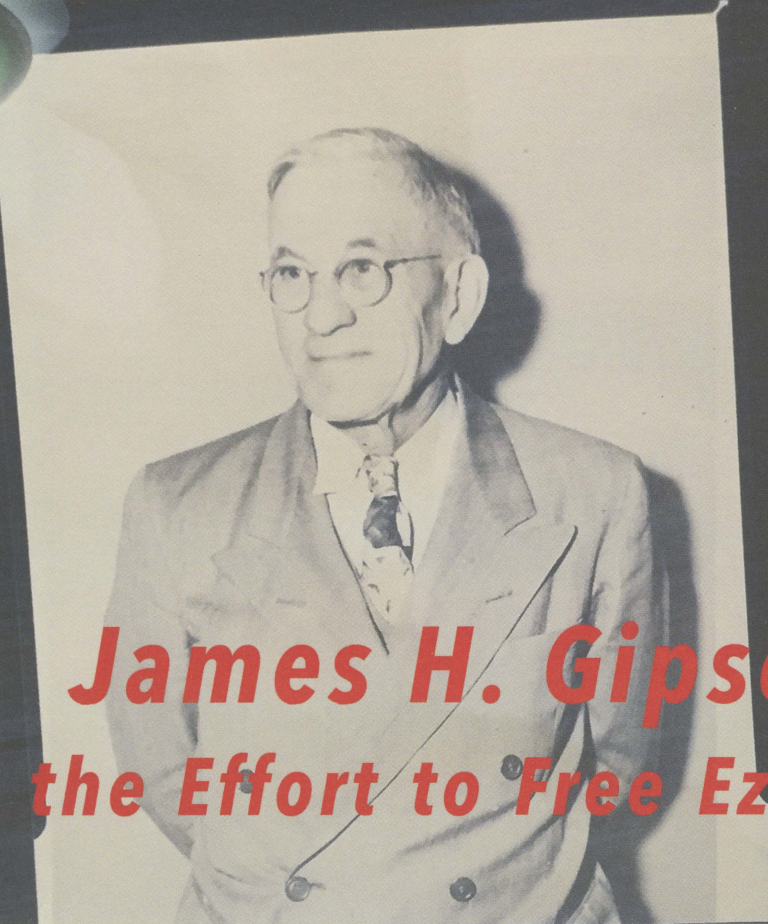


*The Ese'Eja People of the Amazon:  
Connected by a Thread*

**DOUBLE**  
**FEATURE**



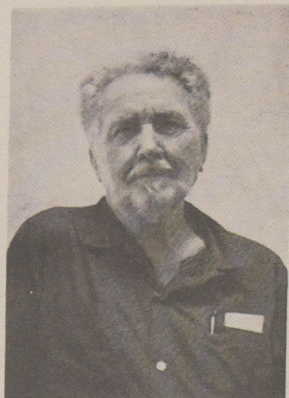
*James H. Gipson  
and the Effort to Free Ezra Pound*

July 16, 1958

1958

Mr & Mrs Ezra Pound

Italy



Some of the need is a story. His Richmond host, forthcoming literary work. shall always feel a sense of shame that my living poets as they treated you, sir. th warm personal regards, I remain



THE CAXTON PRINTERS, LTD.  
CALDWELL, IDAHO

April 1, 1952

Mrs. Dorothy Pound  
3215 Tenth Place, S.E.  
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mrs. Pound:

It was hard to reach the decision which I felt we must reach, in justice to you and to your great husband, and that is to send back the pamphlets which you have been kind enough to submit to us, because it isn't often that small publishing houses like the Caxton Printers have the opportunity of bringing out a book authored by the greatest living poet, but after giving these a reading I just didn't see how we could successfully put them over, in view of the existing condition and our present commitments.

I have probably explained in past letters that production costs, as far as Caxton books are concerned, are astronomical--they are three times what they were prior to World War II.

In addition we have our schedules filled with items, two of which we were in correspondence about prior to the time that we started writing you about these monographs, and there would be no chance for us to bring this out for a year or more.

We felt, therefore, that we should return this material to you. You will find it enclosed, and we again want you to know that we appreciate your kindness in offering it to us, and we are making a note of Peter Russell's name and address so that we can order these from him in London.

If you and your husband could find time to read them, I would like to send, with my compliments, as a token of appreciation, the monographs by Gareth Garrett, THE REVOLUTION WAS, EX AMERICA and RISE OF EMPIRE. I am sending circulars descriptive of the two latter titles, and the other title is briefly described in our folder, Books for Libertarians.

