

Development and Management of Oregon's Tribal Archives

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Year one peer evaluation

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Summary of evaluation:

Year one involved planning for a week-long institute to provide in-depth archives and records management training for members of Oregon's nine federally recognized tribes. The institute will be held in the second year.

Visits to each of the tribal communities allowed for the assessment of the communities' needs, and information gathered at those meetings was used to create a draft of the curriculum for the Institute.

The Institute will be held on the Oregon State University's campus, and initial arrangements with OSU's Housing and Dining Services have been made. The relationships between OSU Archives and the tribal communities which were created in the site visit phase of the project have continued to thrive via phone and email.

The project is clearly progressing according to plan. The draft curriculum looks informative and interesting. Having Jennifer O'Neal, Head Archivist at the National Museum of the American Indian and Oregon tribal member, involved in planning and facilitating is particularly exciting. I look forward to hearing about the institute itself.

Project objectives and methods:

Objective one: Needs assessment

This objective was noted as 100% met in the third quarter report.

Site visits were arranged and made to each of the nine federally recognized tribes to assess their needs for archives and records management training.

Arrangements began by making initial contact with the communities. Aspects included finding out who were the right people to talk to, making assurances that the visitors did not want to take, or even necessarily see, artifacts and records, but just to help them manage them, and setting meeting times that accommodated the academic calendar of the University and the social and ceremonial calendars of the tribal communities.

Logistical arrangements were made primarily by the project's intern, Laura Cray, and where overnight stays were necessary, lodging was taken at tribally owned hotels or casinos when possible. An agenda was drafted and sent to participants in advance.

Visits were made by Larry, Natalia, Laura, and in some cases James Fox, Larry's counterpart at the University of Oregon. Tribal community members attending included anyone who had an interest in the topics discussed.

During the visits copious notes were taken, and reports were written and shared with those who attended the meetings.

Objective two: Develop curriculum

This objective was noted as 60% met in the third quarter report.

A curriculum planning committee was formed, including Larry, Natalia and Tiah Edmunson-Morton, Instruction and Outreach Archivist, and meetings were held weekly to develop the curriculum.

A draft curriculum was included in the third quarter report, with the next steps, to be taken in year two, clearly outlined.

I have limited archives training, but the curriculum looks splendid. Planned field trips will break up what could be too much classroom time. Sessions on sources of grant funding and grant writing should be helpful, as learning what could and should be done without the funds to do it could be frustrating.

Objective three: Plan the conference elements

This objective was noted as 33% met in the third quarter report.

The Institute will be held on the OSU campus, and initial arrangements with University Housing and Dining have been made.

My own experience suggests that bonds are forged in residence hall stays, and this could contribute to building relationships between tribal members that may well last after the Institute is over.

Objective four: Build relationships between OSU Archives and tribal communities

This objective was noted as 100% complete with the comment that it is an ongoing process.

Relationships that were formed in the course of planning and implanting the site visits are continuing as the institute is being planned, and are expected to continue beyond that.

Project results:

This has been a planning year. Results so far include building relationships with, and visits to, the tribal communities. The Institute itself will be another result. Later results will be the use that the attendees make of what they learn, and the relationships they maintain among themselves.

Project impact:

Only potential impact can be considered at this point. Ideally tribal communities will have the tools to better manage both their cultural archives and their records, and, having the tools, will do so.

Additionally there is the potential to repeat the project in some form for new personnel or as a refresher, to expand to tribal populations in other states, and to embrace new partners such as the Oregon Heritage Commission and State Historical Records Advisory Boards.

Suggestions for improvement:

None

Observations:

An initial on-line survey was conducted that proved less useful than might have been. A thought now is that if those surveyed had a better idea of what the program was at that time, responses might have been more helpful.

Various factors contributed to the nine sites visits being conducted in the space of ten weeks. This was too compressed for comfort, but did get it done.

It may seem that a full year between the site visits and the Institute itself is a long time. While partially dictated by the academic calendar, it does allow for better planning and curriculum development than might be possible in a shorter time span.

Tribal community involvement in planning is a key aspect.

Finally:

This looks like a fine plan to meet a definite need, and sustainable and replicable with appropriate funding. I look forward to hearing about its progress.

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