

*Facing Inward, Facing Outward:
Strategies for Communicating Tribal Sovereignty*

Capstone Project

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“Heritage is people. People are the earth. Earth is heritage. In remembering these relationships -- to the people, the past, the land -- we renew in strength our continuance as a people. Literature, in all its forms, is our most durable way of carrying on this continuance. By making literature, like the singers and storytellers of earlier times, we serve the people as well as ourselves in an abiding sense of remembrance.

We must never forget these relationships. Our land is our strength and our people the land -- one and the same -- as it always has been and always will be.

Remembering is all. “

Remembrance, Renewal by Geary Hobson

Abstract

During the research process for this paper it became evident of the need for tribal nations to become effective communicators in relation to information shared both inside and outside Native communities. There is a lack of trust by tribal nations to share information as the result of stereotypical connotations played out by the media. This lack of trust has given Native Americans more reason to be hesitant to share their story with outside media.

This paper is an exploratory study; our goal is to develop “pertinent hypothesis and propositions for further study” (Yin, R. (2003) *Case Study Research, Design and Methods*, pp. 6). Furthermore it is our intention to develop from our research a list of policy implications and strategies for tribal governments.

The media has enormous power to determine what issues are important and to set the public agenda. It has enormous power to shape the meaning of these issues and as a result strongly influence people's ideas and values, including their ideas about Indigenous People.

Introduction/Background:

Tribal governments as leaders of sovereign nations need intrinsic ways to share information. It is important for the leaders of tribal governments to access effective ways of communicating information both inside and outside their communities. It would be beneficial for tribal government leaders to educate the public on important and contemporary issues faced within Indian country today. Tribal sovereignty is a theme not thoroughly understood, especially by populations outside of Indian country. It is a topic that never seems to receive enough attention and can be as easily understood as it can be misunderstood by the non-Indian populace. Tribal sovereignty can be described as inherent powers of self-government exercised to the extent that may not be extinguished. Therefore, the authority of tribes is not illustrated entirely by position to definite delegation of Congress. (Cohen, (1982) *Handbook of Federal Indian Law*, pp.122)

Trudell has described the struggles of the future concerning the powers of tribal governments will develop largely from individuals and institutions that do not understand the unique positions held by Indian tribes with regard to the constitutional system. (Wilkinson, (2004) *Indian Tribes As Sovereign Governments*, preface-xiii)

Indigenous people have experienced the loss of their land, their places and their labor. Knowledge and information have become commodities. (Cajete G, (2000) *Native Science, Natural Laws of Interdependence*, pp. 8) At this stage in history, Indigenous people have become sensitive to the vast array of

expropriation of their special knowledge that outside of their power, the context is changed, dismembered, and unrecognizable. Control of information and access to information are issues facing Indigenous peoples. "An equal playing field is essential for exchange of information between practitioners of Indigenous and Western Science." (Cajete, pp.8) One of the strategies and coping skills for tribes is to withhold information.

Because of their lack of trust to outside forces, Indian people are cautious to share any information for fear it could be used to portray their communities in a negative connotation. This has been contributed to the stereotypical depiction of Indian people within the media surroundings. As tribal leaders of sovereign nations have become more efficient with regard to effective communication, it has become necessary for them to use fundamental ways to communicate information both inside and outside their communities. Tribal employees are capable of enhancing their techniques of functioning with the media in a professional manner and educate the public effectively on the important issues faced within Indian country today.

The advanced communication tools available today could enable tribal governments to communicate more effectively inward to their tribal members and outward to the surrounding communities. Tribal employees can enhance their methods of working with the media in a professional manner. The Gwitchin Nation has incorporated technological media interaction for tribal members, the media and the general public. An example is the Old Crow Yukon, Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation's website, <http://www.oldcrow.ca/news.htm>. Included in

their web pages are links to various tribal entities and information resources, including a link called, "Here are the News."

According to *The Reading Red Report, Native Americans in the News: A 2002 Report and Content Analysis on Coverage of the Largest Newspapers in the United States*, (Briggs, Arviso, McAuliffe & Edmo-Suppah, 2002), the majority of Native American coverage falls into three topic areas when covered by mainstream media:

- Casino gambling by tribes
- Mascot team names
- "On the rez" datelined stories

The report's findings indicate that the majority of stories typically skew the public perceptions about tribal nations and Native American communities. Taken alone, they barely skim the surface of contemporary Native America. Across the nations, tribal governments are building significant working relationships with state and local governments, but that is seldom reported in the media. Many journalists and readers rely on their dominant culture education to inform them about Native Americans today.

The problem is that with this education "Native Americans are treated as historical figures that lived on the Great Plains and hunted buffalo" (Briggs et al., pp. 12).

The miseducation of America resulted in prejudicial news coverage for Native Americans. Many journalists unwittingly pass on their lack of knowledge

through word choice, limited sourcing and repetition of outdated scientific theories. “Building relationships with credible sources in Native America takes personal effort on the part of journalists” (Briggs et al., pp. 13). This paper is an exploratory study; our goal is to develop “pertinent hypothesis and propositions for further study” (Yin, R. (2003) *Case Study Research, Design and Methods*, pp. 6). Furthermore it is our intention to develop from our research a list of policy implications and strategies for tribal governments.

