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PLACE AND NATIVE VOICE

INTERIM ANNUAL REPORT, 2009

submitted by

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Introduction and Overview

The Place and Native Voice Project is now in its fifth year of continuous operation. In previous years, an annual report was filed near the end of the calendar year, once student projects had been completed and all Project expenditures had been accounted for. However, this reporting schedule was out of phase with the annual budget request process for NPS-funded projects. As a result, the annual funding process for the PNV Project has been a post-hoc and slightly haphazard one, with no certain knowledge of what next year's level of financial support might be until within two or three months of when the summer program was to begin.

The scope, scale, and momentum of the PNV Project have grown steadily since its founding in 2004, with the RMCESU seed grant made by Christine Whitacre; and thus is now at something of a crossroads. The desire for program participation by NPS units in

the Intermountain Region now substantially exceeds the capacity of the PNV Project to deliver it, as the Project has become better known and has come to be seen as providing a valuable service to participating units in terms of enhancing both their workforce diversity and interpretive program diversity.

The purpose of this interim report, prepared at the request of NPS Intermountain Headquarters, is to seek to remedy this problem by providing a cohesive and integrated estimate of total annual project costs for both the federal employment component and the academic program components of the PNV Project. It is an effort on my part to contribute to making the PNV budgeting process more rational and less ad hoc, and thus to help provide greater program security, stability, and consistency in the future.

It begins with an overview of Project accomplishments to date in the 2009 Project year, with particular emphasis on how supplemental funds made available early this year markedly enhanced its ability to achieve its stated goals. The report then makes some program design modification recommendations based on the experience of administering the Project so far. Finally, it envisions what an integrated annual budget for the PNV Project might look like, based on some alternative funding scenarios.

2009 Project Performance to Date

Based on PNV Project performance so far this, 2009 can be any measure be judged to be the most successful program year since the Project's inception in 2004. For the first time, we have a full complement of PNV interns (4) at participating NPS units throughout the region; and we had several more units requesting PNV interns than we were able to accommodate. Moreover, 3 of these 4 interns are at NPS units (GUMO,

NABR, and WABA) who are participating in the PNV Project for the first time. Thus, we have managed to expand both the diversity of NPS units in the PNV network and the tribal affiliations of the interns hired this year.

At each of my start-of-the-season site visits to these venues in late May, what I also discovered was enthusiastic and engaged support for the PNV Project by everyone from the superintendent to other management staff participating in PNV administration and intern supervision. They were already somewhat knowledgeable of the Project and its goals, and seemed fully committed to ensuring its success at their site. This was particularly heartening for me, since less of my time needed to be devoted to educating management teams from “square one” on the PNV Projects goals and intentions, or on the need to work together as a team to help the Project succeed.

In my view, there are several factors contributing this heightened level of success of the PNV Project so far this year, two of which are directly related to the supplemental funding made available this year. First, the funding allowed for the hiring of a graduate research assistant at the School of Public Affairs, whose time has been divided between supporting Christine Landrum at the NPS regional office and me at the university.

Sheri Michael is completing her Master of Public Administration degree with the program concentration in Environmental Policy, Management, and Law. She is a former school teacher and wilderness ranger with the U.S. Forest Service, and has thus proved to be uniquely qualified to support the Project. She has provided valuable continuing liaison with PNV interns and with their supervisors, handling some matters on her own and referring others to Christine and me. Since both Christine and I have multiple

program responsibilities, Sheri's service has proved invaluable in terms of prompt and effective responses to various PNV administrative matters as they have arisen.

