

Center for Northern Studies

Fall 1999 Lecture Series

November 3, Eleanor Ott

Ethics and Shamanic Ritual

Eleanor Kokar Ott, Ph.D., is a folklorist and co-director of The Shamanic Conservancy, an international resource center based in Vermont and home of the Shamanic Film/Video Archive; she is also associated with the Washington, DC-based Group for Cultural Documentation, and she teaches in the Vermont College Graduate Program and at the summer institute of the International Women's Writing Guild. Dr. Ott has recently returned from Iceland, Greenland, and Norway, where she was studying and participating in shamanic healing rituals. She will speak about the ethical considerations of shamanic practice, particularly with regard to the revival of the Norse magical practice of the *seidhr* ritual.

November 17, Sonja Schmitz

Life's a Beach: The Sand Dunes of Lake Champlain

The beaches and sand dunes of the northeast are dynamic ecosystems at the interface of water and land. The character of these beaches, be they the towering coastal dunes of barrier islands, the cobble beaches of the North Atlantic or the freshwater sand beaches of large inland lakes, are as unique as the force that shaped them. The sand dunes of Lake Champlain represent some of the rarest and most endangered natural communities in Vermont. The dunes are home to several plant species, listed as rare and endangered by the Natural Heritage Program, that normally inhabit coastal beaches. How these plants came to exist on the shores of Lake Champlain is an intriguing question and the focus of considerable research at the University of Vermont. Sonja Schmitz is a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Vermont, and her research interests include plant systematics and evolution. In her presentation, Sonja will summarize some of the research conducted at UVM while simultaneously taking the audience on a tour of beaches of the northeast.

December 1, Daniel Odess

Pre-Eskimo Archaeology of the North American Arctic

The Canadian Arctic and Greenland were first occupied a little over 4000 years ago by Pre-Dorset Saqqaq, and Independence I peoples thought to be related to the Denbigh Flint people of Alaska. These cultures thrived in some of the harshest conditions on the planet for over 3000 years before they were replaced by the ancestors of the people we now call Eskimos or Inuit. Drawing on his archaeological research in Alaska and Canada, Dr. Odess will discuss what we know of the relationships among these cultures and how we know it. He will also discuss the differences between the Paleo-Eskimos and the ancestors of modern Eskimo/Inuit peoples. Dr. Dan Odess, a CNS alumnus and faculty member, is also a Research Archaeologist at the Arctic Studies Center, Smithsonian Institution, in Washington, DC.