The media has enormous power to determine what issues are important and to set the public agenda. It has enormous power to shape the meaning of these issues and as a result strongly influence people's ideas and values, including their ideas about Indigenous People.

Non-Indigenous Americans, Australians, Canadians, and New Zealanders have held the power of the electronic media for over 70 years portraying the Indigenous population in a mostly negative, stereotypical manner through electronic media. Native Americans, Maori, First Nations peoples and the Aboriginal peoples of Australia are now in a position to change the thinking of non-aboriginal people and enlighten them as to who we are, what we do and to take a look at history from an aboriginal viewpoint.

Aotearoa (New Zealand)

Noted Maori educator Mason Durie states, “Maori self-determination and positive Maori development amounted to little if, in the establishment of a strong economic base, no room were left for the strengthening of a Maori identity and the continuing expression of Maori culture – the advancement of Maori peoples

as Maori. (Durie, (2002) *Te Mana, Te Kawanatanga, The Politics of Maori Self-Determination*, pp. 52) For many years, the media were slow to include the Maori language in regular programs.

The Waitangi Tribunal of 1986 heard many complaints about broadcasting policies, but did not make further recommendations because a Royal Commission and a Broadcasting Tribunal was meeting at the same time. In the Te Reo Maori Report, the Tribunal was strong in its criticism of government policy and made recommendations which included that, “the broadcasting policy should recognize that the Treaty of Waitangi obliges the Crown to recognize and protect the Maori language.”

In May 1996, A Maori television channel, Aotearoa TV Network commenced broadcasting. The Māori Television Service Act passed in May 2003, established the channel as a statutory corporation. It set out that the channel should:

- Be a high quality, cost effective television provider which informs, educates and entertains
- Broadcast mainly in te reo Māori
- Have regard to the needs of children participating in immersion education and all people learning Māori.

A key finding of the audience research commissioned by Māori Television is that 98% of Māori and 84% of the general population who had heard of Māori Television believe that the channel should be a permanent broadcaster, and that the programming has increased awareness and understanding of Maori culture.

Australia:

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have a long history of using and developing many different communications techniques, including stories, songs, performances and visual arts. For over two decades, Indigenous Australians have been developing new ways of communicating—electronically. Australians were experimenting with radio as far back as 1905 and the first station 2SB in Sydney began broadcasting in November 1923. But it wasn't until June 1976 when Melbourne Station 3CR broadcast the country's first Aboriginal radio program.

The first Indigenous broadcasts in Australia were made by a group of Tasmanian women, who started Wayee Radio (a half-hour program) in Hobart during early 1979. Then, in 1980, Australia's first Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned and controlled radio station, the Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association's (CAAMA's) 8KIN, started broadcasting.

As new technology became available and accessible, these—and other forms of communications services—were developed to the point where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community organizations now own and control:

- Over 100 small community radio and television broadcasting facilities (known as BRACS) in remote communities;
- Over 20 community and radio stations in regional and urban centres;
- One commercial radio service;
- One commercial television service;

- Several video-conference facilities; and
- A number of websites and beginning streaming media/webcasting
- Several community and commercial print and multi-media enterprises.

The government directly funds two national media services, the Special Broadcasting Service (SBS), which is to reflect Australia's multicultural society, and the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) which is to provide a media service, and both are to entertain, inform and educate all Australians.

Canada:

The Museum of Broadcast Communications recognize First People of Canada to have become internationally acknowledged as the most advanced and fair fourth world broadcasting system, based on a 1991 legislated recognition for their collective communications and cultural rights as Peoples with special status. Aboriginal communities possess the fortitude to use media to better serve their goals to preserve indigenous culture, language, and identity.

During the early years, Canada's Aboriginal people recognized the correlation linking cultural survival and the ability to control media within their communities. Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (APTN) is the first national Aboriginal television network in the world with programming by, for and about Aboriginal Peoples distributed to Canadians as well as to viewers around the world.

The Inuit Broadcasting Corporation is the national organization in charge of Inuit broadcast services. Through Television Northern Canada, it broadcasts Inuit television programs across Nunavut, the NWT, Northern Quebec and

Labrador, as well as the Yukon Territory. IBC provides a window to the Arctic by producing award winning television programming by Inuit, for Inuit. IBC is an impressive illustration of adapting to the changes in the geographic or cultural environment that is key to survival.

IBC produces programs in one of Canada's richest culture and languages, which is the Inuit language of Inuktitut. IBC programs are about kids, musician, politicians, and aboriginal humor. The programming has become internationally recognized as one of the most successful communication models for Aboriginal nations. Their training programs have been imitated not only throughout Canada, but also worldwide.

IBC has five production centers located across Nunavut, with thirty-four Inuit staff in every level of the production franchise. All programming is envisioned, designed, and produced by Inuit community members. IBC is partly financed by the Department of Canadian Heritage. Nunavut government programs, license fees, production funds, and various fundraising provide other resources.

