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- PLACE AND NATIVE VOICE -

**A CULTURAL RESOURCE INTERPRETATION
INTERNSHIP TRAINING PROGRAM
CO-SPONSORED BY THE
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS,
UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO,
AND THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE**

- ANNUAL REPORT, AY 2004-2005 -

Introduction. This is a report of activities conducted during the first academic year (2004-2005) of the administration of the Place and Native Voice Project. The project was established by virtue of funding provided by the National Park Service, in response to a proposal submitted to the Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit, Rocky Mountain Region, by the Graduate School of Public Affairs, at the University of Colorado at Denver and Health Sciences Center. To facilitate comparison of tasks performed during the first academic year of the project's administration (fall, 2004, through fall, 2005) with what was originally proposed, this report is organized using the same terms and headings as the original proposal (hereinafter, "PNV proposal") for the project.

Outreach to Applicants. Once the initial seed grant had been awarded to the principal investigator, Professor Lloyd Burton, of the Graduate School of Public Affairs, University of Colorado at Denver and Health Sciences Center (GSPA-UCDHSC), the next step was the identification and acquisition of sufficient additional funding to pay and provide other support for the American Indian college students who were to be recruited for participation in the project. Working with the project officer at RMCESU and various program administrators at the Rocky Mountain regional offices of the National Park Service, such funding was eventually secured to make possible the placement of two PNV program participants at Rocky Mountain National Park, and two more at Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site and Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site [under development].

However, this funding was not secured until the early Spring of 2005. And while program administrators at NPS Rocky Mountain region offices and the principal investigator had already developed outreach and application materials (see Appendix) and had informally discussed the pending establishment of the program with various college and tribal administrators who might be interested in supporting it, formal outreach and participant recruiting did not commence until funding had been secured.

The reason formal outreach did not commence until the funding had been secured was that, in the principal investigator's experience, particularly when working with administrators in tribal governments as well as American Indian college and university students, it is extremely unwise to make any assurances regarding any government program until that program is actually able to deliver what it promises. Rather than raise expectations that might not be fulfilled, it seemed wiser to wait until it was clear that the project was actually going to receive the requisite funding before making programmatic assurances on which these college students would be depending in terms of making their summer employment plans.

Once funding had been assured, outreach activities consisted primarily of the principal investigator, program administrators at the Rocky Mountain NPS offices, program administrators at the participating NPS units, and the RMCESU project officer distributing the outreach materials in both electronic and hard copy form to tribal officials, college and university administrators, and all other persons in the respective professional and personal networks of those participating in this outreach process.

However, given the timing of the initiation of the outreach process, the principal investigator and others soon discovered that many would-be eligible applicants (1) had already made other summer employment plans, (2) did not learn enough about the PNV project in time to judge whether it was something they might wish to participate in, or (3) simply did not have time to assemble the requisite application materials before the participating NPS units needed to make their summer staffing decisions.

Selection of Program Participants. Not unexpectedly, the most successful outreach strategy was professional networking with administrators of programs providing services to American Indian college and university students – in this case, the director of the Native American Student Services Center at the University of Colorado and Denver and Health Sciences Center, Theresa Gutierrez. She distributed outreach materials given her by the PNV principal investigator to the students visiting her center, and encouraged them to apply.

There were three expressions of interest emanating from this contact that eventually led to either partially or fully completed applications. One was from a UCDHSC engineering student in his sophomore year, who was eventually hired through the PNV Project to serve on the seasonal interpretive staff at Rocky Mountain National Park. A second student did not

finalize her application plans until RMNP had already completed its summer hiring process. This student was thereupon considered for employment at Bent's Old Fort/Sand Creek, but did not have the personal transportation needed in order to be able to commute from housing in La Junta to the worksite. Not possessing a driver's license, she was therefore also not qualified to fulfill some of the requisite responsibilities of an interpretive staff member at the Fort.

Training and Interpretive Program Development by PNV Participants. As originally proposed (PNV proposal, § 2), PNV student project participants would be students in degree program majors associated with the presentation of cultural resource interpretation programs (e.g., anthropology, sociology, communications, ethnic studies); with the understanding that such participants would already have some of the academic background useful in the preparation of an interpretive program. It was also the original intent of the project that students would be enrolled members of tribes having a traditional cultural affiliation with the park, monument, or historic site at which they would be working.

