Ithaca, NY—Barton Hall echoed with the sound of drums and was buzzing with excitement on Saturday April 14, 2007. Nearly 2,000 visitors witnessed the swaying fringe, the quickstep of a smoke dancer and the joy of a toddler’s first jingle dance during the 8th Annual Powwow and Smoke Dance Competition hosted by the Native American Students (NASAC) at Cornell.

After taking a year off to plan for the Ivy Native Conference last spring, NASAC members were worried about attendance and participation at this year’s Powwow. Additionally, they had graduated many upperclassmen who had helped plan powwows in the past. The NASAC Powwow Committee began meeting in...see Powwow page 4

Families from throughout the region come together to celebrate Native cultures.

Photo by Carol Kalafatic

Another Look at Program Houses

Editorial by Mary La France ’09

In a recent and highly controversial broadcast of CNN’s Paula Zahn Now show entitled, “Divided We Stand: Self-Segregation Out in the Open,” Cornell University Program Houses were examined as examples of the degree to which self-segregation exists on college campuses. After an emotional viewing, students and faculty from Akwe:kon (“All of Us”), the Native American Program House, came together to discuss the portrayal of program houses during the episode and steps to take in response.

It is important to realize that, true to their stated purpose, program houses at Cornell provide important bases for students of many diverse cultural backgrounds. Yet it was enormously clear that CNN chose to portray program houses in a light that could potentially undermine them as important resources for students at universities everywhere. Instead of hastily reacting to the content of the show, students and faculty have chosen a more positive approach to addressing these concerns.

The most direct result of the broadcast has clearly been unity. A large portion of the Cornell and Akwe:kon communities came together to watch and discuss the content of the episode. Everyone at the Akwe:kon viewing agreed that the first priority in correcting the mis-representation of program houses like Akwe:kon is to reaffirm the purpose and values that guide the house, and then to take action to promote these to the larger Cornell community. This will help to strengthen community within Akwe:kon and improve understanding throughout the campus at large.

The next step is for all Cornell program houses...see Program Houses page 4
M.E.: Basically my idea for this interview is to talk about your artistic history, how art fits into your life, your latest display at the Johnson.

I'm just going to throw out a bunch of questions. Just answer the ones you like the best, or ramble and I will frame questions for them

So when did you decide you wanted to become a full-time artist?

L.T.: It's just something I've always done. It's always been part of my life.

What challenges do you feel you face (a) as a creator of art and (b) someone trying to succeed and eventually make a living in the artistic world?

I think the biggest challenge is that a lot of people don't have respect for artists, especially in an academic setting. People don't think we work as hard, or that our work is extremely easy. I love it. I do love my work, but that doesn't mean it's not hard, or that I'm not spending nights in studio.

How would you describe your latest display in the Johnson? Was there an assignment you were responding to? If not, what ideas of feelings informed your creation? What were you trying to convey? How do you feel about the finished work?

The piece I had in the Johnson, "Striped Form," was from my Painting III class. In the class we had no assignments, other than to produce work by certain times. I was thinking about the interactions of straight lines across organic forms. A lot of time things become polarized: straight and curvy, male and female, and even science and art. I like to think about things as less distinctly defined, and I wonder a lot about how we as people decide on these sometimes arbitrary definitions. Then in my work I like to integrate and meld the two definitions.

What artistic traditions or currents, both past and modern, influence or correlate to your works?

I really like the work of Francis Picabia. Lately I've been looking at a lot of Thomas Scheibitz.

As someone of native descent, how does your cultural heritage influence your work, if at all?
I view my heritage as something that is a part of me, not my entire definition. Sometimes thoughts about my heritage are incorporated into my work, but I like to veer away from making "cultural" artwork, whatever that means.

Looking ahead, what areas do you want to explore and challenge? Where do you want to go with your art next?

I'm not really sure as of right now. I'm trying to figure that out before I graduate. Art can be very powerful, because images stay in your mind for a very long time. I'm trying to see what I want to do with that.

I like your interpretation. My work has been called “landscape” a lot, but I almost never paint landscapes. The imagery actually comes from an abstracted human form, mostly arms, and an imaged of the stripes of a shirt I was wearing, which was then turned on its side and integrated with the more human form. It is about altering our interpretations.

It most look like a landscape when focusing on the center-piece, but the side two cast shadows (literally) and doubt on whether the object, if it can be called that, is a mountain grounded or some suspended shape. To me, this work speaks to my interest in how we interpret reality, how looking at something, lets say a mountain landscape through a hotel window with a curtain, can confuse the senses if we allow it, where different planes can intersect and alter our understanding of things.

I initially only saw the center segment, so I especially like how the rightmost segment seems more spread out, and how the blue balances and answers the left segments.

Thanks!
Program Houses cont’d from page 1
to come together to share and discuss their individual observations, reactions, and ideas concerning these issues so they can support each other. Cornell program houses can work collaboratively to communicate a unified message to the larger community about the important role program houses play in student development and education.

It is clear that the broadcast affected a large segment of the Cornell community. But in the end, it can inspire us to unite, strengthen, and improve the vision and effectiveness of Cornell’s program houses.

Powwow cont’d from page 1
October, but got into full motion this semester. And when the organization hit roadblocks they reminded one another what a significant event this is to feature on campus.

“Events like these are important; it is an opportunity for Ithaca and Cornell communities to be introduced to, and to participate in, Native culture. Additionally, it allows many Native students to maintain ties with their home communities while at college,” explained Matthew Ricchiazzi ’08 (Seneca), the event’s Chairperson. All were encouraged to attend the free, intertribal event and there was something there for everyone. Intertribal and social dances engaged community members and a variety of food and arts and crafts vendors were available all day.

The Powwow and Smoke Dance Competition is an opportunity for NASAC to share Native culture with the Cornell and greater Ithaca community. The Cornell University NASAC Powwow Committee is comprised of a dozen members who worked tirelessly this semester to pull off one of the largest events on campus. At times the Committee met up to three times a week, taking time out of students’ already busy schedules. Mary La France ’09 (Mohawk), confided, “It is a huge commitment of time for students to dedicate themselves to the Powwow.”

But with that huge commitment comes a grand reward. While the students are eager to share this experience with the community, it is also an opportunity to enrich and reinvigorate their own experience at Cornell. The Powwow and Smoke Dance Competition is a free event that boasts high attendance, but it is perhaps most appreciated by those who are reconnected with their family and culture like LaFrance, who commented, “The best part was getting to see my sisters and friends who drove four hours from home.” Ben Lee ’10 (Penobscot), said, “This was my first powwow and watching the Grand Entry was amazing. It was wonderful to be part of this.”

The Powwow re-emerged on campus this year with great success, and when asked about next year’s Powwow, Ricchiazzi said, “I am very confident, given the student involvement this year and the leadership that was exhibited by many of the younger members, that the powwow will be a continued, persistent, and growing presence on campus.”

NASAC would like to thank all of the Powwow’s

Upcoming Events

- Akwe:kon Closes 5/19
- Commencement 5/27
- Graduation Picnic 5/27
- Freshman Orientation 8/22*
- Director’s New Student Dinner 8/26*
- Indian Day @ NY State Fair 8/31
- Welcome Back Dinner 9/7*

*Dates are tentative