I thought you both might enjoy reading Garrett, as he is one of the greatest of modern pamphleteers, in which field your husband, of course, is interested.

With every good wish, I remain

Yours truly,

The CAXTON PRINTERS, Ltd.

J. H. Gipson, President

# James H. Gipson and the Effort to Free Ezra Pound

by Alessandro Meregaglia

On May 3, 1945, armed partisans arrested Ezra Pound in Italy. This began the extradition process to the United States, where, two years earlier, Pound had been indicted in absentia for treason. The charges were based on the content of radio broadcasts he made in Italy, where he had lived for the past twenty years. Pound was brought to the United States, declared mentally insane, and sent to St. Elizabeths, a government hospital in Washington, D.C. Pound vehemently maintained his innocence; his wife, Dorothy Shakespear Pound, moved to D.C. and rented a room near the hospital so she could visit him daily. He would remain incarcerated there for more than a dozen years. During his time at St. Elizabeths, Pound continued to write and publish new poems for his *Cantos*, his life's work. He also received visitors on an almost daily basis. Well-known artists and poets and writers—T. S. Eliot, Robert Lowell, Marianne Moore, and Allen Tate, among others—all visited Pound in his cell. (See Daniel Swift's 2017 book *The Bughouse: The Poetry, Politics, and Madness of Ezra Pound* [Farrar, Straus and Giroux] for an excellent account of Pound's years at St. Elizabeths.) But Pound also received less famous visitors. These included James H. Gipson of Caldwell, Idaho, founder of Caxton Printers.

Founded in 1907 in Caldwell, Caxton Printers is well known as a regional book publisher. Caxton has published (and continues to publish) hundreds of books about Idaho and the Pacific Northwest. Less well known is Gipson's political activism on both the state and national level. He campaigned for Theodore Roosevelt and the Bull Moose Party in 1916; toured the U.S. giving speeches advocating libertarian and free market principles; and was actively involved in Republican politics almost his entire life. Those views dovetailed somewhat with Ezra Pound's politics: a shared concern about economic policy, foreign policy, and the rights of individuals. (Gipson, to be clear, did not share Pound's fascism or anti-semitism.)

The friendship between Pound and Gipson was not particularly close, though both men respected each other. Pound's status as a native son of Idaho—he was born in Hailey, though his family moved to New York City when he was just eighteen months old—buoyed the unlikely relationship between a world-renowned poet and a regional publisher. In the course of their ten-year relationship, they met in person only twice. Pound asked Caxton to publish several volumes of his work (ultimately none were,) and Gipson spent great time and energy working to secure Pound's release from "the bughouse." Indeed, Gipson took Pound's incarceration personally, viewing it as an unjust action by the government, and wanted to see his friend happy and living on his own terms.

What's known about their relationship survives in correspondence found in Pound's papers at both the Lilly Library (Indiana University) and the Beinecke Library (Yale University) as well as Gipson's personal papers at Washington State University's Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections. In total, there exist more than three dozen letters between Gipson and the Pounds. (Gipson corresponded primarily with Dorothy; there are three letters signed by Pound himself.)

The correspondence begins in October 1951, inauspiciously and seemingly by accident. Dorothy Pound wrote a general letter (which does not survive) to Caxton Printers to order a copy of Ayn Rand's *Anthem* (Caxton published the first hardcover American edition.) Gipson wrote back confirming the order and included a personalized note stating, "I believe I am addressing the wife of Ezra Pound, who

many feel as I do to be one of America's greatest poets," and asking if she would be interested in being added to Caxton's mailing list (*October 24, 1951.*) Gipson would repeat that epithet in a dozen of his letters to the Pounds, though by the end of their correspondence it would be shortened simply to "the greatest of living poets."

Dorothy wrote Gipson back (in a letter which also does not survive) and included two economic pamphlets written by her husband—*What Is Money For?* and *Social Credit: An Impact*—with the proposition that Caxton republish them. Although they are little remembered today, Pound wrote seven pamphlets dealing with economic and monetary theory. All were published in England in the late 1930s and then reprinted again fifteen years later by Peter Russell, another English publisher. Dorothy hoped that Caxton might issue American editions of those pamphlets. Gipson offered tepid support for that idea because, he admitted, there was little market for Libertarian books "as we have found by sad experience" (*November 9, 1951.*) Nevertheless, because he was eager to publish something by Pound, he promised he would consider it more seriously.

