Guide to the Frank R. LaPena papers, 1930s-2013

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California State University, Sacramento Special Collections & University Archives
University Library
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August 2016
Title: Frank R. LaPena papers
Identifier/Call Number: MSS 2001/31
Contributing Institution: California State University, Sacramento Special Collections & University Archives
Language of Material: English
Physical Description: 78.75 Linear feet (57 record cartons and 5 oversize flat boxes)
Date (bulk): Bulk, 1970-2000
Date (inclusive): 1930s-2013
Abstract: The Frank R. LaPena Papers (1900-2013) include subject files on topics concerning Native Americans, in particular, California Indians. Topics include institutions, people, programs, laws, and events. In addition, files relating to his time teaching and participating in campus programs at Sacramento State University since the late 1960s are part of the collection. The collection is rich with records documenting Frank LaPena’s involvement with various public and community projects, organizations, and activities, among them the Alliance for California Traditional Arts, American Indian Historical Society, Atlatl, California Arts Council, California Commemorative Seals Advisory Committee, California Indian Education Association, California State Capitol Commission, California State Indian Museum, and Native American Heritage Commission. A significant portion of the collection deals with LaPena’s artistic work and philosophy, his participation in museum and art gallery exhibitions, both national and international, and his scholarly contributions to the art world and art criticism, especially as it concerns contemporary Native American art.
Language of Materials note: Collection is in English and Maidu.
creator: LaPena, Frank R.
Scope and Contents note
The Frank R. LaPena Papers measure 78.75 linear feet (57 record cartons and 5 oversize flat boxes) plus materials in oversize folders, and are dated 1940s-2013 (bulk 1968-2005). The papers consist of correspondence, printed material, writings, publications, teaching material, notes, research materials, sound recordings, artwork, and photographs. They document LaPena’s career as an activist, artist, educator, traditionalist, writer and curator of exhibitions in the field of contemporary art. A small number of records concerning his personal life are included in the Biographical and Personal files (Series 1).
Found within the collection are Reference Files (Series 4) that are subject/correspondence files for artists/other individuals, museums/galleries/organizations, and subjects. General correspondence to and from LaPena are found in Letters (Series 3). Also found in the collection are Project Files (Subseries 4.2) that include manuscripts, notes, related correspondence, and reference and research material for publications in which LaPena’s writing and/or art were included. Exhibition Files (Series 5) include manuscripts, notes, related correspondence, research material, and printed material. Teaching Files (Series 2) consist of notes, reference and research materials, and administrative correspondence.
Documents relating to LaPena’s public activities—including art related activities, poetry readings, lectures, community projects, ceremonial and traditional performances, and consultant work—are included Series 6. Among the Printed Material (Series 7) is a wide variety of items collected by Frank LaPena, much of which overlaps with similar material in the Subject Files (Subseries 4.1). Photographs are of works of art, with some of exhibition installations, people, and miscellaneous subjects. The artwork found in the collection includes lithographs, illustrations, drawings, and textiles. Book covers, newspaper layouts, and posters are included in the Oversize files (Series 9). The collection also includes artifacts such as a Native American pipe, a scrapbook, an exhibit model, and visual and audio recordings (Series 8).
Processing Information note
The papers were processed to a minimal level by Frank La Pena and SCUA staff in spring 2003.
Preferred Citation note
[Identification of item including date], [Folder Title], MSS 2001/31, Frank R. LaPena papers, Department of Special Collections and University Archives, The Library, California State University, Sacramento.
Biographical/Historical note
Frank LaPena was born on October 5, 1937 in San Francisco, California to parents of the Wintu-Nomtipom tribe of Native Americans. He was sent away to live at a federal American Indian boarding school when he was 5 years old and he stayed there until after he graduated from high school in 1956. He received his Bachelor of Arts degree from Chico State University in 1965 and did graduate work at San Francisco State University as well as California State University, Sacramento (CSUS), where he received his Master of Arts in Anthropology in 1978.
LaPena started teaching professionally in 1969. He has a Bachelor of Arts degree from California State University, Chico, a teaching credential at San Francisco State, and a Master of Arts degree in anthropology at Sacramento State. He is a
Professor Emeritus of Art and Ethnic Studies and was Director of Native American Studies at Sacramento State for almost 30 years. He currently resides in Sacramento. LaPena identifies as a Wintu-Nomtipom American Indian. He has been and continues to be a tireless educator of Native American culture, a writer and poet, and an activist of Native American and human rights. He is a founding member and Dance Captain of the Maidu Dancers and Traditionalists, a cultural dance group dedicated to the revival and preservation of the ceremonial traditions of his own and other Northern California Indian communities.

