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Columbia's CSER Kicks Off Native American/Indigenous Studies Speaker Series

New York – February 17, 2011 – The Center for the Study of Ethnicity and Race (CSER) presents the first permanent multi-year Native American/Indigenous speaker series at Columbia University this coming February 22, 2011. Named **Indigenous Forum**, CSER Director Frances Negrón-Muntaner has called the series a “dream come true.” “At last,” she added, “Columbia has a permanent public series focusing on Native American and Indigenous Studies. It is a milestone for both the university and the larger community.”

The series is the first program of the Center's Native American/Indigenous Studies Project and will bring three speakers a year to Columbia working in different areas: academia, the arts, and the political sphere.

The first guest will be Mr. Larry Echo Hawk, the current Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs. Mr. Echo Hawk, an enrolled member of the Pawnee Nation of Oklahoma, was confirmed by the United States Senate as the Assistant Secretary-Indian Affairs for the U.S. Department of the Interior on May 19, 2009, and was sworn into office by Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar on May 22, 2009. Prior to his appointment, Mr. Echo Hawk served for 14 years as a Professor of Law at Brigham Young University's J. Reuben Clark Law School. In 1977, he was named Chief General Legal Counsel to the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes of the Fort Hall Indian Reservation in Idaho, a position he held for more than eight years. He became special counsel to the tribes in 1998. Mr. Echo Hawk was also elected Attorney General of Idaho in 1990, the first American Indian in U.S. history to achieve that distinction. He had served as the Bannock County (Idaho) Prosecuting Attorney since 1986. Before that, he served two consecutive terms in the Idaho House of Representatives, from 1982 to 1986.

This program is made possible by the generous contribution of Mr. Daniel Press. Mr. Press '64C is a Columbia alumnus with a deep interest in Native American affairs. For the last four decades, Mr. Press has practiced Indian law and has worked on Native American economic issues on behalf of tribes throughout the country. Mr. Press has worked over the past five years to strengthen Columbia's programs for Native Americans. “This is a dream come true for me as well,” said Mr. Press, “the opportunity to help bring together two parts of my life that have so enriched my life – my four years at Columbia and my forty-three years working with Indian nations.”

The opening event will be followed by a reception. The event is open and free to the public and will take place on February 22 at 4pm, at the Faculty House, located at 64 Morningside Drive, New York, NY 10027.