

THE MARI SANDOZ HERITAGE SOCIETY PRESENTS

2023

## PILSTER GREAT PLAINS LECTURE & MARI SANDOZ SYMPOSIUM

MARI SANDOZ'S HOMELAND YESTERDAY, TODAY,  
AND TOMORROW: A HIGH PLAINS SYMPOSIUM

**SEPTEMBER 28–30, 2023**

Mari Sandoz High Plains Heritage Center at Chadron State College  
Chadron, Nebraska

Donovin Sprague, Lakota Historian & Educator, Rapid City SD & Sheridan, WY

Christine Ambrose, Chadron, NE

Phyllis Krotz, Rushville, NE

Harlen Wheeler, Gordon, NE

Dr. Mary Clai Jones, Chadron State College, Chadron, NE

Markus Jones, Chadron State College, Chadron, NE

Dr. Matt Evertson, Chadron State College, Chadron, NE

Tony Malmberg, Rancher & Author, Union, OR (luncheon keynote)

Dr. Michael Leite, Chadron State College, Chadron, NE

Steve Rolsmeier, Chadron State College, Chadron, NE

Dr. Teresa Frink, Chadron State College, Chadron, NE



This program is funded in part by Humanities  
Nebraska and the Nebraska Cultural Endowment

[www.marisandoz.org](http://www.marisandoz.org)

## Friday, September 29, 2023

### 8:15 am Registrant Check-In, Continental Breakfast, Coffee, and Networking

Mari Sandoz High Plains Heritage Center, Chicoine Atrium

### 8:50 am Opening & Welcome

Shannon Smith, President, Mari Sandoz Heritage Society and Mike Smith, Chair, 2023 Symposium Committee

### Announcement of 2023–2024 Sandoz Scholar

Broc Anderson, Sandoz Scholar Committee Member

### 9:00 am "Telling Our Stories" – Preserving and Sharing Plains Indian Culture and History Today"

*Museum exhibits, public presentations, books, documentaries, films, music, and art tell the stories of Indigenous cultures around the world. In every medium there have been instances of cultural appropriation by non-Indigenous people and sometimes the narrative being told has come from an outside perspective that can promote inaccurate, insensitive, and even completely false characterizations. Mari Sandoz worked hard to dispel misconceptions about Plains Indian history and culture while telling unvarnished truths in appropriate and respectful ways in her stories about Native American dispossession. Today, Donovan Sprague also works tirelessly to share the culture of his people to help us better understand their past and present situations. In this talk Donovan will discuss his work as a public historian and his impression of the current state of affairs in preserving and sharing American Indian culture and how non-Indians can support their Indian brothers and sisters by learning more about them.*

**Speaker: Donovan Sprague, Sheridan, WY**

**Shannon Smith, Session Chair**

### 10:00 am PANEL DISCUSSION: "Preserving Local History in Sandoz Country"

*Although Mari Sandoz did not complete any formal historical training or education, Sandoz relied on her own experiences growing up in northwest Nebraska to tell her stories. Not to downplay her time dedicated to the extensive and significant research in archives across the country, but it is Sandoz's intimate connection to the High Plains region that she can describe these people and places in a much deeper and more meaningful narrative. Now in the twenty-first century, local residents and institutions seek to preserve and share this history within these northwest Nebraska communities. From this panel, the objective is to raise awareness and describe the importance of being able to preserve this local history within these respective communities. This honors and continues Mari Sandoz's legacy and research interests. The panelists, Christine Ambrose, of Chadron, Phyllis Krotz, of Rushville, and Harlen Wheeler, of Gordon share their own and institutional projects, plans, and efforts to preserve and maintain local history in the homeland of Sandoz country.*

**Panelist: Christine Ambrose, Chadron, NE**

**Panelist: Phyllis Krotz, Rushville, NE**

**Panelist: Harlen Wheeler, Gordon, NE**

**Broc Anderson, Session Chair**

### 11:00 am PANEL DISCUSSION: "Teaching With Mari Sandoz on the High Plains"

*Matthew Evertson, Markus Jones, and Mary Clai Jones all teach in the English & Humanities Department at Chadron State College. This panel will explore how they teach using materials and themes related to the High Plains. Each panelist will briefly describe how they've incorporated elements of the High Plains –*

*- whether it be Mari Sandoz's publications, the Sandoz High Plains Heritage Center, or attributes of the high plains' landscapes -- into their writing and teaching. Then, panelists will open the floor for discussion by posing questions for the audience. For example, the English Studies Major catalogue has recently included a regional component into their requirements.*