United States

Currently, the U.S. federal government does not fund a national broadcast network as New Zealand, Australia and Canada provide for Indigenous people. Native Americans have a number of ways that media distributes stories about indigenous people. *Indian Country Today*, in both print and Internet form, has provided daily information on Native American issues since 1981. The on-line version now offers video clips as well. There are a number of other publications

that provide both print and on-line formats to get out the story, including NativeYouth.com, founded by Mary Kim Titla, a San Carlos Apache and former TV reporter.

AIROS is the American Indian Radio Network, broadcasting across the country and also on-line at www.airos.org and www.nativeradio.org.

Public television, community access, and many Indian Nations have cable channels, that offer programming that is relevant to Native American issues, but at this time, there is not regular, national, on-going programming. According to James Browder, Northwest Indian News Director, "There is a group that has licensed American Indian Network a nationwide cable channel. They are looking for financial backers. Our production crew shot their recruitment video and they are using NWIN as an example of programming they will be carrying." NWIN is currently broadcast on KSTW UPN Channel 11 in Seattle Washington, KVOS in Bellingham Washington and various stations throughout the western U.S. and Alaska, and is a clear example of positive, educational, quality programming that demonstrates there is interest in this type of information for both the general public and tribal members. Native Americans are increasingly building a communications infrastructure of their own. The researchers of this paper encourage the development of a Native American broadcast network, if the cable industry can support a "Baby Network," there is certainly room for a cable network that focuses on the important native news stories, documentary films and other original programming.

Assumptions:

The assumption of this research is that tribal governments have the responsibility to reach out to the media and the general public, with clear and accurate communication. With the explosion of information technology and the increasing need for communications, tribal governments must approach communication dualistically.

1. *Facing Inward*: Clear communication and information to tribal members. Tribal government employees need to improve their ability to not only respond to external media sources, but also – how to engage their constituents – tribal members.
2. *Facing Outward*: A professional approach in working with the media, communication to the general public.
3. *Facing Forward*: A way to obtain the skills necessary in facing inward/facing outward is through a course taught through the Evergreen State College Tribal Governance MPA program, or some form of media training. The benefits of media training – is that Tribes can learn about the media, and that media can become educated about the history, culture and sovereignty of tribes.

This research will focus on the following questions:

- Are Washington Tribal Government employees in management positions interested in working with the media?

- If so, would Washington Tribal Government employees in management positions be interested in attending a course on working with the media?
- Are Washington Tribal Government employees in management positions interested in developing skills for communicating with tribal members?
- If so, would Washington Tribal Government employees in management positions be interested in attending a course on developing skills for communicating with tribal members?

Hypothesis:

1. Tribal government employees will demonstrate interest in how to work with the media.
2. If so, tribal government employees will demonstrate the interest in a class in how to work with the media.
3. Tribal government employees will demonstrate the interest in how to communicate with tribal members.
4. If so, tribal government employees will demonstrate the interest in a class in how to communicate with tribal members.

Null Hypothesis:

1. Tribal Government employees demonstrate no interest in learning how to work with the media.
2. Tribal Government employees demonstrate no interest in learning how to communicate with tribal members.

Secondary data:

- Descriptive Case Study of the media/tribal interaction focused on “Tsuxiit/Luna the Orca Whale.
- Findings of the “Communications and Contemporary Native Americans,” Symposium in Washington D.C., March 2006
- “Public Opinion on American Indians and Taxation Issues in Western New York,” conducted by the Communications Department at Buffalo State University.

Methodology:

Subjects: Washington State tribal government employees in management positions and/or political leaders.

Dependent Variable: interest in working with media, learning more about internal communications to tribal members, interest in attending a class on working with the media, interest in attending a class on development of internal communications to tribal members.

Independent Variable: tribal government political leaders – interested in attending or selecting a tribal employee to attend a class on communication with media and tribal members.

The objective is to survey Washington State tribal leaders. The survey will include questions that measure on a scale from 1-5 preference for coursework in working with the media and demonstrated interest in communicating with tribal members, the general public and federal/state/local governments.

Feasibility

The feasibility of this research rests upon the results of the findings conducted by the survey. The research group will compile the data analysis from the surveys received and report the findings of their research proposal for the capstone proposal.

Reliability

The reliability of the research is based on the information accumulated from the survey respondents of the 29 Washington State Tribal Chairpersons. Careful planning will include documenting the survey responses and data analysis process. Further research will be conducted to develop an appropriate survey.

Ethics

An ethical standard shall be implemented to include submission of the Human Subjects application and a mutual respect will be maintained at all times while working with tribal government employees. The research group

acknowledges the importance to maintain a high level of respect and appreciation with the survey respondents.

Planning session

Timeline. The complete research project will last approximately eight months.

Each quarter core class will incorporate another segment to this project for the final completion of the capstone project in Spring 2006.

Development of research proposal will be conducted during the Fall Quarter of 2005. This project will be completed by the end of Spring Quarter 2006.

Budget

Travel – 2500.00

Survey, paper, other tools – 100.00

Delimitations

- Limited response from subjects - research group will make follow up calls.
- Tribal employees may have a limited amount of time to dedicate to the survey.
- Time constraints – research group will remain on-task.
- The ability to remain on-task with research project despite the conflicts from personal, work, and school obligations. We believe that the obstacles will not force this project to be incomplete, whereas effective

planning and following the timeline will be essential to completion of this research project.

