Stachura (BSN '08, MSN '13) was less than a year into her current role as vice president for patient care services at CHI Health St. Elizabeth. But nothing about her demeanor conveyed inexperience as she welcomed you into her office. Instead, she shook your hand and you detected something already battle-tested in her smile—something that neither a KN-95 nor a warm disposition could mask.

Jenny Stachura's been through it.

Fifteen years at St. Elizabeth and CHI Health Nebraska Heart. Working her “three twelves” on the floor in progressive care. Coordinating services for patients with failing hearts. Serving as director of critical care. The last two years spent in COVID-19's exhausting fury.

Still, Stachura remained upbeat. Asked about the pandemic's impact, she answered with a veteran's understatement: “You do learn to stay flexible.”

But this was January 19, 2022. And some things about the omicron wave belied understatement. Nationally, COVID-19 infections crested five days earlier, at around 808,000 daily cases—those eights and zeros hanging open like a row of astonished jaws. Each day in America, another Seattle, Wash., infected.

In Nebraska on January 19, the curve tracked somewhat behind the nation's, with cases still rising. And hospitalizations, by their nature, tracked behind cases. Together, that meant omicron's strain on St. Elizabeth's intensive care unit promised to stay white knuckled into February.

“Never in my career have I seen an ICU stay completely full for so long,” Stachura said.

She and her colleagues had contingency plans. If things got still worse, they could transition St. E's ICU from 16 beds to 24—something the hospital had never done before. Stachura described this contingency with lifted eyebrows, as if to say St. E's also has the ability to turn on all its fire sprinklers. That doesn't mean it wants to.

In some ORs, the hospital's capacity to continue elective surgeries teetered on what happened the night before. One patient's



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admission for surgery hinging on another's release. The system, she said, has been that strained.

"I think a lot about our strategic planning," Stachura said. Planning to get the hospital and her nurses through the pandemic. Planning, also, to take them beyond it.

"What comes after this? What's the strategy from here? Over the next six months, what can we do to grow our skills and elevate the practice of nursing?"

Missing from Stachura's vocabulary were the typical buzzwords of the institutional planner—the jargon about "value added" or "upgraded process innovations." That might be because Stachura's mindset as a hospital administrator stayed remarkably close to her mindset as a floor nurse, a coworker, a parent.

*Working on the floor, you have to look for the wins. And you have to share them.*

"It's important for us to continue looking forward," she said. "You still have goals. Those didn't just go away."

For countless nurses, those goals involve education—and the career doors a degree can open.

"I didn't have a real plan when I started my MSN," Stachura said. "Nursing education or administration?"

I wasn't sure. But I loved being a student, and Wesleyan made it easy to plan my week. Small classes made for great discussions, and I've had so many good mentors."


Those classes and mentors expanded her range as a nurse. And while she may not have had a plan heading into NWU's Master of Science in Nursing program, she came out of it better able to create one. "And when that opportunity opened up, I was ready to jump."

Stachura felt a similar positivity running between Nebraska Wesleyan's learning environment and St. E's working environment—especially through the pandemic's hardships.

"Working on the floor, you have to look for the wins," she said. "And you have to share them. When that family member sees what you do and shows you gratitude—it's so important that you share that with your team. Because you're in it together."

So much unfolds in a single shift, she said. "In one room, someone's upset. The next room: someone's dying. In the next room, someone needs help getting to the bathroom." Stachura's eyes smiled over her mask. "You get good at shifting gears and putting on that face."

Another thing the pandemic taught her: You can't wear that face all the time. "People in the medical field can be the worst at asking for help," she said.

Then she uttered the most strategically important sentence a hospital administrator can say to anyone—inside or outside a hospital. She said, "We need to prioritize taking care of each other." 

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# International Waters

A Prairie Wolf swims for her home country in a world meet.

By Dwain Hebda ('90)

The course of a competitive swimmer's career usually starts shallow, with small, local meets that advance into larger and larger pools. For Nebraska Wesleyan University swimmer **Kayla Hepler** ('24), the current has flowed in a different direction.

Hepler, a native of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, arrived in Lincoln this fall with years of experience in world meets. She left campus in December to represent the Marshall Islands at the 15th FINA World Swimming Championships in Abu Dhabi, UAE. There, she shared the pool with 900 of the world's top swimmers, including Team USA 2020 Olympic medalists Kate Douglass, Lydia Jacoby and Emma Weyant.