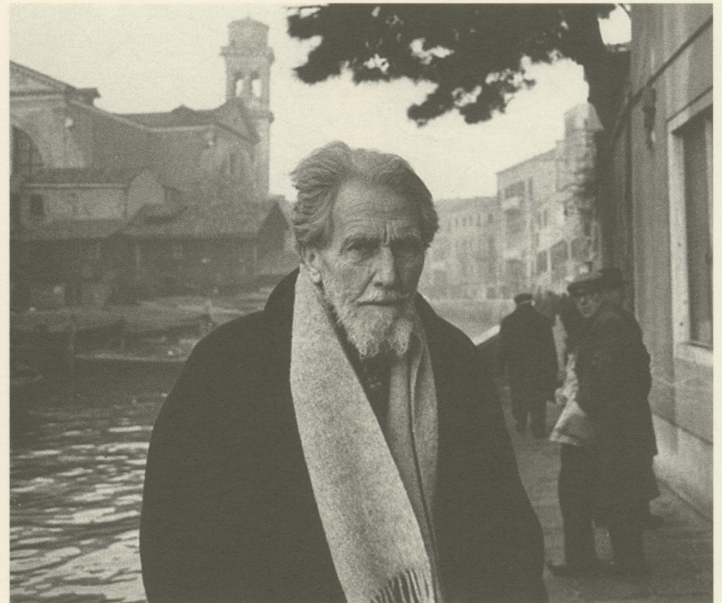
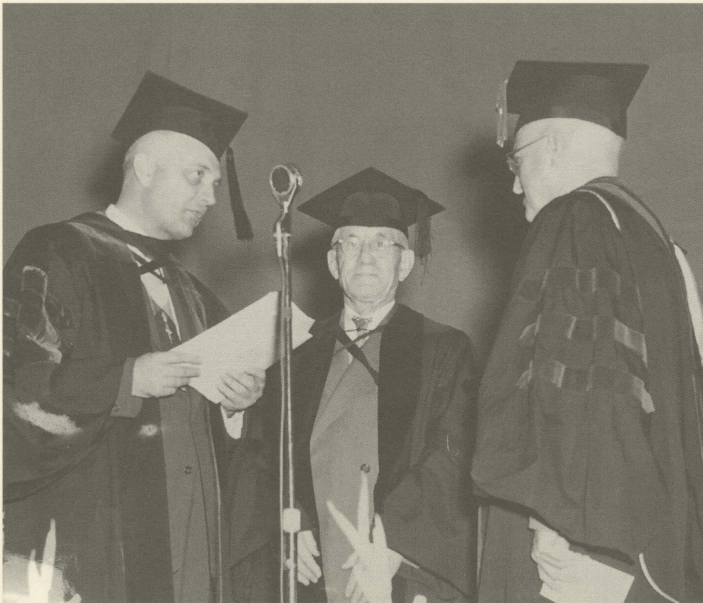
On April 1, 1952, Gipson broke the bad news to Dorothy: Caxton would not publish any of the pamphlets. Gipson's reasoning was financial: "production costs, as far as Caxton books are concerned, are astronomical;" the firm would be unlikely to recover its costs (*full letter at left.*)

Despite turning down Dorothy's offer, Gipson pushed her multiple times to secure a comment from Ezra Pound on one of Caxton's recently published works, *Unison* by H. G. Livezey, a 252-page epic poem. (Pound did ultimately provide a quotation for the book: "clean, unaffected, no left over harness" [*March 27, 1952.*]) Gipson also suggested that Pound work as a manuscript reviewer for books of verse submitted to Caxton. "I want to help these authors, and there is no greater critic of poetry than E.P.," Gipson wrote (*February 19, 1953.*)

Another opportunity to publish Pound arose a year later when Pound proposed to have Caxton bring out his latest translation of Confucius. (Pound was a believer of Confucianism for most of his life; a copy of Confucius was one of two books he stuffed in his pockets when he was arrested in Italy.) Though still very sympathetic to Pound and wanting to help, Gipson declined once again. Pound was apparently simultaneously considering using Harvard University Press, which ultimately published the book in 1954. Gipson recommended that they stick with Harvard because the Ivy League press could "do better in the matter of sales" than Caxton, though he reaffirmed his desire for Caxton to publish "an item by the greatest of living poets" (*August 14, 1953.*)

Although Pound never appeared under Caxton's imprint, Gipson did work hard on getting Pound released from St. Elizabeths. Gipson met Pound in person twice. The first time came in early 1953 when Gipson took a month-long trip to the East Coast. There's no record of exactly what the two talked about, but when Gipson returned home he turned his attention to freeing Pound. Nationally and internationally, Pound's case garnered frequent attention. In an interview after winning the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1954, Ernest Hemingway suggested "this would be a good year to release poets."