Spatial – Washington State Tribes

Temporal – January, 2006-May, 2006

Potential Policy Impacts: The policy impacts of this research include the development of communication coursework to be offered by The Evergreen State College. For the college, this would impact curriculum development and budget analysis. Tribal governments would determine if the coursework can be beneficial for management training, set forth implementation to include tribal employees in the training process

Potential Audience: Washington State tribal government employees/political leaders and students in The Evergreen State College MPA program.

Data Collection:

This research project was intended as a survey sent to 29 Tribal Chairpersons in Washington State who were the primary source for this survey. A questionnaire was sent along with a consent form and cover letter explaining the intent of the survey. It was determined to survey all of the Tribal Chairpersons, who were the sample population of the Indian Tribes in Washington State.

The level of measurement for this survey is the ordinal method using the Likert Scale as an attitude-measuring tool. It should be noted that we made a four-point scale leaving out "undecided" in order to measure a favorable or unfavorable response. The data analysis used for our research project is the internet-based tool, Web Surveyor.

Laural and Renee wrote the original research proposal during the fall quarter class session as a cohesive working team. A Human Subjects Review Form was required from The Evergreen State College that included a cover letter, consent form, and a questionnaire made-up five (5) questions. The review was completed in December, and the research proposal was approved.

Another MPA Tribal student, Terry Thatcher, was assigned to this research project at the beginning of the winter quarter. Terry's contribution to this project is documenting the precise steps taken to gather the data. He was provided a list of tribes to contact as he sent out letters to designated tribes. Each letter contained a coversheet, consent form, questionnaire, and a return self-addressed envelope. The letters were mailed out January 14, 2006 and while waiting approximately one to two weeks without receiving a response from any of the tribes, an email was sent to each tribal chairman/chairwomen, with a copy of the cover letter, and consent form. A web link was provided by teammate Renee Klosterman that would enable the tribal official access to the survey questionnaire. The tool used to create the on-line survey was Web Surveyor: <http://websurveyor.net/wsb.dll/48482/TESCFacingOut-FacingIN.htm>

It was the intention for this web link to make it easier for the each of the tribes to fill out the survey questionnaire.

During Terry's research he found in the Washington State Tribal Directory through the Governor's Office of Indian Affairs website (www.goia.wa.gov) were either incorrect or offices other than the tribal chairperson. It was discovered that a letter or other form of communication to a tribe requires follow up within a couple of days. This will enable the survey respondent who is contacted information for what is expected from them. It was discovered that by communicating with tribal officials or their respective administrative personnel enables the researcher the connection which can be very useful when trying to obtain important information.

Terry Thatcher states in his reflection of working with this research group: "I think one of the most important points I learned this quarter, is to have a good working relationship with your fellow researcher. Each one of us needed to rely upon the other at onetime or another to do this project. Laural gave me three-email addresses I was having trouble finding and Renee set-up the link to our new online questionnaire, which I feel has benefited this project. I also understand that many tribal administrators do not wish to be bogged down with lengthy questions, if they are going to answer any question they want them to be direct and to the point. When reading book titled "Research Methods" (McNabb, 2002 p.129) it says that mailed questionnaires are often the least expensive procedures for gathering data, but at the same time mailed questionnaires have one of the lowest response rates. McNabb's book also says that a better way to

do survey questions is to do it by voice, such as phone or face-to-face interviews. In our research project, a face-to-face interview would have been impossible, but maybe a voice-to-voice would have been better, if we would have had somehow in which to do it. I think with Renee's online web questionnaire we will now get responses, at this time I do not believe any one of us has received any responses by mail."

As the senior members of this research group, Laural and Renee learned to be flexible as team players when Terry was added to the group at the beginning of winter quarter. Since most of the topic research had already been collected, Terry assisted with the survey implementation and distribution to the 29 tribal chairpersons in Washington State. Terry was reassigned to a different project at the end of the winter quarter.

Secondary Data:

Case Study – "Tsuxiit/Luna the Orca Whale



For over 4,000 years the Mowachaht/Muchalaht people of Nootka Sound have lived among killer whales. In July 2001, a lone young orca was first seen in Nootka Sound, British Columbia, Canada. The Center for Whale

Research and Marine Mammal Research Program of the Canadian Division of Fisheries and Oceans determined that the orca had been previously identified as L98, a member of the “L” pod of resident orcas born in 1999. He had been missing from “L” pod since at least June.

Nootka Sound residents nicknamed the orca “Luna” mistakenly believing that he was female. The Mowachaht-Muchalat First Nations believed that Luna, or Tsuxiit as they called him, instead embodied the spirit of their late chief, Ambrose Maquinna. It had been reported that Chief Maquinna, shortly before he died, had predicted that he would reincarnate as an orca, a holy animal to the tribe. The Mowachaht/Muchalaht believe the young whale carries his spirit and has, for now, chosen Nootka Sound for his home. To the Mowachaht-Muchalaht, killer whales are the guardians of the laws of the sea, and their choices should be respected.