**Panelist: Mari Clai Jones, Ph.D., Chadron State College**

**Panelist: Markus Jones, Chadron State College**

**Panelist: Matt Evertson, Ph.D., Chadron State College**

**Renee Laegreid, Ph.D., Session Chair**

**12:15 pm**

**Luncheon/Keynote**

**"High Plains Grasslands: Enhancing Livestock Production in an Ancient Ecosystem"**

Chadron State College Student Center Ballroom

*The world's grasslands, including the High Plains, evolved in cycles of high disturbance followed by long periods of rest. Nebraska native Malmberg carries the message of how today's land managers can mimic the evolution of the grasslands to the benefit of both the land and their bottom lines.*

**Keynote Speaker: Tony Malmberg, Cattle Rancher and Holistic Grasslands Manager, Union, OR**

**Shannon Smith, Mari Sandoz Heritage Society President, Moderator**

**1:45 PM**

**Return to Sandoz High Plains Heritage Center**

**2:00 pm**

**PANEL DISCUSSION: "The High Plains: Climate, Flora and Fauna, Past, Present, Future"**

*Conference Chair Michael Smith will moderate a probing discussion among three of Chadron State College's knowledgeable natural scientists in exploring the place that is characterized by the High Plains environment and the life it supports. Created by natural processes over eons of time, this place has supported human life for 15,000 years or more. What has changed, what is found today, what is its projected future and what might that mean for the peoples who depend on and love the land? This is a key topic, one that Mari Sandoz explored in her writings and is ever more vital today.*

**Panelist: Michael Leite, Ph.D., Chadron State College**

**Panelist: Steven Rolfsmeier, Chadron State College**

**Panelist: Teresa Frink, Ph.D., Chadron State College**

**Michael Smith, Session Chair**

**3:00 PM**

**Optional Friday afternoon activities (instructions TBA)**

- Tour of the Chadron State College Herbarium
- Tour of the Sandoz archives at the Sandoz High Plains Heritage Center
- Chadron State Park hike

## **Saturday, September 30, 2023**

**9:00 am**

**Informal Coffee & Discussion**

Bean Broker Coffeehouse & Pub, 202 W. 2nd St., downtown Chadron

**"A Cowboy's Challenge: Succession. What the Land Teaches"**

*Join Tony Malmberg to discuss what the land has taught him over the years and how he is employing those lessons today. Moderated by Mari Sandoz Heritage Society President, Shannon Smith*

# 2023 Symposium Speaker & Panelist Bios

## Donovin Sprague

Born and raised on the Cheyenne River Reservation, Donovin is a Minnicoujou Lakota, enrolled member of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, and a descendent of both Chief Hump and Crazy Horse. He is a nationally renowned public historian and educator and has traveled the world to share his knowledge. Donovin was the head of American Indian Education for the University of Iowa, Iowa State University, and the University of Northern Iowa and is currently a Professor of History at Sheridan College, Sheridan, Wyoming. Sprague's knowledge of traditional Native American historical sources makes him one of the premier experts on the topics and he has worked with several tribes across the country including the Choctaw Nation and the Citizen Potawatomi Nation of Oklahoma. He is proud of his place in the academic world where he can help people understand primary sources like winter counts and oral stories. He is also a consultant to museums around the country including the Smithsonian National American Indian Museum and the new Museum of Westward Expansion at the archway in St. Louis, Missouri. His museum historical research and written captions are at the George Heye Center American Indian Smithsonian Museum in downtown New York City. Donovin is also a tour guide, an author of 10 books, an artisan, and a musician. He received a Coat of Arms from the Queen of England and was selected as South Dakota Ziebach County Historian of the Year. He received the Distinguished Scholar Award from the South Dakota Humanities Council, and South Dakota West River History Conference Award (2018). In 1994, the City of Rapid City proclaimed March 23 "Donovin Sprague Day" for his work with improving American Indian/white relations.