Gipson's first step was contacting the Department of Justice to get a copy of the full indictment against Pound. (Because Pound had been declared mentally unfit, the indictment was still pending; there had been no trial. Instead, the government psychiatrists at St. Elizabeths remanded him to their custody indefinitely.) After reading the charge, Gipson wrote back to the Assistant Attorney General, that "It would



seem to me that a proper punishment, in his case, would be exile from his native land. I myself could see no greater punishment" (June 22, 1953.) Gipson also corresponded with a friend of Pound's in Italy, Olivia Rossetti Agresti, about the best strategy; both lamented the lack of politicians' interest in the case. Indeed, Gipson's efforts yielded no progress.

Three years later, in February 1956, Gipson again visited Washington D.C. and again met with Pound in person at St. Elizabeths. This second meeting restarted Gipson's efforts of freeing Pound. This time he turned his attention to the media. While in D.C., he met with Walter Trohan, the Washington bureau chief for the *Chicago Tribune* and Bonner Fellers, a decorated Army officer who worked as a staffer at the Republican National Committee. Both men offered support and sympathy for Pound; Trohan even wrote a column about the case. Gipson also had success in Idaho when a reporter at the *Spokesman-Review* wrote an article about Pound's relationship to Idaho. (The article, "Ezra Pound Who Won Poetic Glory and Wartime Notoriety" from April 15, 1956, is interesting on its own; it includes transcriptions of letters that Pound wrote to the former publisher of the *Hailey Times-News-Miner* with comments on Idaho Senator William Borah and economic issues.)

Gipson himself wrote about Pound in his weekly column for Seattle's *Republican Call*, which was also picked up by the *Idaho Statesman*. In "The Strange Case of Poet Ezra Pound," Gipson publicly attested to Pound's sanity and explained his unjust committal: "...if Mr. Pound was insane, there are a lot of mighty crazy people running loose here in America" (June 8, 1958, page 26.)

In the middle of Gipson's efforts, in April 1958, the Washington, D.C. District Court dismissed the treason indictment against Pound. Upon hearing the news, Gipson wrote immediately to Pound to share his elation but also to express his "shame that my country treated the greatest of living poets as they treated you, sir" (July 16, 1958.)

Pound replied, and in his typical style he complained about Idaho newspaper coverage of his release: "I saw the shit this a.m. but didn't take note of which agent of hell was back of it, or what dirty Idaho news sheet" (sic) (May 7, 1958.) From a mutual friend of Gipson and Pound, it's clear that Pound was referring to an editorial in the *Lewiston Morning Tribune* that argued that "his treason . . . cannot be excused" (April 20, 1958.) Gipson promised that he would "see what he can do" about correcting the misleading article (May 13, 1958.)

On May 7, 1958, Ezra Pound was officially discharged from St. Elizabeths after living there for twelve and a half years. He sailed to Italy in July, where he lived with his daughter, Princess Mary de Rachewiltz, until his death in 1972.

The correspondence dwindled after Pound's release, and Gipson never heard directly from Ezra Pound again. He and Dorothy exchange a few pleasantries, and Gipson expressed concern about Pound's health, but nothing of importance transpired between them after 1958. Gipson died in 1965.

J.H. Gipson took Pound's cause very seriously, and used what reach he had to effect Pound's freedom. His relationship with the Pounds, though not close, nonetheless reveals how politically involved Gipson was on the national level as well as underscores his belief in the cause of freedom and liberty.

**Alessandro Meregaglia** is an Archivist and Assistant Professor in Special Collections and Archives at Albertsons Library, Boise State University. This essay is an excerpt from a larger, archival research project, which examines the full history of Caxton Printers and its founder, James H. Gipson. His research is supported, in part, by grants from the Idaho Humanities Council and Boise State's Arts and Humanities Institute.

