

Proposed long range emphasis area

Northwest Native American Cultural Studies

This is conceived of as an interdisciplinary area with the potential for serving two rather different student clientele - Native American students who are interested in understanding, preserving and enhancing their unique cultural heritage in the Northwest, and non-Native students who are interested in traditional Native American cultures and values, archaeology, anthropology, ethnohistory, economics, expressive arts, technology and the dynamics of culture change, through an investigation of Pacific Northwest Native American cultures.

In order to serve Native American students, Evergreen must recognize the unique position that Native Americans hold as members of communities which have sovereign legal status within the United States. These communities are, in fact, increasingly seeking means for self-determination and cultural revitalization. Native American students are seeking skills which will allow them to provide leadership in the context of their traditional values. Specific skills sought include those needed for community controlled educational systems, health services delivery, understanding treaty law and tribal government, fisheries and aquaculture programs, and business management. In addition to faculty which can supply these skills, this population must have available Native American faculty who clearly represent the traditions and values upon which these communities are founded.

A preliminary survey of programs which serve the needs of Washington's Native American communities in the four year institutions of Washington and British Columbia, reveals that none has adequately concentrated on the needs of this population. Evergreen has a unique opportunity, particularly given our curricular structure, to respond to their needs. In fact, the program Resources for Self-Determination, is the result of four years work with this student population. We need to formalize this commitment to assure a continuing relationship with Washington's Native American communities.

A second student population which could include both Native and non-Native American students, would include those students who, broadly speaking, are interested in the methods and theory of anthropology and culture history. The Northwest offers unique opportunities for the study of prehistoric migrations to the New World, human ecology, acculturation - including the impact of contacts with Russia, the fur trade, and the gold rush, and the impact of the pipeline on Alaskan Native communities. There are rich opportunities for field study and internships throughout the Northwest. We conceive that historians, economists, marine biologists, anthropologists, geographers, artists, linguists and lawyers, to name a few, would bring useful tools to a program with a Northwest focus.

Northwest Native American Cultural Studies, cont.

The conceptualization of this program area is unique in that it focuses on the native populations of the Northwest. The study of Native American culture and the interests of Native American students in law, business, environmental sciences, etc. create a natural overlap with many of the other areas identified as areas of Evergreen faculty strength.

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