However, the only timely, successful applicant for the AY 2004-2005 project year was a student for whom neither of these conditions applied (i.e., an engineering student with a Navajo/Choctaw ethnic lineage). However, this student, Robyn Hickman, is someone who since childhood has participated continuously in a wide variety of cultural preservation and enrichment activities associated with his tribal heritage. He has attended many powwows, learned and performed a wide variety of native dances, and has otherwise dedicated much of his life to the continuation of his tribal heritage.

In consultation with the principal investigator regarding the intent of the PNV Project,

therefore, Mr. Hickman made arrangements to spend a week of his orientation time at Rocky Mountain National Park visiting the Northern Arapaho reservation in Wyoming, to learn from elders there what cultural knowledge they thought it most appropriate for him to share with visitors to RMNP by way of inclusion in an interpretive program. Some of these interviews he recorded, which material is to be transcribed for archival purposes.

Activities of Participating NPS Units and the Principal Investigator. Interpretive program administrators at RMNP, as well as its museum curator, worked closely with Mr. Hickman to prepare for and underwrite his journey the Northern Arapaho reservation, and to otherwise help ensure that he would be able to gather cultural knowledge appropriate for inclusion in an interpretive program. Upon his return, staff worked with him to determine how best to incorporate some of what he had learned – as well as his own already quite substantial personal knowledge of traditional indigenous lifeways – into his interpretive programs.

Over the course of the summer, the principal investigator made three site visits to RMNP (1) to consult with and tutor Mr. Hickman in the development of his interpretive program; (2) to consult with interpretive program administrators and staff to promote mutually beneficial interaction between the PNV project and RMNP's existing interpretive activities as they relate to the presentation of cultural knowledge; (3) to witness and evaluate Mr. Hickman's interpretive presentations; and (4) to learn from interpretive program administrators both what they may have found useful in hosting the PNV Project during the summer of 2005, and how they thought the Project might be adjusted or improved in the future.

Project Evaluation and Future Administration. RMNP interpretive program administrators and staff reported that, without question, the most important benefit to

achievement of the park mission of hosting the PNV Project during this start-up year was having on its staff someone who could speak with the authority of personal experience about the role of indigenous cultures in the rich natural and human history of the park. Given Mr. Hickman's personal background and his dedication to the preservation and perpetuation of some of his and other American Indian's tribes' most important traditions, it was generally acknowledged that he did indeed bring a fresh and unique voice to the park's interpretive program that no one else could have. There was also considerable favorable comment on Mr. Hickman's willingness to take the initiative in gathering cultural knowledge appropriate to inclusion in his interpretive program.

In terms of improvements in future program administration, RMNP administrators and staff were equally uniform in their emphasis on the need to initiate PNV Project participant outreach and recruitment much earlier in the project's annual cycle, so that participating NPS units could identify the most qualified applicants hiring decisions in the early spring of the year in which students would be serving as summer seasonal interpretive staff. To that end, RMNP personnel have offered to again take an active role in disseminating PNV outreach materials and information to their contacts within tribes having a traditional cultural affiliation with the park.

Likewise, once funding sources have been at least conditionally secured, the principal investigator will once again conduct outreach to colleges and universities in the region likely to have enrolled students who are members of tribes with traditional cultural affiliations with participating NPS units. If at all possible, the plan is to have these materials disseminated to these educational institutions (including tribal colleges and governments) prior to the end of calendar year 2005.

Also in keeping with advice from RMNP personnel, efforts will be redoubled to solicit applications from students who are members of tribes with the closest affiliation to

participating NPS units, such as various Arapaho, Cheyenne, and Ute tribes. However, outreach materials for AY 2005-2006 will nevertheless retain the same language as the revised edition of last year's materials with regard to this issue: "the Place and Native Voice (PNV) Project is seeking the participation of undergraduate or graduate college and university students who are members of the Arapaho, Cheyenne, and Ute Tribes; and other tribes of the Rocky Mountain Region and western Great Plains". Retaining this language will help to assure a larger applicant pool, and thus increase the likelihood that there will be a sufficient supply of qualified applicants from which to staff the project, in the event that there are not enough qualified applicants from the Arapaho, Cheyenne, or Ute tribes.

Additional advice concerning future administration of the project was rendered by some outreach contacts. Specifically, the director of the UCDHSC Native American Student Center recommended that if there are position-specific requirements for service at a participating NPS unit beyond those called for in the application materials (such as a driver's license and perhaps one's own private transportation), that should somehow be made explicit at some early stage in the application and selection process.