When Canadian authorities decided to attempt to capture Luna and either reunite him with his pod or, if that was not possible, relocate him to an aquarium, possibly the Vancouver aquarium, the idea was fiercely resisted by the Mowachaht-Muchalat First Nation. Through negotiations, the Mowachaht-Muchalat and the Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) developed a Joint Stewardship Plan for the protection of Tsux’iit . This Stewardship Plan reflects the interests of the Mowachaht/Muchalaht and DFO to collaborate on issues regarding Luna (Tsux’iit).

However, the whale was entangled in the propeller of a fishing boat in March 2006, and was killed. The following media coverage ranged from subtle to

not-so-subtle blame toward the Mowachaht/Muchalaht, in some reports, not even calling them by their tribal name, rather, just using the more generic “one of the First Nations of Canada.” In reviewing three web-based articles, the information was shown to be more focused on the death of the orca, with only reporting that the “First Nations believed that the whale was the embodiment of their dead tribal leader,” and a quote from Michael Harris of the Orca Conservancy, “This is the Katrina of orca advocacy.”

(McClure, “Luna the orca killed by tugboat”, *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, March 11, 2006)

“When Native people look at the world and try to understand relationships, it is a scientific (creative) process...each story has a sacred quality. Consequently, only parts of the story can be disseminated to outsider” (Cajete, pp. 37).

The focus on the deceased leader and the spiritual relationship between the whale and the First Nations peoples, is sacred, and should not be shared, which is these authors’ opinion. From the perspectives of “facing outward” - on the back page of the Seattle Post-Intelligencer article, is the story to be shared. The failure of the Canadian government to adequately consult with the tribe about the whale and had FOR YEARS failed to work with the tribe about the DFO’s advocacy of salmon aquaculture in the area was a opportunity for the Mowachaht/Muchalaht to share sovereign/tribal issues with the general public.

Communications and Contemporary Native Americans,” Symposium in Washington D.C., March 2006-

Laural and Renee attended the “Hear Our Story, Communications and Contemporary Native Americans,” Symposium in Washington D.C. in March 2006. The absence of U.S. media coverage about Native American communities means that Indian Country today is a mystery to the general public. While there are rampant stereotypes about Native Americans, realities and cultural strengths remain hidden. This symposium was an opportunity that brought together Native American leaders, members of Congress, journalists, academics, religious organizations, and other opinion leaders with a goal of engaging more people with issues affecting indigenous peoples in the United States. Speakers included Montana Governor Brian Schweitzer; John Mohawk, a Native philosopher and thinker of the first rank; Mark Trahan, a Native journalist who is editorial page editor of a mainstream newspaper; Rep. Tom Cole, the only Native American member of Congress; and Robert Lichter, the President of the Center for Media and Public Affairs. Highlights from several of the speakers:

- President Joe Garcia, National Congress of American Indians (NCAI)
“Education system in this country starts with ‘miseducation.’”
“Media is a process, a system.”
“Legislators and Congress should be required to take a course called, “Indian 101.”
- The Honorable Ron Allen, Treasurer, NCAI
“The mission is to educate.”
“Broaden your non-native circle – local service groups.”

- Laura Harris, Executive Director, Americans for Indian Opportunity
“Don’t be road kill on the technology highway.”
- Kim Baca, Native American Journalists Association
“Tribes have a responsibility to be responsive in a timely manner to reporter’s calls.”

A series of recommendations were formulated from the findings of this meeting, and will be incorporated in the strategies/policies segment of this project.

***“Public Opinion on American Indians and Taxation Issues in Western New York,”* conducted by the Communications Department at Buffalo State University, June, 2005**

This project used focus groups, survey (500 people) and content analysis of New York newspapers. The support for tribal issues is across the board in terms of political affiliation, from liberal to conservative. Four parallel focus groups conducted in Western New York yielded a generally positive profile of citizens that are relatively uninformed of tribal issues, as friendly and open toward Native American issues. Included in the findings:

- The research shows a widespread posture of interest and support for Native American issues.
- A positive link exists between personal familiarity with Native Americans and support for Native American issues.

- The concept of treaties enlisted two responses, one, that they should be respected, and two, perhaps they should be updated.
- The concept of sovereignty yields two opinions, one that Tribal Governance should be respected, and that two, that the state should be able to intervene for the good of the larger public.
- Issues of the establishment and management of gaming and casinos sometimes cloud the more central issues of treaty obligations and sovereignty rights.

The analysis of these findings suggests that increased education of the general public of the historical, social and cultural rationale behind tribal self-governance would be helpful in a greater understanding of sovereignty issues.

Data Analysis for the Tribal Chairperson Survey:

Survey questions were sent to 29 tribal leaders. A total of fourteen responses were received. Ten were used in the data analysis through WebSurveyor, four responses were considered invalid, one tribe sent in five responses.

#1.Are Washington Tribal Government employees in management positions interested in working with the media?

