As a second year graduate student in the History Department at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, my research interests include everyday cultural practices within the Ainu community, the indigenous people of northern Japan, during the first half of the twentieth century. By examining this theme at the intersection of environmental, performance, and diaspora studies, I am particularly interested in how some Ainu were able to deploy folk customs in order to claim cultural autonomy within the contested and uneven landscape of Hokkaido, their ancestral homeland. As a mode of storytelling which embodied a distillation of deep knowledge, such ceremonial performances as religious festivals and the recitation of folktales provided many of them with an ecological worldview in which to articulate their demands and enact their contestations against colonial-capitalism. Consequently, it is within this hidden archive, which remained invisible to government officials, that the Ainu were able to register everyday experiences of displacement and imagine utopian visions of emancipation that were suppressed by dominant narratives of state development. This eventually provided future generations with the grounds for indigenous social and environmental action by generating new political forms and critiques, especially diasporic ones, which outlined alternative ways of belonging in modern Japan.

Having this project in mind, I believe a preliminary dissertation field research will provide me with an invaluable opportunity to examine the different resources that are available in Japan. The last time I visited that country was in 2007, when I spent a semester abroad as an exchange student at the University of Tsukuba. My experience
there familiarized me with both daily life and academic culture in Japan. In addition, I have also completed fourth-year Japanese language courses at both UCLA and UW-Madison. Such training has allowed me to incorporate Japanese language material within my academic work, assisting me to become more comfortable handling documents that are particular to my research interest. With this foundation, then, I believe I can successfully conduct archival research in Japan.

For much of the ten weeks, I plan to stay in Sapporo, the capital of Hokkaido. The city includes several archival facilities related to my dissertation topic. The one I will likely spend the most time gathering sources is the Northern Studies Collection at the Hokkaido University Library, which is one of the largest collections in Japan on materials relating to the region’s history. Furthermore, I will utilize the Northern Region Reference Center at the Hokkaido Prefectural Library, which includes various historical records of local municipalities, along with the Hokkaido Prefectural Archive, which stores several regional government documents. Lastly, since my work also examines transculturation within the Ainu community, I also plan to visit the municipal library at Hakodate, a historical port city that acted as an important contact zone between Japanese, Ainu, and Western people during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century.

However, since political organization for the common people within the Ainu community was at the local level for most of the twentieth century, I am also particularly interested in searching for material beyond the metropolis. Consequently, I hope to discover alternative networks of information during my field research there. This includes municipal libraries, museums, and tourist sites outside of Sapporo. Certainly, all of the major archives listed in the previous paragraph contain an abundance of local newspapers,
magazines, and yearbooks that will be of great use to me. At the same time, though, I want to challenge myself in seeking new sources on microhistories at other locations. As sites of popular knowledge production, the tourism and museum industries have been contested arenas in regards to control over the representation of the Ainu people. While there are numerous such facilities around the prefecture, the Ezo Culture and Archaeology Museum in Makubetsu, which was established in 1959, is one that I would like to visit because it is the first of its kind to be created and run by Ainu people. Another such facility is the Nibutani Ainu Culture Museum. These two places, whose history have yet to be written within the English language, represent broader movements to resist the objectification of the Ainu people and their culture, a problem long afflicted by the Japanese colonization of Hokkaido.

It is with this that I truly hope to use the Scott Kloekt-Jenson Fellowship to pursue preliminary dissertation field research in Hokkaido this upcoming summer. Such a privilege will not only familiarize me with the dominant archives that exist there, but also provide me with the opportunity to wander around alternative sites of knowledge production for serendipitous moments that will reveal to me hidden stories. As a result, I believe that such support will greatly assist me in the near future to produce effective dissertation grant proposals, and build the critical foundation necessary to expedite my dissertation research.
SUMMARY STATEMENT OF SOCIAL JUSTICE

By examining the modern experience of the Ainu nation at the margins of Japanese historiography, I ultimately hope to make their historical memory legible to a wider audience so as to reveal the diverse array of political meanings produced and embedded within their daily lives. For much of the twentieth century, many Ainu people have not only been marginalized within the political realm, but also within the academic one. Most works on Japanese history only make cursory remarks about their existence, and there are very few English language monographs about their modern history. Even to this day, several Ainu continue to struggle for indigenous rights and environmental protection, as well as seek to rectify the objectification of their past and culture within the Japanese legal system and mass media. Indeed, it is only in 2008 that the indigeneity of the Ainu people was recognized by the Japanese government. By scrutinizing how the category of indigeneity can be a viable analytical category within the field of Japanese studies, my long-term goal with this project is to give voice to the Ainu who have conceptualized and mobilized it as a means to resist the colonization of their communities and outline a vision of social justice.