One of two women to compete under the Marshall Islands flag, Hepler set personal bests in both her events: the 50m butterfly and 50m freestyle.

"I feel amazing about my performance," she said. "At first, I was a bit nervous; it's always the nerves that get to you. But actually, I feel happy. I feel like I accomplished something."

For kids raised on the Marshall Islands—a tiny series of Pacific islands and atolls roughly halfway between Hawaii and Australia—water is a way of life. "I started swimming when I was just a baby," Hepler said. "My mom would take me to the pool every day. I started competing when I was around 15."

The islands' combined landmass is roughly equal to Washington, D.C. And the nation's population of less than 80,000 makes it a little smaller than Sioux City, Iowa. So, finding competition meant looking internationally. "I've competed in so many different countries," she said. "I think my first one was in Indianapolis, and that was pretty cool. I also went to Buenos Aires. I've been to Papua, New Guinea, for an international



Photos by Chris Smithberg and Corbey Dorsey



*I feel amazing about my performance  
... I feel like I accomplished something.*

swim meet. That was pretty fun."

Those experiences left her unafraid to search far and wide for a college home. She found Nebraska Wesleyan thanks in part to her older sister, Annie. Annie swam on the club level at the University of Nebraska. Her club coach, **Kyle Hunt**, became Nebraska Wesleyan's head swim coach in 2019. But for his recruiting, she'd likely never have heard of NWU.

"Kayla is a very smart, very cerebral swimmer," Hunt said. "She is really cool, really calm and collected, has a super bright smile. When training is hard, she'll uplift people by her personality."

Hunt said, "The best part about her is she is super coachable and willing to adjust. If we need her to step up in a relay, she'll do that. If she needs to swim an event she's not really comfortable doing, she's willing to do that. Ultimate team player."

Hepler transferred to NWU after a

pandemic year of studying online. She called her first semester in University Place an ongoing learning experience, from the intensity of training to being her team's only woman of color.

"At first, I did feel a little weird. I felt like I was standing out," she said. "I am still adjusting and getting to know [teammates], but I have definitely made friends on the team."

She said her top goal at NWU is to complete her education degree and return home to join the long line of teachers in her family. As for swimming, Hepler wants that to benefit her homeland, too.

"I'm hoping people back home are inspired to compete like me, to represent our country and get that experience I've had," she said. "Meeting new people and swimmers from different countries is cool. Being able to represent your country is pretty fascinating as well." 🐾





Photos courtesy Trey Bardsley

## Trey Bardsley Strikes 3x3 Gold

One of the most prolific shooters in Nebraska Wesleyan men's basketball history has kept right on shooting—and making history—since his days as a P-Wolf.

Trey Bardsley ('16) won the 2016 Jostens Trophy as NCAA III's top men's player. Since then, he's toured nationally with the Harlem Globetrotters as a Washington General. Then came success in the growing phenomenon of three-on-three basketball.



Bardsley won a national championship for 3BALL Omaha last summer. That experience led to an opportunity to train with the American national team, where he earned a roster spot at the FIBA AmeriCup in Miami, Fla., in November. He helped Team USA win gold in Miami, scoring 21 points over five games, including the go-ahead bucket in the final versus Brazil.

Bardsley also shined in the tournament's individual contests, taking silver in the shooting competition.

"Representing the U.S., it was a huge honor, and coming out with a gold medal was a great experience," Bardsley told the *Lincoln Journal Star*.

The win secured Team USA's invitation to the FIBA 3x3 World Cup in Antwerp, Belgium, this June. Roster decisions for that team have yet to be determined, but Bardsley hopes to contribute in Antwerp. [n](#)

## 34<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL 'W' CLUB GOLF TOURNAMENT



## Tee up for 'W'

MONDAY,  
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Hillcrest Country Club // Lincoln

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11 a.m. check-in and lunch,  
noon shotgun start,  
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Register at [nwusports.com/wclubgolf](https://nwusports.com/wclubgolf).



# Color & Grace

A grateful student honors his teacher with a solo exhibition.

Every Nebraska Wesleyan graduate can name “that teacher”—the one professor whose impact was so personally profound as to be life-changing.