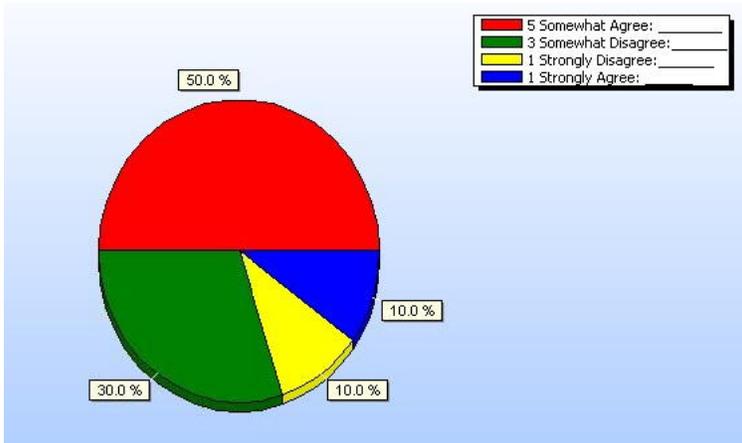


Figure 1. First survey question.

#2. If so, would Washington Tribal Government employees in management positions be interested in attending a course on working with the media?

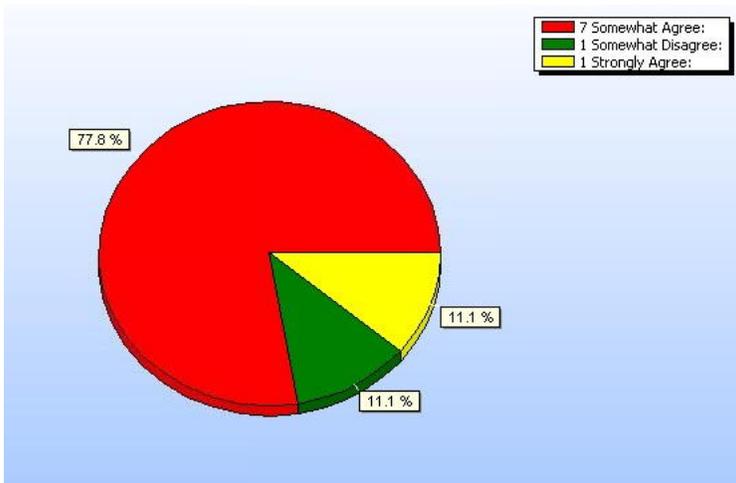


Figure 2. Second survey question.

#3. Are Washington Tribal Government employees in management positions interested in developing skills for communicating with tribal members?

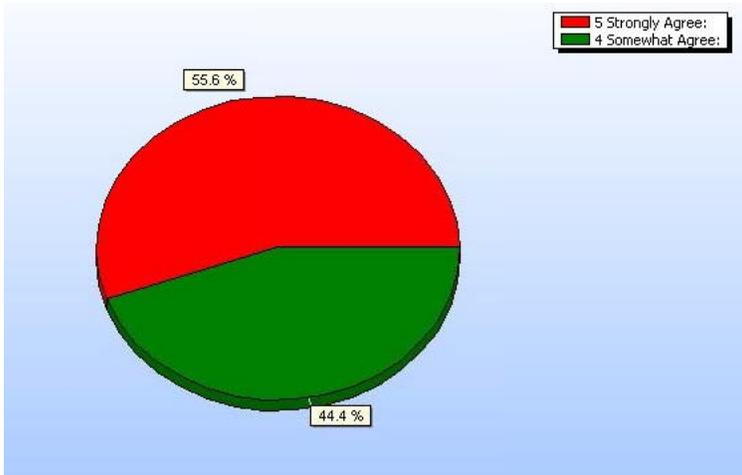


Figure 3. Third survey question.

#4. If so, would Washington Tribal Government employees in management positions be interested in attending a course on developing skills for communicating with tribal members?

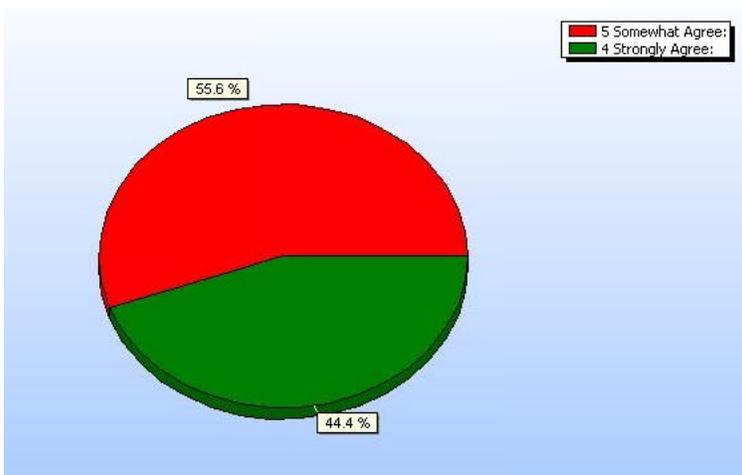


Figure 4. Fourth survey question.

The survey results verify the four hypothesis of this research project. According to the collected data findings approximately fifty to seventy-eight percent of the tribal respondents somewhat agreed or strongly agreed that effective communication with the media and tribal members was essential. And furthermore, tribal leaders showed interest in media training. The responses were very similar, focusing on the two positive answers; *somewhat agree* and *strongly agree*. For our group this was a favorable outcome for the research questions.