#### IMAGES

At left: Archival materials from J.H. Gipson's file of correspondence with the Pounds, from the Caxton Printers, Ltd. Records (MS.1984.43,) Manuscripts, Archives and Special Collections, Washington State University Libraries. Dorothy Shakespear Pound, the British wife of Ezra Pound, photographed between 1910 and 1920. Photo by Walter Benington (1872-1936) courtesy of Wikimedia Commons. 1952 Letter from Gipson to Mrs. Pound, from the Pound mss.II, Lilly Library, Indiana University.

Above left: Gipson (at center) receiving an honorary doctorate from the University of Idaho in 1956, from the Publications Department Historical Photograph Database, Special Collections and Archives, University of Idaho. Above right: Ezra Pound pictured five years after his release from Saint Elizabeths, near a canal in Venice, 1963. Photo by Walter Mori (Mondadori Publishers) courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

At right: Letter from Pound to Gipson written in 1956, from the Caxton Printers, Ltd. Records (MS.1984.43,) Manuscripts, Archives and Special Collections, Washington State University Libraries. Note the "Congrats Doc" scrawled at the top of the letter referring to Gipson's honorary degree.

14 July

*congrat S Doc*

*Ezra Pond*

Dear Gopson

Sorry you are not passing thru Washington. I take it yr/ itinerary is very close . and no use indicating people save immediately near yr/ hotels. This in ROME , be Sure to see Olivia Rossetti Agresti 36 via Ciro Menotti

*35-38-63*

( just across the Tiber)

and Luigi Villari , 2 via Antonio Bosio /

*84-70-88 - out of town*

I think they have both seen the Ollivier " *Man of Yalta*" which you said you wd/ be interested in seeing if it were in English.

Frampton has now translated it on chance, Dave Gordon very excited and says it shd/ be published AT ONCE.

Frampton is trying Devin Adair, who bring out Villari , and , I suppose Regnery , but if are on the job by September and neither of them have copped it you wd/ be the natural outlet.

I could probably get you sample chapter, if you are working while you travel

I dont suppose Framp/ has had sense to do it in quadruplicate.

The Agresti would know whom else you should meet in Rome if you are stopping long enough to meet anyone else.

Niece of Dante Gabe Rossetii , interpreter at Versailles, etc. and knows the score.

As does Villari .

*Recd 7/20/51*

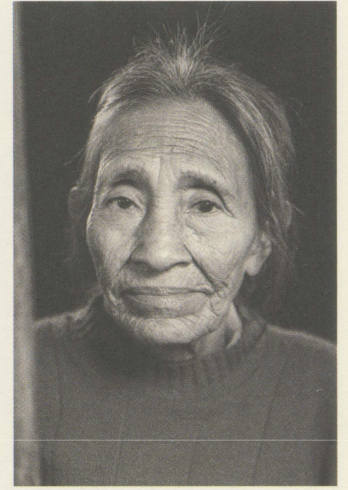
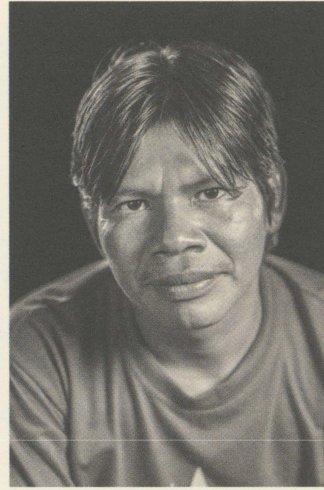
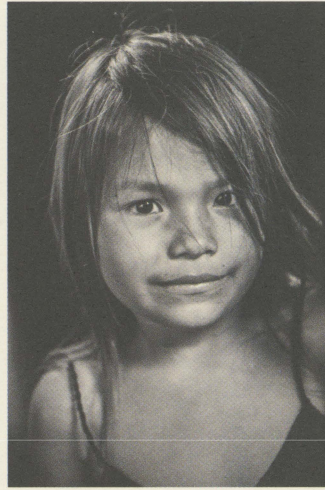
hope you have a present trip ."Travel broadens the mind " etc.

cordially yours.

*[Large handwritten signature]*

Camillo Pellizzi , MAY be in Rome. 12 via de Villa Albani or in Paris , co/ Mme Bordes , 5 rue Henri de Bornier , Paris xvi.

