

Statement of Alan Parker  
Director, The Northwest Indian Applied Research Institute  
The Evergreen State College  
Olympia, Washington  
[parkeral@evergreen.edu](mailto:parkeral@evergreen.edu)

Before the United States Senate Committee on Indian Affairs  
Hearing on Exemplary Native American Program Initiatives  
US Colleges and Universities  
June 21, 2001 Washington, DC

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee on Indian Affairs: It is a pleasure and privilege to appear before you today to testify regarding exemplary program initiatives at US Colleges and Universities that serve Native American Students and Indian tribal communities. I am accompanied today by Dr. Linda Moon Stumpff, the director of the Master in Public Administration program at The Evergreen State College who will be describing our plans to establish a special graduate program for tribal government administrators and managers. Attached to my written statement please find a copy of a brochure entitled, "Native American Programs at The Evergreen State College" which contains a brief description of the academic programs we offer to students and the two public service centers recently established by the College, the Longhouse Education and Culture Center and the Northwest Indian Applied Research Institute. I have also included a report that describes the activities and accomplishments of the Northwest Indian Applied Research Institute over the past two years as well as an excerpt from our web page.

Mr. Chairman, we at The Evergreen State College are very proud of the fact that The Honorable Billy Frank, Jr., Nisqually tribal member and Chairman of the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission, serves as a member of our Board of Trustees. To my knowledge, we are the only State College that has a prominent tribal leader on their governing board. Billy has been both an inspiration to the Native American students and faculty at Evergreen and a powerful influence on the administration of the College. In addition, the College is very pleased to report that we have the highest percentage of Native American students and faculty of any College in the US. For this current academic year over 150 native students attended Evergreen out of a total enrollment of 4,800 and 12 natives are full-time faculty out of a total of 187 faculty who teach on a regular, full-time basis.

**The Reservation Based Community Determined Academic Program**

The Evergreen State College has a twenty-five year track record of serving tribal members and many Evergreen graduates are tribal community leaders and outstanding professionals. Twelve years ago the College initiated a unique program offering liberal arts degree classes on five of the Indian reservations in the South Puget Sound and Olympic Peninsula areas. The Reservation Based Community Determined Program not only makes it possible for these community members to pursue their BA degree without having to disrupt their lives by relocating to the College's Olympia Campus, but the curriculum for their classes is also designed to address distinctive issues and topics relevant to these tribal communities. I recommend that you review

the College's Native American Programs publication for more detailed information on this exemplary program.

### **The Longhouse Education and Culture Center**

This philosophy of designing academic programs to be relevant to particular tribal communities was continued when the College designed and built a new classroom and meeting facility on its Campus in 1995. Instead of creating simply another standard classroom building, the College responded to tribal aspirations by creating a unique facility that followed coastal Indian traditional designs for a "Longhouse". The Longhouse Education and Culture Center is authentic in style, structure and function to serve as a coastal Indian Longhouse as well as an attractive classroom and meeting facility. Since its opening in 1995, the Longhouse has served not only as a classroom for Native Studies but also as a House of Welcome to native people from throughout the area who feel comfortable and at home on this campus for all manner of cultural and educational events. Next week, the Longhouse is hosting a week long cultural event, a "Gathering" of indigenous artists of the Pacific Rim who will share their music, the stories and their art. This is simply the latest in an ongoing series of events and programs designed for and by native people. No other College or University in the US can boast of a facility the compare to Evergreen's Longhouse and the role that it plays in fulfilling the mission of service to native communities.

### **The Northwest Indian Applied Research Institute**

Following the construction and opening of the Longhouse, the College decided that a research institute that could enable faculty and administration to provide relevant and timely academic programs for its students keyed around current tribal issues. In addition, tribal officials had requested that the College make available the resources and expertise from within the College to tribal communities to provide assistance in subject areas such as governance, natural resource management and economic studies. Attached to this statement please find a report that summarizes the activities and research agenda of the Northwest Indian Applied Research Institute. We believe that this track record does demonstrate the validity of the idea that an institute of higher learning is uniquely equipped to serve communities that send their members to the College the critical thinking skills and expertise associated with a College education. The most valuable work that we have accomplished over the past two years has been work of Evergreen College students, native and non-native, graduate and undergraduate. Under the supervision of Institute staff, the students have conducted studies and published reports that have been very helpful to tribal officials in their everyday work and on special projects. We urge you to review this report and the Institute's web page, [www.niari.evergreen.edu](http://www.niari.evergreen.edu), and we would be pleased to answer any questions you may have about particular projects.

### **Summary**

Mr. Chairman, it is a great privilege to be invited to appear before you and your Committee to discuss exemplary Native American Programs in higher education. We certainly believe that our work at The Evergreen State College should stand as an example for other Colleges and Universities that are located in Indian Country. For too long administrators in the field of higher education have confined themselves to the ivory tower of academia. We at Evergreen believe that we have a special duty to serve the community and that in serving the community we serve our students. We hope our example of community service may be helpful in this regard.