Counter arguments:

Someone else might see the data in this way: Due to low number of responses, the research needs further data to reach a positive outcome.

Areas for Further Research:

A greater understanding of the parameters of media training for tribal employees. Factors to be researched are length of training, location of training, training restricted to an individual tribe, and development of the curriculum or workshop.

Bias and Assumption:

Researcher Klosterman's background in television news and video production incorporates a bias toward interacting with the media, and learning techniques to ensure that one's side of the story is told, and that the information is accurate.

Analysis:

This research group feels if several aspects of the project were handled differently, it would have resulted in a more improved outcome. First, time constraints prevented the researchers from visiting the tribal chairpersons in person to acquire the tribal leaders' participation in the survey. This group believes that a face-to-face interview would have proven more beneficial in obtaining more effective feedback from tribal officials. We discovered most tribal chairpersons are inundated with so much mail it was easy for the surveys to be lost and never made it to the respective recipients. If the timeline for the research were longer, the group would have considered to be placed on the agenda for scheduled tribal council meetings. This would enable the research group to speak with tribal governing representatives and explain the intent of the research survey. This could have resulted in a more expansive response to the survey questionnaire.

The research team also learned not every research proposal is played out as intended. It was our intention to receive more than 14 survey responses from the 29 Washington tribes represented. Despite the low collection data received, our group gained invaluable experience in the foundation of qualitative research. It is our intention to employ the knowledge we acquired in order to conduct research with regard to our professional careers as it is warranted. The ramifications of this study for the Evergreen State College is to further evaluate and identify the school's role in providing media training and internal communications training to tribal employees.

Furthermore, we found from this research the importance of tribal governments to effectively communicate with tribal members as well as the media within the surrounding community. It is beneficial for tribes to re-educate the general public on the significant issues faced by tribal nations. This should include the complex issue surrounding tribal sovereignty in order for the general public to understand the clear picture of why this issue is important to tribal nations.

Recommendations:

As tribal governments move forward and further their development to the contemporary issues relevant in Indian country, it becomes ever more essential for tribal leaders to communicate effectively. It is important to educate the general public about tribal sovereignty in order for them to fully understand the true meaning of the inherent right afforded by the federal government to Indian Tribes. A media strategy is not simply about influencing power by achieving power. "The strategic use of communications is an essential corollary of political empowerment," Wade Henderson, executive director of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights said at the "Hear Our Story" symposium. Political empowerment for tribal nations means in part, getting Native American interests addressed, and understood.

Strategies for communicating Tribal sovereignty:

Tribal Members:

- Tribal groups located close in proximity to metropolitan newspapers and television stations; can use this to their advantage by using the media as a public platform for their voice.
- Develop this voice as a pro-active effort to engage reporters, assignment editors, editorial boards, impacting reporting on stories that create a deeper education and understanding of tribal issues.
- Develop a relationship with local programming programs, either “news magazine” format or studio audience – talk show programs. Community access and PBS are good avenues.
- Television news demands a more visual story; so much of what occurs in Indian Country has visual impact.
- Media training and public relations training will further increase effectiveness in this pursuit.
- Find Opportunities. Be a resource and tell the Native American history.
- Contact the Faith Community. Engage them to hear the story.
- Try to form allies with outside organizations – frame the issue, make the “pitch” an opportunity to create an ally. Rather than an argument of the past, reframe to bring something fresh, help others to see the issue. What would you rather have, catharsis or impact?
- “Demographics shape destiny” – America is getting older, Indian Country is getting younger. Develop strategies to make a difference.
- Frame the message concerning treaty rights, human rights.
- Tribal websites – post press releases.

- Place literature in the casinos about tribal history, culture, and future strategic plans. Explain that the majority of funding from casinos is for tribal community services.
- “Be like Eagle...always look at what’s happening”

General Public:

- The first step for non-natives in building relationships is listening.
- Invite representatives of nearby tribes to address your meeting, church or organization.
- Attend local, state and national meetings on Native American issues.
- Read your local print and broadcast media. Write a letter, or ask for a meeting when you see local media using stereotypes, or failing to consult with Tribal Leaders.
- Read Native American newspapers, listen to Native American radio and follow Native American websites.
- Find out about Native American issues in your community, and contact your elected officials (at all levels)

Policy Development Recommendations for Tribal Governments:

- Tribal Leaders, in partnership with TESC, develop a curriculum to educate the media and provide public relations training.
- Create an Office of Communications, or designate one person to be the media relations manager for the organization. The tribal leader can remain

the spokesperson, but the media relations manager will coordinate and manage communicating with the public.

- Support the development of a National Native American Network for broadcasting. The governments of Australia, New Zealand, and Canada all support at the least a national cable channel. Indigenous people from time immemorial have gathered together to share information, trade ideas, goods and culture. Using technological communications tools, Indigenous people can continue and enhance the ability “to gather.” This National Native American Network will most likely be generated through collaborative private funding.

Conclusion:

While the results from this research leaves for further research in the area of successful communication both inside and outside native communities, it also supports the suggestion that effective communication with the media and tribal members is essential. What’s more tribal leaders have shown an interest in media training.