*I saw Signora Agreste Apr/51. She was with me in EP when daughter had married in Italian. France & must look after her*  
*Mary E. Reibla*



## *The Ese'Eja People of the Amazon: Connected by a Thread*

*From the Amazon, to Washington, D.C., to Idaho: A New Exhibition Opens*

by Anna Webb

*The Ese'Eja People of the Amazon: Connected by a Thread*, opened October 18 at the Ron and Linda Yanke Family Research Park Gallery at Boise State University. It gives visitors an intimate look at the lives of one of the last indigenous tribes in the Amazon basin of Peru through an array of elegant silver-toned photographs, objects, drawings, text and video.

It gave students in art professor Stephanie Bacon's course on exhibition design something more—the chance to install an entire exhibition, one that comes to Boise State all the way from the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian and the Peruvian Embassy in Washington, D.C.

*Connected by a Thread* represents a departure from traditional ethnographic exhibitions, said Bacon. Those are often curated from an outside, academic perspective in which objects are "on display" without any ties to their original context. In this case, the Ese'Eja (EH-see-AY-ha) people worked alongside project team leaders and photographers—Jon Cox from the University of Delaware and Andrew Bale from Dickinson College—to create the exhibition, select its treasures and write interpretive texts. A book that accompanies the exhibition, *Ancestral Lands of the Ese'Eja: The True People*, also is written from the Ese'Eja perspective with explanations of history, practices and folklore.

Students in Bacon's class represent a range of departments—from art, to public history, to anthropology.

"We've felt a duty to present objects in a way that does them justice," said Aimee Rollins, a first-year graduate student in the applied historical research program and a student in Bacon's class.

Students have faced challenges like how to place daguerreotype portraits so that light sources don't wash them out and how to hang a trio of arrows as tall as a grown person, but delicate, too, tipped by spirals of iridescent Macaw feathers. They have studied sources like Japanese garden design to help anticipate how viewers might move through the gallery's space. They have had to think conceptually—deciding how and why to group certain objects—while honing their basic carpentry skills. They have had to consider, said Rollins, how

objects from the Amazon might play off the banks of the Boise River, its vegetation visible through the gallery windows.

The class will also help her build her professional resumé, one of its main attractions.

"This class has been a learning experience in more ways than I thought it would be," said Rollins. "We've learned the proper care for artifacts, fixing the lights properly, yes, but also how to work with students from other disciplines, to see how other people think. It's been refreshing to get outside of my bubble."

Rollins appreciates that the Ese'Eja are at the center of this exhibition and had such a critical role in creating it. "They invite the viewer into their world," she said.

Students who encounter objects in museums or in texts often see themselves as observers outside of a cultural discussion, said Bacon.

"But here, students are handling objects, seeing themselves as researchers with points of view. You can't get that experience from



looking at a photograph. We want students to have the best opportunities. To galvanize the idea that they are themselves cultural interpreters.”

The Boise State exhibition is the first time the collection been installed by anyone other than its curators, said Bacon. This is the second time she has taught an exhibition design class. The first class centered on Shakespeare’s First Folio, the 400-year-old, first-published collection of Shakespeare’s plays that came to Boise State in 2016.

### *Art for Society’s Sake*

The title of the exhibition, *Connected by a Thread*, refers to the traditional belief among the Ese’Eja people that they climbed down to earth from a thread in the sky. Beyond the cultural significance of the objects displayed, and the involvement of students and tribal members, the Amazonian exhibition has a weighty mission. It captures a moment when ecological degradation, governmental land seizure, development and other issues are threatening the indigenous practices of the Ese’Eja. The exhibition brings hope nonetheless. All donations and sales of the book will go to a community development fund managed by the Amazon Center for Environmental Education and Research (ACEER) Foundation. The money will support community development agendas identified by the Ese’Eja, as they map and navigate their future.

The opening week festivities included gallery tours, photographic workshops and remarks by Cox and Bale, and Roger Mustalish, outgoing president of the Amazon Center for Environmental Education and Research. The exhibition is free and open to the public at the Yanke Center until February 6, 2019. Gallery hours are 9 am—5 pm weekdays (excluding holiday breaks.) For more information, email [sbacon@boisestate.edu](mailto:sbacon@boisestate.edu).