In the arts, these student-professor connections run especially deep. Creative expression is intensely personal, and those uncertain early steps art students take require more than a little trust in the teachers guiding the way. As a result, the gratitude developing artists feel for excellent teaching is often lifelong.

In November, Professor of Art **David Gracie** paid unusual tribute to “that teacher” in his life: the late painter, Stephen Brown. Gracie studied painting under Brown at Hartford Art School in West Hartford, Conn., in the late 1990s.

Brown studied under Alice Neel in New York and earned an Academy Award in Painting at the American Academy of Arts and Letters. He had exhibited his paintings widely across the country—but never in Nebraska. Gracie changed that by bringing together a fall exhibition of 70 of his works at Elder Gallery in Nebraska Wesleyan’s Rogers Center for Fine Arts.

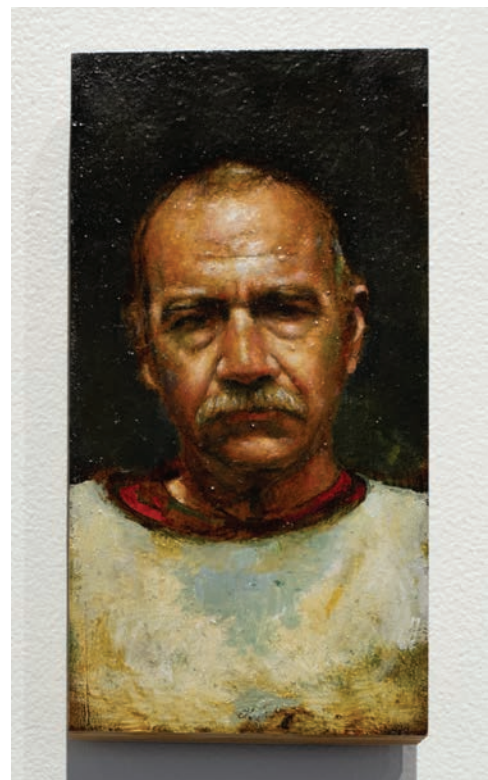
“The Aching Beauty of It All” was a student’s tribute to his teacher.

Gracie sees his own teaching as another tribute to him. “As I begin my 17th year of teaching at Nebraska Wesleyan University,” he said, “I can reflect on how each of my students is taught Stephen’s way of seeing the world as a painter.”

The easy naturalness of Brown’s paintings—a pair of empty work boots at ease against a wall, or a pear balanced on a plate—belies the meticulousness of their construction. Brown did his work in both painstaking and improvisational layers.

Even Brown’s name does a bit of the painter’s work, calling forth an earthy color. And Gracie’s name does something similar in the way it echoes grace.

Mix the two—the teacher and the student, the color and the grace—and something special happens. Grace can be called “love for the unlovely.” And Brown’s earthiest paintings—his portraits of potatoes, his skillful renderings of the raspy skins of red onions—show color and grace in lifelong partnership. **n**



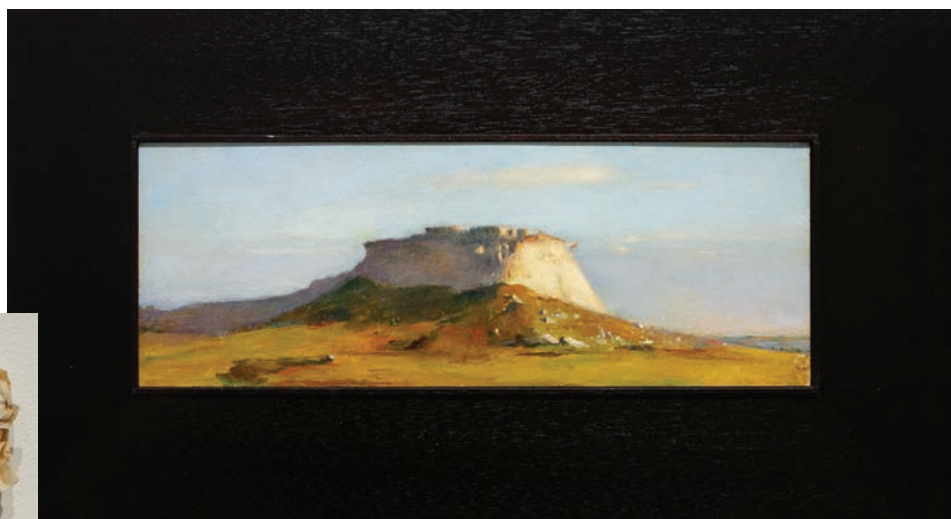
*“Being a realist painter doesn’t simply mean you copy what’s before you. The paint itself is equally real and has its own material, conceptual and expressive potential.”*





