American Indian studies is dedicated to advancing awareness and understanding of the histories and contemporary experiences of American Indian people. You’ll gain a broad understanding of cross-cultural and diversity issues and an expertise in American Indian affairs, cultural diversity, and minority perspectives. The program focuses on the native peoples of the United States and Canada, but also draws on the experiences of indigenous peoples from other parts of the world.

In the American Indian studies major you’ll look at the histories, cultures, arts, languages, literatures, philosophies, religions, economies, politics, and legal status of indigenous peoples. You will also focus on the many differences that have separated tribal nations as sovereign bodies and on the many similarities that unite them in common interests and causes. The American Indian studies major gives special attention to the sovereignty of American Indian nations as this is expressed in all walks of life - from the preservation and revitalization of native languages to the protection and retention of native lands.

The College of Liberal Arts Advantage: More Than a Major

When you study American Indian Studies at the University of Minnesota, you gain the added advantage of a College of Liberal Arts education. At CLA, the liberal arts mean you get more than just a degree in one major or another; it means you will be exposed to different areas of study, to different ways of thinking and learning. In fact, the liberal arts teach you how to learn—how to ask the right questions, how to problem solve, and how to innovate. The liberal arts prepare students for the complexities of our world, because here at CLA you will study not just, say, politics
or art but also where politics and art intersect, where science and ethics intersect, where economics and the environment intersect.

Meet Our Students

Summer Lara is a member of the Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate of the Lake Traverse Reservation. Lara hopes to one day move to her reservation and serve her community by opening up a wildlife rehabilitation clinic that provides affordable veterinary medical care to large and small animals. In addition, Lara aims to incorporate a youth program with the tribal school and create a volunteer network and veterinary assistant certification course. Her dream is to combine her passions for veterinary medicine and community outreach.

Read more about Summer's story, and find out more about our undergraduate program.

Ojibwe Language Revitalization at the College of Liberal Arts:

Student Experiences

Internships: Gain Valuable Experience in the Twin Cities and Beyond

Did you know? CLA Career Services has its very own internship reflection course! Students taking an internship can use this course to reflect on ways that their work experience is preparing them for successful careers - and receive credit for the work.
Learning Abroad in American Indian Studies: Prepare to Lead in a Global Economy

American Indian Studies is dedicated to advancing awareness and understanding of histories, cultures, arts, languages, literatures, philosophies, religions, economies, politics, and legal status of the native peoples of the US and Canada; however, we encourage our students to draw from the experiences of indigenous peoples from other parts of the world. Given the diverse nature of our department's majors, many options are available to you.

You can study global indigenous communities if you visit Australia, New Zealand, or Latin America; or you can take part in the National Student Exchange to engage with our American Indian communities. The most important fact is that learning abroad can help you compare, contrast, and make connections between indigenous peoples in a domestic or global setting.

Learn more about study abroad for American Indian Studies majors.

Undergraduate Research: Shape Your Curiosity into New Knowledge

The University has funding opportunities available for undergraduates who wish to gain research experience. Programs such as the Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (UROP) gives undergraduate students the chance to work closely with faculty members on research projects. Full information about this can be found in Undergraduate Research Opportunities.

Student Organizations: Find Friends and Grow as a Leader

- Circle of Indigenous Nations (COIN)
- American Indian Student Cultural Center (AISCC)
- American Indian Cultural House (On-campus Living Learning Community available to any incoming first-year freshmen)
- Canoe Rising

Meet Our Faculty
With as few as 1,000 Native speakers of Ojibwe remaining, preserving the language is more important than ever. It’s “a big effort to not lose who we are; how we view the world is in the language,” says Professor Brendan Fairbanks, who works tirelessly to revitalize the language through teaching, research, and special programming.

Read more about Professor Fairbanks' work.

Meet Our Alumni

CLA Graduates: Successful Careers and Purposeful Lives

CLA graduates succeed in many different careers — law, health care, medicine, business, government, teaching, advertising, arts and entertainment, international relations, and more — precisely because they understand how to navigate a complex and interconnected world. As our alumni explain below, “Being a good employee means being curious, and continuing to evolve, and learn, and educate yourself, and I can think of no stronger foundation for doing that than a liberal arts education.”

“An education in the liberal arts is a springboard to lifelong career success”
-- Dean John Coleman
You might also explore

Native American Environmental Knowledge Minor
American Studies
Ojibwe Language

Associated Careers

Child, Family, and School Social Workers; Community Organizers; Community Outreach Coordinators; Museum Curators; Diversity Coordinator; Elementary, Middle, and High School Teachers; Health Educators; Historians; Family Services Specialists, Lobbyists

Admission Information

FRESHMAN: Admission information

TRANSFER STUDENTS: Requirements for the College of Liberal Arts

Beyond admission, if you have questions about transferring, the College of Liberal Arts (CLA) has transfer advisors to help. Please feel free to contact them about any of the topics below!

• Course plans before transferring
• Estimated time to graduation
• Career preparation in CLA
• Getting ready for orientation, if admitted
• Connecting with major/minor departments