Second, I used some of this supplemental funding to hire a website consultant to help me completely redesign and upgrade the PNV website. In addition to being far more aesthetically appealing, it is also a great deal more functional than the previous site. It (a) provides more in-depth information about the PNV Project; (b) upgrades the site's use as a recruiting mechanism and facilitates the application process for prospective interns and their supervisors; and (c) does a far better job of showcasing both the interns' Project presentations and my accompanying research essays on the environmental and spiritual history of tribes affiliated with participating NPS units. These materials are now presented on the PNV website in the form of an online anthology: *Sustainability and the Sacred: An Anthology of Teachings on Indigenous Peoples and National Parklands*. This is an ongoing, ever-expanding electronic publication to which all present and future interns' work will be added. It is also worth noting that, having made available some PNV funding for this purpose, the School of Public Affairs matched this website development funding dollar for dollar, inasmuch as the PNV Project in general and the website in particular reflects positively on the school. We use the same consultant for other projects at SPA.

Third, our outreach to NPS units in the intermountain region was also significantly enhanced this year. Having Christine Landrum as my NPS counterpart in PNV Project administration seems to be enormously beneficial, in that she is in regular and active contact with NPS units in the region on matters of cultural resource

interpretation and tribal liaison, which – along with NPS workforce enhancement – is central to the mission of the PNV Project.

What turns out to have been another significant enhancement of our outreach efforts was my being invited to make a presentation on the PNV Project at a convocation of chiefs of interpretation from throughout the region held at Intermountain regional headquarters in the spring of 2009. I had an opportunity to provide them with a guided tour of the new website, and field a great many questions on program administration. This presentation seemed to be instrumental in interesting the three new participating NPS units in the PNV Project in applying for an intern.

Based on this level of engagement and enthusiasm from NPS units applying for internship positions, we were also able to meet another important design goal of the PNV Project from its inception, which is to strengthen the consultative relationship between NPS units and tribes having a traditional cultural or historical affiliation with their venues. In most cases this year, the PNV interns hired were initially identified and encouraged to apply by interpretive chiefs at the participating units.

Building on Successes and Planning for the Future

In the past, outreach and recruiting tended to be a somewhat uneven process, in that the funding was also indeterminate, both in terms of how many interns we might be able to hire and how my own financial support for the academic program component of the Project would be secured. The more students hired, the more extensive needs to be my supervising and mentoring activities – including site visits to the interns' places of assignment. Additionally, participating NPS units did not know until relatively late in the

process whether they would be able to make a hire (or re-hire of an existing intern).

Below I make some programmatic recommendations for addressing this problem. Then the final section of this report provides some budget estimates, by way of doing my part to bring greater rationality and cohesion to longer-term PNV program planning.

Program Continuity and Participation Commitments to Participating PNV

Units. Every year, when we are encouraging NPS units to participate in the PNV Project and students to apply for internships, one question that always arises is for what period of time they can participate. Participating units can be understandably reluctant to participate if they expend all the effort necessary to train a new seasonal employee for this unique position and adjust their interpretive program schedules to accommodate PNV intern programs if they have no assurance that their investment might yield benefits beyond the season for which the intern is hired.

On the other hand, if PNV internships only go to participating units that have received them in the past, it discourages other units from applying and thereby narrows the diversity of NPS units and ethnic lineages showcased on the PNV site. Internal to PNV program administration, we have debated off and on over the years how to find a balance point on this question.

What I propose we do now is to formalize the general assurance we have been making so far: that if the hosting of a PNV intern is deemed to be a success (defined as adequate support for PNV goals and training/supervision of interns at any participating unit, and submission of the student's project by the end of the calendar year), that unit should enjoy the presumption of being able to reappoint the same intern the following summer. If that intern is unavailable, the unit should enjoy the presumption of

identifying and employing another suitable intern. This formalized understanding should increase the confidence level of would-be participating units, as well as letting them know that their support for and fostering of the Project and its interns will be essential to being funded for a second year.

However, it should also be understood that NPS units are eligible for a usual maximum of two years' participation in the program. By the end of this period, if the PNV intern has proved to be a worthy and valuable employee, it should be incumbent on the participating unit to identify other funds to support their continued employment. What this does is to ensure a steady, rotational supply of openings for other NPS units and students to apply. It thereby also steadily adds to the diversity of NPS units and ethnic lineages of interns being portrayed on the PNV website.