*“Like a person standing in front of you ... you sense the history leading up to the point when you behold his paintings. The details and order of that history aren’t clear, but you’re convinced of its presence.”*

*\*Quotations from David Gracie’s 2021 exhibition essay, “The Aching Beauty of It All”*



*Photos by Allison Woods (’20)*



*“He would sand and scrape to reveal passages into earlier layers. The subtractive element allowed earlier moments of the painting’s self-narrative to come to the surface alongside newer marks.”*



*"When making his small paintings, Stephen would often work with the painting in his lap. Holding the painting this way made it clear that it was both an object and an image."*



Dennis ('67) and Margaret (Baxter) ('67) McClatchey established a new endowed scholarship to honor professors of theatre **David Clark** and **Henry Blanke**. Who are the teachers who made a difference in your life? Let us know at [ewendt@nebrwesleyan.edu](mailto:ewendt@nebrwesleyan.edu).



## You can make a tax-free gift to NWU from your IRA.

If you are 70½ or older and own an IRA, you can make a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) directly from your IRA to charities like NWU.

Making a QCD may lower your taxable income and count toward your required minimum distribution.

### Reach out to learn more.

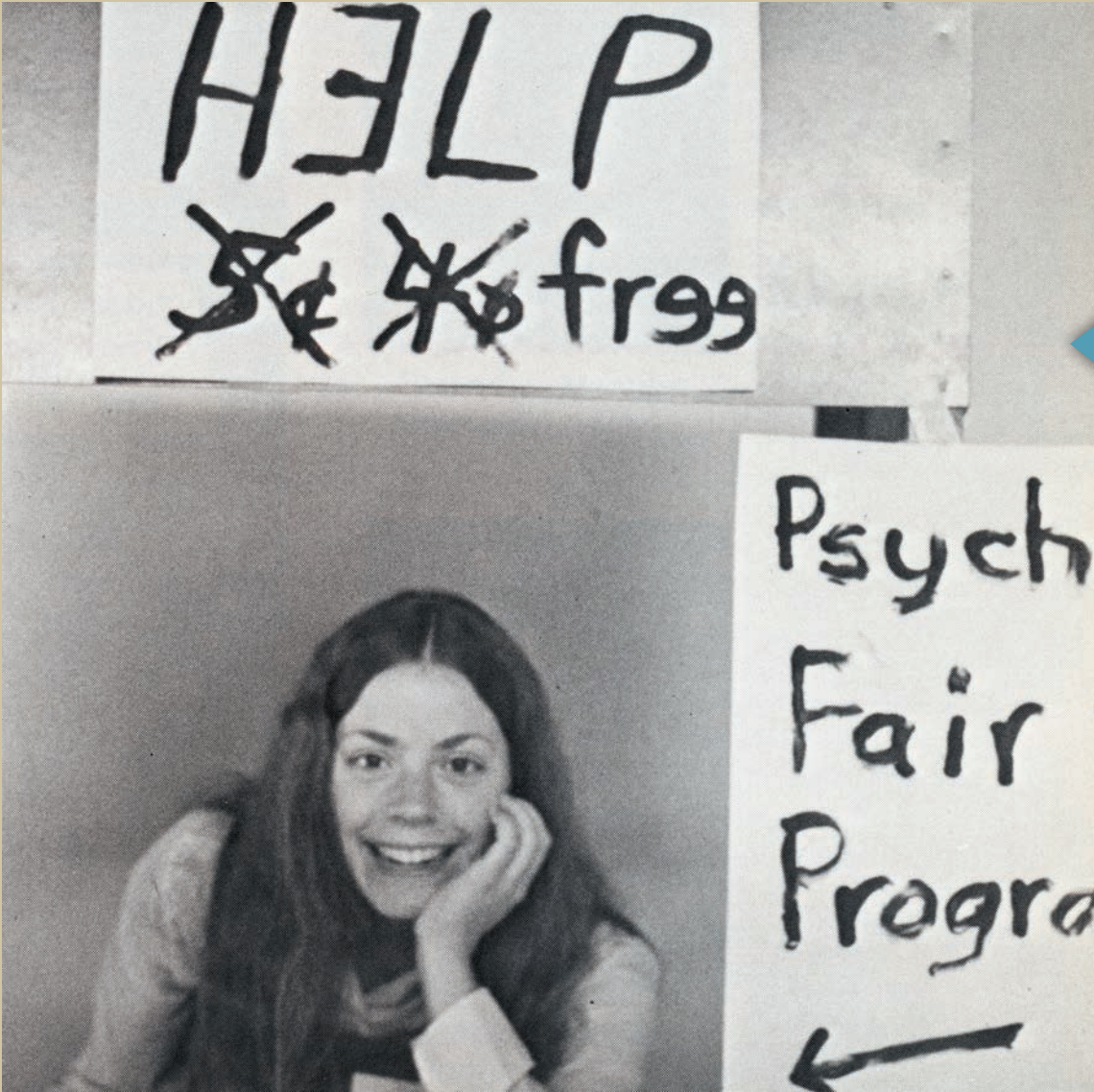
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## MYSTERY PHOTO



