

# RECOVERING VOICES

Seminar Series in Endangered Languages and Indigenous Knowledge



Dr. Theresa L. Miller  
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National Museum of Natural History

*presents:*

## People-plant engagements: exploring past and present indigenous crop cultivation in the Brazilian Cerrado

Tuesday October 20, 2015  
12:00 p.m - 1:00 p.m  
Rose Room (Room 337), NMNH

This seminar will examine the intertwined lives of people and plants in the Brazilian Cerrado (savannah), especially the Ramkokamekra-Canela indigenous community and its predecessors. It will explore how indigenous environmental knowledge and engagements with cultivated crops can be traced over time through examining collections in the Natural History museum. This seminar will display how certain collections can shed light on the historical and archaeological record of gardening practices and crop cultivation among the Canela and their ancestors. It will focus on my research conducted on the Canela ethnographic collections of Dr. William Crocker and on botanical specimens of lowland South American bean species in the National Herbarium. It will be shown how this archival research expands upon my doctoral fieldwork, which explored the myriad ways that modern-day Canela gardeners maintain crop biodiversity and value intimate engagements with their cultivated crops, particularly bean species and varieties. Key questions that will be explored include: how have people and plant lives in the Brazilian Cerrado “co-emerged” over time in biological and socio-cultural ways? Does the contemporary Canela preference for biodiversity have a historical or archaeological precedent? And finally, how can this research support Canela ecological knowledge in the environmentally-threatened Cerrado?

For more information or to request a visitor badge contact [RecoveringVoices@si.edu](mailto:RecoveringVoices@si.edu) or call 202-633-5039



An initiative by the National Museum of Natural History,  
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