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## Burke Museum of Natural and Cultural History Diversity Report to College of Arts and Sciences March 2004

**For a relatively small unit the Burke has an unusually wide range of activities in research and public programs that engage a diverse audience.**

### **MISSION:**

The Burke Museum is dedicated to creating a better understanding of the world and our place in it. The museum is responsible for Washington state collections of natural and cultural heritage, and or sharing the knowledge that makes them meaningful. The Burke welcomes a broad and diverse audience and provides a community gathering place that nurtures life-long learning and encourages respect, responsibility and reflection.

### **CORE VALUE**

**Community:** We engage a diverse audience in ways that encourage their active participation and honor their contribution to our shared heritage.

### **MUSEUM EDUCATION PROGRAMS:**

Ongoing K-12 educational tour programs at the Burke include:

- *First Nations Discovery Tour*, a museum/classroom curriculum that explores the living Native American traditions of fishing and weaving, the techniques of mask-making and carving, and the significance of stories and ceremonies using the museum's collection of artifacts and art. This program serves more than 5000 students around the region each year.
- *Pacific Voices Storytelling Tour*, a museum program about the uses of myths and stories in countries around the Pacific Rim, the importance of language and oral traditions in sustaining cultural identity, and the role of storytellers in other cultures.
- Guided tours of the Pacific Voices exhibit which highlight the preservation of cultural heritage and the region's ethnic and cultural diversity.

Ongoing educational outreach efforts include the Burke's Traveling Study Collections program which maintains approximately 40 hands-on teaching collections of artifacts and resource materials representing Pacific Rim countries and Washington's Native American cultures. These resources have been developed in collaboration with community members or tribal elders in order to create materials that best represent the complexity and richness of the culture.



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For example, the *Archaeology of West Point* traveling study collections were created with the support and participation of three Washington tribes. Copies of this teaching resource were developed specifically for use by the Muckleshoot, Suquamish and Tulalip educators and students.

1. student access:

University of Washington students in various disciplines work with our Education Division every year. For example, this year, two Hispanic undergraduate students were awarded 3 quarters of support through Mary Gates Fellowships to provide bi-lingual tours of the *Reverent Remembrance* exhibition and help create the bilingual curriculum accompanying the *Day of the Dead* traveling study collections.

UW undergraduates and graduate students representing Chinese, Native American, Japanese, Hispanic, Korean, and Indonesian cultures have worked in the Education Division consistently over the past 10 years, bringing their specific cultural knowledge to many kinds of education projects such as K-12 curriculum development and tour programs. Sometimes these are paid positions, sometimes internships, and sometimes volunteers. Currently, a Japanese graduate student in the Museum Studies program is interning in the division to update three traveling collections on Japan and one on the Philippines as part of her course work.

2. relationships with external communities: program access to underserved communities:

In addition to serving UW students, the Burke's educational outreach activities serve a diverse regional community through museum visits and the classroom resources mentioned above. Every year, approximately 25% of K-12 student visiting the museum are offered free or greatly reduced admission, and special efforts are made to reach out to underserved communities through such programs as Gear-Up, STEP, the Office of Minority Affairs, Upward Bound, and other University departmental partnerships.

## **PUBLIC PROGRAMS**

### **Exhibits**

1. student access

In addition to the outreach and other education programs listed above, the exhibits division has from time to time (when funding is available) provided training opportunities for internships or research assistantships with an effort make available training opportunities for students of specific ethnic backgrounds. Examples include a Native American exhibits intern who worked on the "Entwined With Life" basketry exhibit, and a Chinese American research assistant who worked on tracking photo and audio visual resources for the multi-cultural "Pacific Voices" exhibit.

2. relationships with external communities

All cultural exhibits hosted or originated by the Burke are developed with the aid of a "Community Advisors," and in the case of Native American projects, this is mandated by



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policy. The Burke's semi-permanent exhibit, "Pacific Voices" (which opened in November 1997) was developed with the assistance of over 200 community advisors over a five year period, 23 of whom were members of a formal "Community Advisory Board" that met monthly. More recent examples include native advisory groups for "Entwined with Life: Native American Basketry" and "Out of the Silence: The Enduring Power of Totem Poles," and Latino and Indonesian advisors for the current "Reverent Remembrance: Honoring the Dead" exhibition. We also involved indigenous curators from southwest China in the exhibit: "Mountain Patterns: Survival of Nuosu Culture in China." These advisors all participate in exhibit theme development, object selection, content review, and programming ideas and participation. Once developed, all exhibits produced or hosted by the Burke are specifically marketed to target interest communities, as well as the statewide "community at large" to highlight pertinent themes of cultural diversity—all of which tie back to our mission.