### Free advice

Deeply discounted advice was offered at this mid-'70s psychology fair. Do you know who staffed this happily helpful booth?

#### Send your responses to:

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Lincoln, NE 68504-2794  
[ewendt@nebrwesleyan.edu](mailto:ewendt@nebrwesleyan.edu)

# ALUMNI PAGES

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### Shelley McHugh ('91)

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## MYSTERY PHOTO REVEALED



This is an “advertising” picture of **Floyd Henderson** (‘68), **Charlene (Anderson) Morris** (‘67), **Marilyn (Belfrage) Rawe** (‘68), and **Kevin Nye** (‘68) extolling the good eats and good taste of King’s Food Host.

Kevin was a resident assistant in Plainsman Hall my first year at Nebraska Wesleyan University in 1965, and I learned a lot from Kevin. Also, Kevin and Marilyn were in an ad for Varsity Drug Store in the 1966 Plainsman yearbook.

Thanks for this “history” section in the *Archways* magazine.

—**Gene Crump** (‘69)

Upon recognizing **Marilyn Belfrage** from my sophomore year, I grabbed my 1966 yearbook and look what I found! Now I know from the left, this is **Floyd Henderson**, **Charlene Anderson**, **Marilyn** and **Kevin Nye**. I knew I was saving my yearbooks for a reason!

—**Judy Crees** (‘68)

I’m the “queen” on the left in the fun King’s ad. Next to me is **Marilyn Belfrage**. I think the boy on the far right might be **Kevin Nye**, and I don’t recall the name of the boy on the far left.

We were recruited by the yearbook staff to take candid photos at many NWU supporters. So much FUN AND FOOD! Every shop—mostly those in Havelock—fed us.

—**Charlene (Anderson) Brodd Morris** (‘67)

How well I remember trips to King’s and their wonderful “frenchees” and hot fudge sundaes in the late 1960s. My old brain is not recalling three of the names, but my dear fellow thespian, **Kevin Nye**, is sitting at the end of the table, stage left. He appeared in “Dylan” and “Dark at the Top of the Stairs” with me, and we both spent the summer of 1968 at Brownville Village Theatre under the direction of **Henry Blanke**.

Kevin was a remarkable actor and I would love to get in touch with him after all these years.

—**Heather Craig-Oldsen** (‘70)

## Upcoming Alumni Events

More in-person alumni events (aligned with NWU and local health protocols) are in the works. Join us!

### Alumni Days at the Ballpark

April 2

**Seng Park**

Softball vs. Wartburg at 1 and 3 p.m.

April 30

**Woods Park**

Baseball vs. Central College at noon and 2:30 p.m.

### Meet the President: Minneapolis

May 12

Lee (‘74) and Karen Newcomer host alumni and friends for a night of celebration with President Darrin Good.

### NWU Together in Phoenix

May 19

NWU alumni, parents and friends gather at the Heard Museum for an evening of socializing.

### Wesleyan Weekend

September 29-October 2

Enjoy homecoming, reunions, alumni awards, a family weekend and more.





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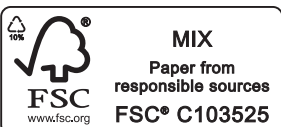


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*April 21, 2022*

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