As an accomplished artist, LaPena has exhibited in museums and galleries throughout the United States and Europe, as well as Canada, Mexico, Cuba, South America, and New Zealand. He is a painter, printer, sculptor, illustrator, and photographer. His art has been exhibited at the Crocker Art Museum, Oakland Museum of California, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, National Museum of the American Indian (Smithsonian), the Linden Museum (Stuttgart, Germany), the Brooklyn Museum of Art, the C. N. Gorman Museum (Davis, CA), American Indian Community House (New York and San Francisco), the Santa Fe Festival of the Arts, the Heard Museum (Phoenix, AZ), and the Wheelwright Museum of the American Indian (Santa Fe, NM), to name a few.

**Accruals note**
No further additions are expected.

**Conditions Governing Use note**
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**Immediate Source of Acquisition note**
Donated by Frank LaPena in multiple deposits since August 2001.

**Arrangement note**

**Conditions Governing Access note**
A container listing is currently available for this collection. Contact the Department for further information on access.

**Subjects and Indexing Terms**
LaPena, Frank R.
LaPena, Frank R.
Native American arts
Native Americans

**Container List**

**Series 1. Biographical and Personal 1970s-2000s**

**Scope and Contents note**
The series consists of documents related to Frank LaPena’s life that do not directly correspond to specific public activities. Files includes correspondence, notes that do not directly relate to an activity or project, photographs by or of Frank LaPena, resumes, slides of LaPena’s artwork, personal and professional calendars and daily planners, and miscellaneous documents and artifacts.
Series 2. Teaching Files 1970s-2000s

Scope and Contents note

The teaching series is composed of professional papers, and other documents and materials pertaining to Frank LaPena’s with California State University-Sacramento, D.Q. University, and Shasta College.

This series is arranged into 3 subseries; one subseries also contains 4 additional categories.

2.1: California State University, Sacramento

2.1.1: CSUS, Ethnic Studies and Art Department
2.1.2: CSUS, Frank LaPena Professional Files
2.1.3: CSUS, Conferences, Symposiums, Committees
2.1.4: CSUS, General Files

2.2: D.Q. University

2.3: Shasta College

Subseries 2.1. California State University, Sacramento 1969-2000s

Scope and Contents note

This subseries is further divided by 4 additional categories. 2.1.1 contains documents regarding LaPena’s involvement in the CSUS Ethnic Studies Department as a professor and as director, as well as LaPena’s involvement as a professor in the CSUS Art Department. It includes correspondence from the 1960's to 1990's, documents pertaining to faculty members, hiring committees, teaching materials, and other various CSUS-related documents and materials. 2.1.2 contains LaPena’s professional files such as his C.V.’s/resumes, awards & honors, and documents pertaining to appointment, retention, tenure and promotion, sabbatical and retirement. 2.1.3 contains document on CSUS conferences, symposiums, and committees, and 2.1.4 contains informational documents on the school, its resources, its other departments, and other miscellaneous papers.

Subseries 2.2. D.Q. University 1970s-1990s

Scope and Contents note

This subseries contains documents pertaining to LaPena’s involvement with D.Q University including as a professor. Documents here also reflect the eventual closing of the college.

Subseries 2.3. Shasta College 1960s-1970s

Scope and Contents note

Documents in this subseries contains documents about Frank LaPena’s Shasta college museum work and his role as advisor and professor.


Scope and Contents note

Incoming and outgoing letters are interfiled in a single alphabetical sequence. Letters to and from a correspondent are interfiled under the name of the correspondent, in chronological order. (An occasional retained carbon in a file is mentioned in a folder note, and then only if the correspondent is considered noteworthy). Drafts of responses on copies of incoming letters are noted, if tracing them may be significant.
Series 4. Reference Files 1960s-2010s

Scope and Contents note
This series consists of documents relating to subjects, people, and organizations that Mr. LaPena was interested in or involved with professionally and/or personally. Items include correspondence, manuscripts, financial records, publicity, publications, photographs, notes, exhibition catalogs and programs, and other printed material. Includes in this category are files relating to Mr. LaPena’s research on his Wintu culture for his master’s thesis in Anthropology at California State University, Sacramento (1978). This series is arranged into 4 subseries.


Subseries 4.1. Subject Files 1960s-2000s

Scope and Contents note
The Subject Files subseries printed material, correspondence, and photographs. Some files may include overlapping correspondence. Many of the files in this subseries were sorted alphabetically by Mr. LaPena and maintained during his time as a professor at California State University, Sacramento. Mr. LaPena’s folder titles and arrangement were kept intact as much as possible. Where adequate and relevant description or order lacked, titles and arrangement were manipulated to make the series more accessible.