## Christine Ambrose

Christine Maloney Ambrose is the co-author of three local history books with Valerie Humphrey-- *The Mueksch Blacksmith Shop & The Branding Iron Reunion*, (2018) *Land of Mirages: The History & People of Mirage Flats*, (2019) and *Memories of the Good Life: Stories from Sheridan & Dawes Counties*, (2021). She also writes a history column for the Hay Springs Hip-Hop newspaper, *Sheridan County Memories*. She has worked for Chadron Public Schools for 14 years, and is currently the Librarian at Chadron Intermediate School. She has one son, Lucas Riley, who is currently attending her alma mater, Chadron State College. Since 2018 she has had a dedicated history Facebook page, Mirage Flats History, where she shares her love of local history. She can be reached at [mirage.flats.history@gmail.com](mailto:mirage.flats.history@gmail.com).

## Phyllis Krotz

Phyllis (Jungck) Krotz grew up in Old Jules country southwest of Rushville, NE. She graduated from Rushville High School and Augustana College Sioux Falls and has lived with her husband and sons in Seward, North Platte, and Lincoln NE. At retirement she and her husband James returned to Sheridan County where she began to volunteer at the Armstrong House Museum. In 2019 when the museum accepted a large collection of family records, she helped organize the Sheridan County History Center. The History Center now holds many records of ranches, schools, cemeteries, and families of the county. In 2021 she compiled a book, *Rushville: My hometown*, with the histories of Rushville families. Krotz is presently working to raise money for the building of an addition to the Armstrong House Museum to house the Sheridan County History Center.

## Harlen Wheeler

Harlen Wheeler was born and raised in Gordon, Nebraska. After graduating from high school in 1973, Harlen spent 20 years living in Texas and North Carolina. Returning to Gordon in 1993, he spent the next 10 years pastoring his home church and in 2002 he retired and started a remodeling business with his son. In 2008, he was hired as editor of the *Journal Star* and worked for a year writing and researching. It was then he got interested in Gordon history and has been reading, researching and writing about local events and history ever since. For 10 years he served as President of the Sheridan County Historical Society and is presently heading up a drive to relocate the Scamahorn Museum along Hwy 20 in Gordon. Harlen is married and has three grown sons. He is working on a historical narrative about Gordon's first five years.

## Mary Clai Jones, Ph.D.

Mary Clai Jones is Associate Professor of English and Humanities at Chadron State College. Her research interests focus on the intersections of gender, material culture, and social geography within late nineteenth-century British Literature. Her current book project, *Fashioning Mobility: Navigating Space in Victorian Fiction*, is currently being revised and resubmitted for Routledge. "The Forest for the Trees: Vernon Lee's Environmental Activism" is forthcoming in *Vernon Lee: Place Nation Memory* with Ohio University Press. "Fashioning Spaces of Play in Victorian Doll Stories" appeared in *Nineteenth Century Gender Studies* and "Marie Corelli's Ziska and Fantastic Feminism" is included in Routledge's edited collection *The Female Fantastic: Gendering the Supernatural in the 1890s and 1920s*. She teaches both composition and literature classes.

## Markus Jones

Markus Egeler Jones graduated with Eastern Kentucky University's MFA. He is an Associate Professor of English at Chadron State College. His first novel, *How the Butcher Bird Finds Her Voice*, was published in 2018. The novel is an Award Winner in the Multicultural category of the 2018 American Fiction Awards and a finalist in the 2019 multicultural category of the New Mexico Book Awards. His work has also been nominated for a 2018 and 2019 Pushcart Prize and as a finalist for both the 2017 Tillie Olsen Award and in the Literary category of the American Fiction Awards. Along the way he has discovered teaching writing is as fulfilling as writing.

## Matt Evertson, Ph.D.

Dr. Matt Evertson is currently teaching, researching, and writing about the regional influences upon the literature of the Great Plains, with a special emphasis on the Environmental Humanities. He is also interested in the role of liberal arts in higher education and interdisciplinary/integrative learning across the curriculum. Dr. Evertson's earlier scholarship focused on American literary naturalism and a comparative study of Stephen Crane and Theodore Roosevelt. Since returning to Nebraska to teach, his interests have evolved into the ecocritical explorations of Western American writers, particularly those voices of our region in the Great Plains. His current writing projects include an exploration of the ecological themes surrounding "home" and "homes" in the works of Willa Cather, Mari Sandoz, Wright Morris and other Nebraska voices. In his spare time he attempts to write long and short fiction, mostly set in the contemporary West.