Technological innovations in communications and the media constitute a growing factor in the restructuring of basic assumptions that have informed the social-economic and cultural fabric of many societies. The acceleration of information flow and the reshaping of traditional cultural and economic exchanges have given rise to an information, communication, and knowledge-

based society. The effective use of media enables indigenous nations and peoples worldwide to face inward, face outward, and face forward, together.

*“Let these two worlds combine,
Yours and mine.
The door between us is not locked,
Just ajar.”*

Jack Davis, Aboriginal Australian

Literature Review:

In our literature review, we focused on issues of methodology (reviewing survey modalities), qualitative research (studies on the impact of communications training for tribal government employees and other non-tribal government employees), and policies on training for tribal governmental employees.

Currently, there is a course on this subject taught in Canada, through Northwest Community College for the First Nations Public Administration program. The course is called, "External and Internal Communications."

<http://www.nwcc.bc.ca/programs/fnpa.htm> (*)

(*) Course from Norwest Community College:

FNPA 104 - 3: External and Internal Communications

This course explores both external and internal communication strategies, and the related implementation skills, from a remote, rural northern community perspective using a case-study approach. The internal part of the course focuses on ways and means of improving communication of political, social, cultural and economic information at the grassroots level. Traditional and contemporary methods for communicating information will be explored. Community-based information strategies, organization and delivery requirements will be identified and discussed. The focus of the external part of the course will be effectively communicating an indigenous message and perspective through mass media avenues. Once students gain an understanding of how mass media operates, they will move on to acquiring skills pertinent to attracting mass media coverage, organizing mass media around a crisis event, developing relationships with those

employed in mass media, and creating a structure to deal with mass media within First Nations government administrations.

Evergreen Library website, under Library Catalog, Reference Journals, Social Sciences – and found “Jstor,” Search “media and American Indians.” Found: “Indigenous Media: Faustian Contract or Global Village”

<http://0->

www.jstor.org/cals.evergreen.edu/view/08867356/ap020023/02a00040/0?currentResult=08867356%2bap020023%2b02a00040%2b0%2cFFFF1F&searchUrl=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.jstor.org%2Fsearch%2FBasicResults%3Fhp%3D25%26si%3D1%26Query%3Dmedia%2Band%2Bnative%2Bamericans

The Reading Red Report, Native Americans in the News: A 2002 Report and Content Analysis on Coverage of the Largest Newspapers in the United States, Native American Journalists Association and NewsWatch, Kara Briggs, Tom Arvasio, Dennis McAuliffe and Lori Edmo-Suppah.

http://www.naja.com/resources/publications/2002_reading-red.pdf

The American Indian And The Media, **edited by Mark Anthony Rolo**

<http://www.naja.com/resources/publications/>

“This is an invaluable resource for reporters and editors who cover Indian country. It is intended to encourage the mainstream and tribal media to attain the highest standards of professionalism, ethics and responsibility.

Within these pages are essays that explain many of the struggles facing Native people. This is an excellent resource guide that can assist journalists in developing sources in the Native community and accurately inform mainstream media and America about Native Americans. This information is critical in the endeavor to promote stronger news coverage of our communities.”

American Indian Policy and Media Initiative – Sponsored by Buffalo State College Communications Department as an academic and professional project focused on media and public policy issues relevant to American Indians. This grant-funded initiative, begun in 2005, has strong links with Indian tribes and nations across North America. The mission of the organization is to develop, “Media planning seminars that assist tribal leadership and other Indian entities in developing comprehensive strategic communication programs.” (Used Google Internet Search Engine, “Media and Tribal Governments”)

Friends Committee of National Legislation: Native American Media Symposium -

The impact on American Indian tribes is a strategically important key, for tribes need realistic representation in order to protect their identity and this can be done with the use of media outreach. It is also known that media covers many tribal issues and does have the ability to drive public policy which involves Indian affairs. Many tribal leaders and opinion makers in Indian Country have often been heard to complain how their people are depicted in issues brought forth by

the media. (Used Google Internet Search Engine, "Media and Tribal Governments)

Journal of Health Communication, "A Communication Analysis of Community Mobilization on the Warm Springs Indian Reservation" - This article analyzed the community mobilization process at the Warm Springs Reservation as part of a health education campaign, using the Freire education model. The article examined the techniques employed to involve community members in print, radio and public speaking. (Used JSTOR, "Communication and Native American Tribes")

Practicing Participatory Research in American Indian Communities - This article relates to our topic as it looks at the historical issues that influence research in American Indian communities and studies the inferences of these issues in relation to culturally sensitive, respectful, and suitable research with regard to this population. (Used JSTOR, "Communication and Native American Tribes")

Native American Documentary: An Emerging Genre - This essay addresses the question of whether Native American media documentaries constitute a unique documentary genre distinct from non-native documentary film and video. Researcher Steven Leuthold hypothesis is that within this genre the systems of beliefs, values, and actions are distinct from non-native cultures. (Used Ask

Jeeves Internet Search Engine, "Literature Review Media and Tribal Governments," linked to Questia.com (research search engine), searched "media and tribal governments")

"We've got a story to tell, a good story. And it is about time the rest of America finds out."

Senator Daniel Inouye (HI)

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