3. staff and faculty

James Nason, Burke Curator of New World Ethnology, is Native American and an active curator of exhibits at the Burke. Less active, but involved with "Pacific Voices" was affiliate curator of Native American Art, Marvin Oliver (American Indian Studies faculty)

**Museum Programs:**

1. student access

When possible, we hire students with experience in specific cultural traditions to work or participate in public programs, helping to interpret their own cultural traditions to museum visitors. This past year, Spanish-speaking Hispanic students were hired through a Mary Gates Fellowship Grant to lead bi-lingual tours through the "Day of the Dead" section of the "Reverent Remembrance" exhibit. Past examples include hiring Chinese and Native American students to participate in Saturday cultural programs.

2. relationships with external communities

As an outgrowth of community participation in exhibit development, many public programs at the Burke result from recommendations received from ethnic community members. In other cases, such as the annual "Native American Arts Celebration," we work with a changing roster of contemporary Native American artists to develop a weekend-long event of art demonstrations, performance, and educational projects. Another annual program that both features cultural arts practitioners and attracts their community members as audience is the annual "Winter Storytelling Festival" that we have held most years since 1997. Other programs that both feature and attract diverse participants are lecture series and demonstration programs. In these, both artists and community scholars are involved. A recent example was the "Reverent Remembrance" lecture series that included lectures on topics from four different cultural traditions, all of which attracted members of the featured cultures.

**RESEARCH & COLLECTIONS**

**NATIVE AMERICAN GRAVES PROTECTION AND REPATRIATION ACT (NAGPRA)  
RELATED ACTIVITIES:**



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The Burke Museum has taken an active national leadership role in complying with and furthering the Congressional intention of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Law, a mandatory Federal legislation affecting museum and educational institutions with Native American cultural collections.

1. student access

This is not directly relevant since the law makes it essential that museums maintain confidential records and relationships on NAGPRA issues. However, the Burke Museum has, alone of all institutions in the U.S., undertaken an active program of x-ray fluorescence testing of objects to detect toxic residues of arsenic and mercury from former applications of pesticides. This extensive testing program, larger than that of any other museum including the Smithsonian, has actively included student assistants, including our only minority graduate students in the Museology M.A. Program.

2. relationships with external communities

We have actively dealt with the legal requirements for tribal consultations and have, in fact, far exceeded those requirements by successfully acquiring three successive awards from the highly competitive NAGPRA grant program offered through the National Park Service. These awards allowed paying travel and per diem costs for members of every Northwest tribe to visit the Burke Museum, review fully all of our relevant collections, and receive expanded collection information. They also provided funds to permit our research team to travel to every tribal community in Washington and Oregon to test existing tribal collections, with tribal staff, for pesticides. These have all been highly consultative relationships that actively engage the Native American community.

Beyond this, we have contacted every Native American tribe in the U.S. with regard to our holdings, and have actively taken part in several major workshops, conferences, and regional meetings in both the U.S. and Canada, with Native Americans, on NAGPRA related issues.

## HERBARIUM

1. student access

The Herbarium supports the research of undergraduate students from China participating in the UW-Sichuan University exchange program

2. relationships with external communities

Participates in a mentorship program targeting Seattle Public High School students from minority backgrounds.

The Herbarium provides lifelong learning opportunities to the public through its volunteer program which has participants ranging in age from 15 to 85. The Herbarium provides additional learning opportunities through its Annual Foray program which is supported in part by volunteers with little or no training in botany or research. Foray participants have the opportunity to expand their knowledge base through a series of plant identification



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workshops in the Herbarium where they can work with more knowledgeable individuals who freely share their skills and insights.

The Herbarium also collaborates with local (Seattle Public Utilities) and federal (National Park Service) agencies, as well as non-profit conservation organizations (The Nature Conservancy & People for Puget Sound), to provide additional field and Herbarium-based activities for volunteers interested in learning about and contributing to ongoing research of the Pacific Northwest flora.

Sincerely,

Dr. George MacDonald  
Director