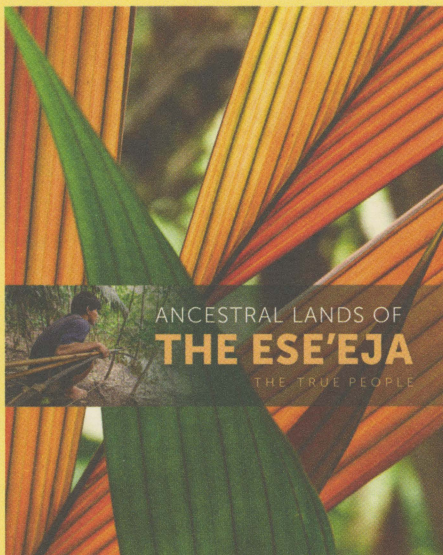
**Anna Webb** is a communications specialist at Boise State. An Idaho native, she began her journalism career at Boise Weekly and the Idaho Statesman. She covered a range of beats, including local history and culture.

### IMAGES

Upper Left: *Daguerrotype portraits of Ese’Eja community members Mateo, Angeli, Fermin, and Elsa. Photographs by Andrew Bale and Jon Cox.*

Lower Left: *Basket woven from tamishi vine dyed with plant materials, made by the Ese’Eja Women’s Co-op.*

Below: *Arrows vary in size and shape depending on their function. Shafts are made from the stalks of tall grass, while arrowheads are crafted from pihuayo bark or palm wood. Macaw feathers are attached using two types of beeswax.*



### **Excerpt from *Ancestral Lands of the Ese’Eja/The True People***

*“When our ancestors descended from the sky on a thread of cotton, they found bananas on the land. They did not know if they were edible and they were prohibited from eating them in case they were kia’ajaja (harmful.) One day two young kuameje (orphans) were so hungry and without food for some time as they waited for the hunters to return, so they decided to eat the bananas, not caring if they died from them. The young orphans realized it was good to eat the bananas and all the Ese’Eja began to eat them. Since that time, when they traveled from one place to another, the plants appeared wherever our ancestors were going. This happened for a long time until some young Ese’Eja began to use the banana leaves to play with and dress themselves. The power of the bananas was lost and since that day we had to plant them wherever we went.”*

This visually stunning and detailed book (published by ACEER and authored by the Ese’Eja Nation in collaboration with Rocio Martinez and Jon Cox) includes photographs by Cox and Andrew Bale, narratives and drawings by Ese’Eja community members, information about traditional hunting, fishing, and foraging, medicinal plants, traditional and contemporary crafts, history, the environment, and much more.

The book may be ordered directly from ACEER (visit [www.aceer.org](http://www.aceer.org) and see “Products.”) The \$50. cost includes shipping, and all proceeds directly benefit the Ese’Eja. —SB

Idaho  
Center  
*for the* **Book** \* \*\*  
newsletter

Vol. 25/No. 2/November 2018



Idaho Center for the Book  
Boise State University  
1910 University Drive  
Boise Idaho 83725

<http://www.IdahoCenterfortheBook.org>  
[IdahoCenterfortheBook@boisestate.edu](mailto:IdahoCenterfortheBook@boisestate.edu)  
Director: Stephanie Kathryn Bacon

\* *Book, construed to include all forms of written language*

\*\* *An Affiliate of the Center for the Book  
in the Library of Congress since 1994*

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## *A Flock of Thank You's*

Sincere thanks to **Alessandro Meregaglia** and **Anna Webb** for their thoughtful contributions to this issue. Thanks to **Andrew Bale, Jon Cox** and **Roger Mustalish** for their visionary work on the Ese'Eja project, and for their energetic junket to Idaho in October. Thanks to **Chris Davidson** and **Sharon Christoph** for their generous support in bringing the Ese'Eja exhibit to Idaho audiences.

Thanks to *Exhibition Design* students **Rebecca Ballou, Emily Fritchman, Caitlin Harris, Melissa Maxey, Lukas W. Robertson** and **Aimee Rollins** for their thoughtful interpretation of the Ese'Eja material. Thanks to **Osher Lifelong Learning Institute** for ongoing support of Gallery programs at the Yanke Center. And thanks to **Brian Wiley** for masterminding the previous two issues of the Idaho Center for the Book Newsletter.—SB



Left: *The Hunter*  
Platinum-Palladium photographic print  
by Andrew Bale and Jon Cox

Below: *Eiji (Necklace)*  
Black achira seeds, red huairo soltero seeds.  
Made by Merce Shanocua.

Front Cover Above:  
Detail from *The Hunter*

Front Cover Below:  
Archival image of Caxton Printers founding  
publisher James H. Gipson, from the Historical  
Photograph Database, Special Collections and  
Archives, University of Idaho

