NU’s ‘well-kept secret’ gives broad approach to studying Great Plains

By Mick Dyer

The University of Nebraska Center for Great Plains Studies, at 1213 Oldfather Hall, has been in existence for 12 years. Its goal is to stimulate an interest in and an understanding of the variety of human cultural developments across the sparsely populated environment of the Great Plains.

"We have one of the best regional centers (for Great Plains Studies) in the United States and Canada," Kaye said.

"We’re a well-kept secret," Frances Kaye said.

Kaye, an associate professor of English, became involved with the center when she came to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln 11 years ago to instruct courses in Great Plains literature. She is the editor of "Griffiths Quarterly," a scholarly journal published by the center. She said that few people at the university are aware of the many programs the center offers.

The center administers the Christie collection of western art, offers an interdisciplinary lecture series, publishes a journal and sponsors an annual symposium, as well as supporting research and providing a major in Great Plains studies.

"Generally speaking, it’s considered to be a high quality program," Kaye said. "We have one of the best regional centers in the United States and Canada," she added. "This center has a very good reputation.

Kaye said that many universities have centers for regional studies. She said there are two other centers for Great Plains studies, located in Regina, Saskatchewan and Emporia State College in Kansas.

The center coordinates courses taught by professors in 14 cooperating departments in three colleges to create the Great Plains studies major.

Fred Luebke, former director of the center, said that the center is very carefully worked out program. He helped organize the center before it was formally established by the NU Board of Regents in 1976.

"I consider it to be a very important program," he said. "It’s a way to bring students and instructors from different disciplines together to see what they are doing.

Emily Levine, a senior Great Plains studies major, said that the interdisciplinary approach taken by the center is one of the center’s strengths.

"It’s the only reasonable way to study anything," she said. "It’s a broad approach to studying a specific geographic region.

Luebke said that throughout most of the center’s history, student response to courses offered through the center has been strong.

"We’re very pleased with student responses to courses in Great Plains studies," he said. "Generally, they are very well-attended.

John R. Wunder recently came to UNL from Clemson University to become the new director for the center and to teach courses in the history department. He just finished writing a book, "The Kiowas," detailing the history of the Kiowa Indians, and is conducting research on Native Americans and the Bill of Rights and the history of Chinese in American law. He said that he is excited to be involved with the center because of his interests in law, race, and western culture.

"It all fits together nicely into what I purport to do," he said.

Wunder said that he doesn’t expect the center to change much under his direction. He said that possible changes might include new programs and approaches that would compliment the existing programs.

"The center already has a fine reputation," he said. "I hope to continue and build on the success of the center.

Here is a list of remaining dates, topics and speakers for the 1988 Center for Great Plains Studies seminar series. Seminars begin at 3:30 p.m. at St. Mark’s-on-the-Campus, 13th and Olive, each Tuesday.

Sept. 28, "Nebraska Family Farm Amendment: Good for Us?" Maurice Baker, secretary of state, and agriculture and natural resources researcher.

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Reggae band looks for ‘more recognition’

By Kelly Anders


During its hiatus from Lincoln, the band played in other parts of the country and worked on original material.

The Chicago-based band consists of Griffiths, lead vocals and guitar; Ballouf Breadwood, keyboards; Marcus Rogers, bass, and Earl Woodham, drums.

Before Traxx was formed, Griffiths played in Jamaican bands, including Solid Foundation, Soul Syndicate and The Revolutionaries. He also did vocal work with the Barris Garden Happening. His biggest-selling single to date is "Devil Woman," a song he released in 1974.

Before the band formed, Griffiths and Breadwood were also members of another reggae band, Black Eagle. Meanwhile, Rogers freelanced and Woodham played in a European R&B band.

Griffiths, Woodham and Breadwood, all Jamaicans, got together with Rogers, of St. Louis, Mo., in New York to form Traxx in 1979.

The name "Traxx" comes from Griffiths belief that there are only two ways about everything. He said things are either "in or out, up or down, or wrong or right." He said that the double x’s in the name signify "the wrong and undesired movements of the system."

The band plans to release a finished album of original material including "The Thrill of Victory" on a new African label, GAVU (pronounced jay-oo), in February 1989.

The band also is looking for "more recognition and a few more miles behind the drums." The band plans to return to Lincoln, he said they "will definitely try to do better."

"We’re not gonna stop comin’," Griffiths said.