## Tony Malmberg

Tony Malmberg is a third-generation rancher. As the recipient of many honors from agricultural organizations, environmental and wildlife interests, including the National Environmental Stewardship Award from the National Cattlemen's Association. Tony demonstrates profitable ecological land use that adds value to his community. As founder and president of Ranchers Management Company, Tony managed ranch properties and consulted for individual ranches in the western United States for nearly twenty years. Tony owned and operated Twin Creek Ranch, south of Lander, Wyoming, for 31 years. The ranch served as a laboratory for master's thesis and other academic studies concerning the interaction of properly managed grazing and sage grouse habitat, wildlife friendly fence and migration, riparian habitat and migratory songbird population. Tony has been a practitioner of Holistic Management for thirty-five years and was a co-founder of Savory Institute. He has supervised the implementation of Holistic Management on ranches in Wyoming, South Dakota, Montana, Oregon, and Hawaii. Tony and his wife, Andrea, sold their Wyoming ranch in 2009. They used the Holistic Decision-Making Framework in selecting northeastern Oregon and now ranch in Union county Oregon. They raise Beyond Organic Beef: Grown to Enhance the Land that Creates it and the People who Enjoy it. Some of the criteria of their search was cost per Animal Unit, access to grass finished beef markets, climate change and a place where they could live with and learn about salmon and their habitat. Tony and Andrea work with land managers to restore rivers, ecosystem health and better manage their irrigation resource to support salmon. Tony recently published a book titled, *Green Grass in the Spring: A Cowboy's Guide to Saving the World*. Tony enjoys writing articles, a blog, and golfing. He likes spending time with his daughter and three grandchildren.

## **Michael Leite, Ph.D.**

Mike Leite was committed to a life of science at the age of 5. Growing up in North Dakota, with the benefits of books, exploration of the outdoors, and understanding parents, he discovered that nature, while awe-inspiring and often daunting, can be comprehensible. Among his role models are Harrison Schmitt, the first geologist to walk on the moon. But he picked geology as a vocation because of the field trips. Field trips were events where like-minded geo-geeks could share the wonders of a world much bigger, and much older than humanly imaginable, and somehow think that was normal. He started his professional life as an oilfield geologist. He never intended to be a teacher (like his father) but fell into that profession because that's where the interesting jobs were. And academia is where basic research is done. Teaching later became a passion. He realized that most people don't have the benefits of an upbringing like his, and some people don't automatically understand their connections to the natural world, and therefore don't understand the consequences of their actions. Among his accomplishments is partnering with colleagues to develop the hybrid (partly online) geoscience program at Chadron State College, including an annual field camp. Before he leaves this world, he hopes to make small strides toward alleviating the climate crisis.

## **Steve Rolfsmeier**

Steve grew up near Seward, Nebraska and did not show much interest in plants until his senior year of high school, when he made a plant collection for advanced biology, and continued to collect as a hobby after graduation. As an undergrad at Doane College, he worked extensively with the college's historical herbarium and eventually got a job working weekends in the University herbarium in Lincoln. A couple of years after finishing a masters degree at the University, he got an opportunity to spend a summer collecting on the Pine Ridge in 1991 and spent much of his off-time volunteering for Ron Weedon in the Chadron State College herbarium. This turned into a yearly gig, and eventually Ron coaxed he and his wife Susan to set up a computerized database for the Chadron State Herbarium in 2003. They both left for Kansas State University for Susan to complete a PhD in 2007, with the thought they would return after she finished. Three years into the program, Ron died unexpectedly and Steve was asked to cover one of his fall courses and manage the herbarium in fall of 2010. He was hired as full-time director of the High Plains Herbarium the following fall. Since then they have added over 10,000 specimens to the collection and are completing digitalization of our plant specimen records which can be accessed online through the Northern Great Plains Herbarium portal.

## **Teresa Frink, Ph.D.**

Chadron State College professor Dr. Teresa J. Frink teaches courses in wildlife management in the range program at the school. She graduated from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln with a Bachelor of Science in fisheries and wildlife biology in 2001. In 2004 she earned her Master of Science in wildlife and fisheries science and in 2008 her Doctorate in wildlife science both at South Dakota State University. Frink joined the CSC range program in 2008. Her research interests focus on mountain lions, bighorn sheep, swift fox and spotted skunk. She lives with her husband Ej and daughters Willow and Cedar on a small ranch south of Hay Springs in Old Jules country.

