“Broken Chains of Custody: Possessing, Dispossessing, and Repossessing Lost Wampum”

Speaker
Dr. Margaret Bruchac
March 16, 5 p.m. - Beach Hall 404

In May 2009, two long-lost wampum belts mysteriously resurfaced at a Sotheby's auction. The actions and ideologies that surrounded specific moments of possession and disposssession led to their presently constructed meaning as private “art objects,” despite common understandings (among colonial authorities, contemporary scholars, and Indigenous activists) about the sacred and political significance of national wampum belts. Their history also illustrates the secretive and lucrative market in Indigenous cultural patrimony that is inextricably linked with the history of the Museum of the American Indian. Dr. Bruchac is an Assistant Professor of Anthropology at the University of Connecticut, and Native American Studies Coordinator at the UConn Avery Point campus.