In so doing, the PNV website may come to be seen as a valuable adjunct to the NPS public education mission. Visiting the website may encourage those viewing it to actually visit the participating NPS units being portraying. The website can also provide viewers with a fairly significant intercultural educational experience, in terms of developing a greater appreciation of contributions of indigenous peoples to our knowledge of how to live wisely on the lands we share.

Budget Planning: Possibilities and Contingencies.

Two tables are appended to this narrative: one based on the funding of the program at its current size (4 PNV interns per summer); and the other based upon the possibility of a 50% expansion in the program (from 4 interns to six). As stated above, in many respects this fifth year of the PNV Project to date has been its most successful. We

have a full complement of four interns; and three of the four venues at which they are working are participating in the PNV Project for the first time. The enthusiasm level among both the interns and their supervisors seems high, and I'm looking forward to a variety of creative new website contributions by the interns.

Also as noted above, the supplemental funding the PNV Project received this year was instrumental to this success. For this reason, the two budget tables appended to this report are for "best case scenarios" in terms of financial support for the program. The following sections of this narrative explain each of the major line items in these tables.

Academic Personnel. Every year since the PNV Project began, I have devoted the equivalent to one full month's work effort to the PNV Project—about two thirds of that in the summer doing site visits, counseling interns, and coordinating administration of the Project with their supervisors and with the NPS Intermountain regional offices. The other third of that time I have expended in spring term recruiting, meetings at NPS Intermountain headquarters, and associated outreach activities. Thus, for most of the first four years of the Project I was donating a substantial portion of my time. I also chose not to draw some of my summer salary in years when we were unable to recruit many interns, since I wasn't spending as much time making site visits and training students.

However, 2009 is the first year I have actually been able to fund my involvement at a level commensurate with my activities. Thus, the budget estimate for next year likewise reflects support for this level of effort: one month of summary salary if we have four interns; and 1.5 months if we have six interns.

Having a research assistant, who supported both Christine Landrum at the Intermountain headquarters and me at the university, has also been hugely beneficial. She has gradually taken on more of the day-to-day routine administrative aspects of the Project, freeing me up to spend more time working with interns and doing additional research germane to my drafting of the research essays for the *Sustainability and the Sacred* anthology on the website. Therefore, the other line item in the academic personnel category is for research assistant support for the same duration we were able to have it in 2009: half-time for both the spring and summer academic terms.

Site Visits. My site visits this year averaged about \$650 apiece; which I increased slightly in next year's estimate, anticipating a rise in both air travel and car rental costs.

Website. Now that the website has been developed, it will need only periodic updating in the future, in addition to the payment of monthly fees to the website host. [In order to avoid the myriad complications associated with hosting the site on either University of Colorado or National Park Service servers, the site is hosted on an independent third party site]. The site was developed using very capable shareware; and a modest contribution to its developers is also being paid, inasmuch as periodic upgrades to the software are also offered free of charge.

Materials. At each of my site visits, I gather research materials not commonly available elsewhere, concerning the relationship of indigenous peoples to the site I am visiting.

Intern Reservation Visits. It is evidently easier to finance intern travel to their reservations for the purpose of consulting with their elders through the University of

Colorado than through the National Park Service. Therefore, those costs are included in this budget estimate.

Intern Tuition for Enrollment in PAD 6910. This line item is included in the budget estimate with a budget figure of zero, in that the School of Public Affairs, University of Colorado's contribution to the PNV Project is to waive tuition. Tuition for one three-semester unit course at the School of Public Affairs is approximately \$1,300. Thus, this year this waiver saved the PNV Project approximately \$5,200.

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As noted, these attached budget estimates are best-case scenarios for full funding of the PNV Project at both its current scope and at a 50% expanded scope. If full funding at these levels does not prove feasible for the upcoming calendar year, please consult with me concerning where and how savings might be found.