# Acknowledgements

## 2023 Mari Sandoz Symposium Chair

Michael J. Smith

## Mari Sandoz Symposium Planning Committee Members

Broc Anderson, Dr. Kurt Kinbacher, Dr. Renée Laegreid, Dr. Elaine Nelson, Lynn Roper, Shannon Smith

## Chadron State College Administration

Dr. Ron K. Patterson, CSC President

Special Thanks to Daniel Binkard and Tena Cook, Chadron State College Department of College Relations

## Mari Sandoz Heritage Society Board of Directors

Shannon Smith (President), Dan Kusek (Vice-President), Brian Rockey (Treasurer), Heather Stauffer (Secretary),  
Lynn Roper (President Emeritus, Assistant Treasurer & Investment Manager),  
Christy Chamberlin (Finance & Development Chair), Dr. Holly Boomer (Grants & Awards Chair),  
Michael Smith (At-Large Executive Committee Member), Broc Anderson, Sybil Malmberg-Berndt (emeritus director),  
Dr. Leisl Carr-Childers, Dr. Steven Coughlin, Dr. Matt Evertson, Dr. Nicole Gray, Karen Kelley, Dr. Kurt Kinbacher,  
Dr. Renée Laegreid, Dan McGlynn, Dr. Elaine Nelson, Dr. David Nesheim, Dr. Chris Steinke, Dr. Jillian Wenburg

## Mari Sandoz Heritage Society Staff

Elizabeth Chase, Executive Secretary  
J.L. Schmidt, Public Relations Coordinator  
Courtney Kouba, Archival Assistant

## Mari Sandoz High Plains Heritage Center Staff (Chadron State College)

Laure Sinn, Mari Sandoz High Plains Heritage Center Program Coordinator  
Courtney Kouba, Mari Sandoz High Plains Heritage Center Archival Assistant

This symposium would not be possible without the generous financial support of the  
Mari Sandoz Heritage Society and the donors who support the work of the Society

This program was funded in part by Humanities Nebraska and the Nebraska Cultural Endowment



We honor the late Ron Hull and the late Dr. John Wunder for their contributions to this annual symposium and the work of the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society. Without their leadership and vision, this symposium would not be possible.

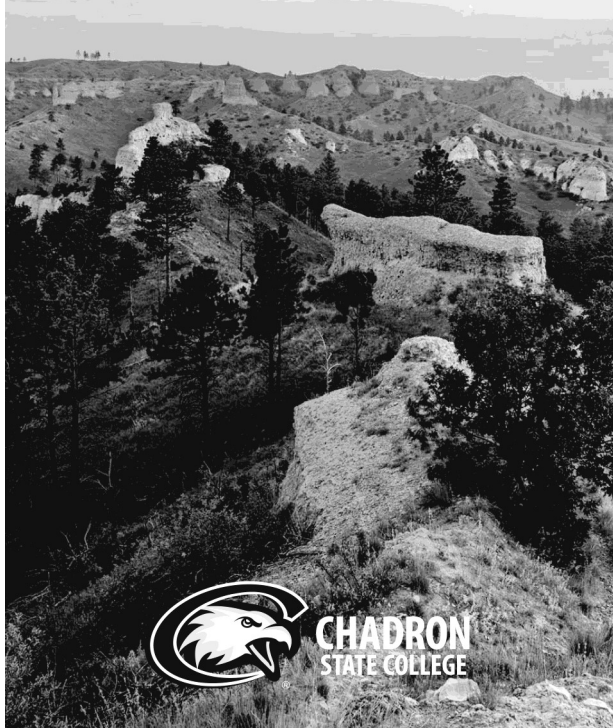




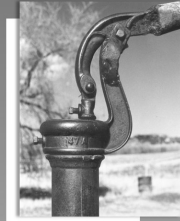




# Chadron State College welcomes you to Sandoz Country



## At Home in the Sandhills



September 13 to December 15

featuring the photographs of  
Dwight Kirsch and David Tipton



Mari Sandoz High Plains Heritage Center

1000 Main St

(308) 432-6401

[www.sandozcenter.com](http://www.sandozcenter.com)

[www.facebook.com/sandozcenter](https://www.facebook.com/sandozcenter)



Mari  
Sandoz  
High Plains Heritage Center



Mari Sandoz's *Homeland Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow: A High Plains Symposium* is funded in part by Humanities Nebraska and the Nebraska Cultural Endowment. For more information, visit [HumanitiesNebraska.org](http://HumanitiesNebraska.org)



An aging drifter seeking answers about his father, and an academic on a quest to rediscover her literary heroine, navigate troubled relationships and the Nebraska Sandhills, as they uncover little-known history about Mari Sandoz.