Subseries 4.2. Project Files 1960s-2010s

Scope and Contents note
Files in this subseries include correspondence, manuscripts, publications, proofs, contract documents, exhibition catalogs, and other printed material. Files in this subseries are divided into three categories: Community Projects, Reproductions of LaPena’s Artwork, and Publications by LaPena. “Community Projects” consists of files associated with long term activities or programs that Mr. LaPena has been involved with since the 1970s. “Reproduction of LaPena’s Artwork” documents the visual, audio, and literary media that have featured artwork by Mr. LaPena. “Publications by LaPena” includes files relating to [published and unpublished] books, essays, and interviews by Mr. LaPena.

Sub Subseries 4.2.1. Reproduction of LaPena’s Artwork in Publications
Sub Subseries 4.2.2. Writing by Frank LaPena [Chronological, Published and Unpublished], 1970s-2000s 1970s-2000s
Sub Subseries 4.2.3. Articles Featuring LaPena

Subseries 4.3. Museums, Galleries, and Organizations 1970s-2000s

Scope and Contents note
Files in subseries 3 include correspondence, exhibition catalogs and programs, publicity, loan agreements, and other printed material. Some files may contain overlapping correspondence with the Letters Series, Exhibitions Series, and Public Activities series.

Subseries 4.4. Artists/Other Individuals 1970s-2000s

Scope and Contents note
This subseries consists of files on artists, writers, scholars, Native American traditionalists, and other individuals. Most of the files are on Native American artists, with many from the Native California region. Files include correspondence, exhibition material, artwork, publicity, resumes, and photographs.
Series 5. Exhibition Files 1960s-2010s

Scope and Contents note
Exhibition files consist of cards, programs, catalogs, correspondence, broadsides, newsletters, periodicals, newspaper clippings, publicity, exhibition plans and proposals, notes, art slides, and photographs. One file includes cassette recordings of music recorded for an exhibition. Some files may include documents related to public activities such as speaking engagements, art demonstrations, traditional performances, and consultant work. The Exhibitions Series consists of two subseries: Subseries 1 consists of files of exhibitions that Frank LaPena has participated in either as part of a group of artists or as a solo artist. Both group and solos shows are interfiled with each other chronologically. Subseries 2 consists of files of exhibitions that Frank LaPena has participated in as a curator, guest curator, consultant, coordinator, or advisor. Files in this subseries are arranged chronologically.

This series is arranged into 2 subseries:
5.1: Group and Solo Exhibitions (interfiled) 5.2: Exhibitions Curated/Organized by Frank LaPena

Subseries 5.1. Exhibition Files 1960s-2010s

Subseries 5.2. Exhibitions Curated/Organized by Frank LaPena

Series 6. Public Activities 1960s-2010s

Scope and Contents note
This series contains files relating to Mr. LaPena’s activities in the larger community. Items in this series include correspondence, lecture notes, event programs and catalogs, proposals, meeting minutes, exhibition plans, contract forms, publicity, and other printed material. The arrangement of this series was largely based on Mr. LaPena’s curriculum vitae. From this information, six subseries were created: Subseries 1 consists of files relating to Mr. LaPena engagements in the arts as an advisor, consultant, speaker and/or coordinator for arts organizations or events; many of the activities concern Native American arts and culture. Subseries 2 contains files relating to poetry performances by Mr. LaPena, mostly in the Sacramento area. Subseries 3 consists of lectures, speaking engagements, and presentations by Mr. LaPena on topics ranging from Native American history and culture, religion, cultural continuity, Indian education, retention and promotion of Native American faculty, and environmental issues. Some activities in this subseries overlap with subseries 1. Subseries 4 contains files relating to general activities in the community not directly associated with the arts. Many of the files in this subseries concern Indian education policy and programs, religious rights, the protection of sacred sites, cultural patrimony, and Native American representation in state institutions. Files in this subseries also include awards received by Mr. LaPena for his work in the community. Subseries 5 contains files associated with Mr. LaPena’s role as a traditional dancer and singer in his community. This subseries includes files relating to his work with the dance group the Maidu Dancers and Traditionalists, of which is a founding member. Subseries 6 contains files relating to consultant work conducted by Mr. LaPena for government agencies, museums, visual media projects, or other organizations/individuals; some files in this subseries contain material that overlaps with Subseries 1 and 3. All files are arranged chronologically by subseries. Some files contain material relating to two or more subseries; this has been indicated with a folder note.

Series 6. Public Activities 1960s-2010s
Subseries 6.1. Arts Activities 1970s-2000s


Subseries 6.3. Lectures, Speaking engagements, and Presentations 1970s-2010s


Subseries 6.5. Traditional and Ceremonial Activities 1970s-2000s


Scope and Contents note
Printed material includes event flyers, catalogs, announcements, invitations; brochures, resource guides, reports and studies, and project proposals; miscellaneous documents; and newsletters, handbooks, books and periodicals. A substantial amount of printed material is included with the Reference Files (Series 4).

Series 8. Artifacts 1990s-2000s