



School for Advanced Research

Principal Figures

EXPLORING HUMANITY. UNDERSTANDING OUR WORLD.



Michael F. Brown

President

2014-Present

Dr. Brown, an expert in cultural anthropology, Latin American studies, and indigenous intellectual property, has been president of the School for Advanced Research since 2014. His research covers a broad range of topics, including the indigenous peoples of Amazonia, new religious movements, and the global challenge of protecting indigenous cultural property from misuse and appropriation. He has an AB degree from Princeton and a PhD in cultural anthropology from the University of Michigan and has been awarded research fellowships by the National Endowment for the Humanities, the National Science Foundation, the Smithsonian Institution, and the Institute for Advanced Study. Prior to his appointment as SAR president, Brown served on the faculty of Williams College for 34 years.

In addition to numerous scholarly articles, Brown is the author of six books, including [The Channeling Zone: American Spirituality in an Anxious Age](#) (1997), [Who Owns Native Culture?](#) (2003), and [Upriver: The Turbulent Life and Times of an Amazonian People](#) (2014). He has also published articles and reviews in publications including *Natural History*, *Smithsonian*, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, the *Times Literary Supplement*, and the *New York Times Book Review*.

Paul Ryer

Director, Scholar Programs

2016-Present



Dr. Paul Ryer received his PhD in cultural anthropology from the University of Chicago. Professor Ryer has conducted long-term research in Cuba (where he was affiliated with the University of Havana) and its diasporas. Before coming to SAR, he taught at both Williams College, Mount Holyoke College, and UC–Riverside.

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Elysia Poon

**Acting Director,
Indian Arts Research Center**

2007-Present



As the curator of education at the IARC, Elysia Poon has furthered a Native artist fellowship program that is now one of the most nationally recognized. Offered to three artists a year, fellows live and work on SAR's campus and have access to the IARC collections. Poon has developed and led IARC education outreach initiatives and facilitates an annual IARC speaker series that explores Native American arts and culture. She received her BA in art history and criticism from the University of California, San Diego and MA in art history from the University of New Mexico. Prior to coming to SAR, Elysia worked for the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles, Autry National Center in Los Angeles, Museum of Indian Arts & Culture in Santa Fe, and Indian Pueblo Cultural Center in Albuquerque.

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Laura T. Sullivan

Director, Development

2015-Present



Laura T. Sullivan has twenty-plus years' experience in fundraising and administration for arts and cultural organizations. She has helped raise over \$20 million including leadership level gifts, corporate and foundation support, legacy and endowment gifts, as well as robust annual campaigns. For the past nine years, she served as director of development at the International Folk Art Alliance. Previously, she was director of education for seven years at the Museum of International Folk Art. Other professional positions include director of the Museum on Wheels, an educational outreach program of the Monterey Peninsula Museum of Art; executive director of the Doña Ana Arts Council in Las Cruces, New Mexico; and development consultant for the New Mexico State University Foundation. She holds a MA from the University of California Santa Cruz with a cross-disciplinary degree in Education, Anthropology, and Art History and a BA from Middlebury College.

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Meredith Davidson

Director, Public Programs & Communications

2018-Present



Originally from Albuquerque, Meredith Davidson returned to New Mexico after spending a number of years on both coasts. She earned a B.A. in Curatorial Studies from Whittier College and an M.A. in Humanities, with an emphasis on Public History, from New York University. Prior to joining SAR, she served as curator of 19th and 20th century Southwest collections at the New Mexico History Museum and as an exhibition manager at the National September 11 Memorial Museum in New York.

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