**Exploring Tribal Sovereignty through Native Case Studies**

By

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**Abstract:** *Problem-based learning with Native case studies can enhance Native student success and deepen all students understanding of the issues facing Indian people today and the important contributions of Native Americans. In many academic disciplines this is a glaring omission in the curriculum. This article describes the Enduring Legacies Project that is making a contribution to filling that void by producing original Native case studies and teaching notes. Many of these cases describe the numerous ways tribes are exercising sovereignty and building their communities. With more than 100 cases in its collection, the Enduring Legacies collection (*[*http://nativecases.evergreen.edu*](http://nativecases.evergreen.edu)*) is a major open source resource that is being widely used in colleges and high schools. The combination of an empowering pedagogy and culturally relevant content on important issues in Indian Country is what makes this approach highly successful with students, teachers, and tribal leaders who see this as an important way to tell their stories. It is an effective method for building student capacity to analyze critical issues facing Native Americans and our society as a whole.*

**Why Cases? Why Native Cases?**

Case studies are a form of problem-based learning that is gaining traction in many colleges and universities. The method is not new but its widespread adoption and adaptation to new audiences and purposes is new. The research indicates case-based learning is effective in promoting student learning and success (Prince and Felder, 2007). This article describes the Enduring Legacies Project, a major initiative developing teaching cases on major contemporary issues in Indian country.

Case teaching in American education began at Harvard University more than 100 years ago. Harvard’s early case studies focused primarily on business and legal issues and later spread into other parts of the University, especially the social sciences. The underlying premise of using cases and other forms of problem-based learning is that real world problems and engaging teaching methods will motivate students and promote higher order reasoning. As Clyde Herreid, director of one of the largest case study centers, the National Center for Case Study Teaching in Science (NCCSTS) at the University of Buffalo, points out, the innovation at Harvard

was to use real-world problems and bring them to the classroom as exemplars of the complexity that students would face upon graduation. These problems…were cast into stories….What made the case problems interesting was not just the puzzle that had to be solved but the storyline itself…that created empathy…had dialogue and generality, were current and relevant to the reader, and required dilemmas to be solved (Herreid, 2011)

Effective cases are about a significant issue, often an unresolved issue that can trigger curiosity, debate, and further research. They involve controversy, conflicts, or puzzling situations and have enough tension to invite discussion and problem solving. Cases, through various forms of story-telling, are a major learning methodology in indigenous societies, making case-teaching methods particularly useful for Native learners.

A big boost to the overall field of problem-based learning came with the establishment of a national center for problem-based learning (PBL) across the disciplines at the University of Delaware twenty years ago (see Duch, et.al, 2001 and Schwartz, et. al., 2001). The national centers at Buffalo and Delaware continue to play a critical role in disseminating problem-based learning and case study teaching throughout the country and, indeed, across the world. In the past several decades, the case study movement has expanded through new organizations and projects, often around particular academic disciplines such as public administration (Electronic Hallway), biology (the BioQUEST Project ), and through new collaborations among these projects such as the Science Case Network (<http://sciencecasenet.org>)

The Enduring Legacies Native Cases Project started with a concern about specific unmet student needs in the academy, specifically for Native American students. Many tribal leaders recognize that community development, tribal sustainability, and education go hand in hand. As the movement to enhanced tribal self-governance continues to grow and more tribes are taking advantage of the opportunities to manage their own affairs, they need many more Indian managers and administrators with appropriate credentials and experience. Since the overall Native American population is young, this is an urgent issue right now and dramatic improvements in Indian education are needed.

Susan Faircloth and John Tippeconnic’s 2010 study of the dropout/graduation crisis among American Indians and Alaska Natives is appropriately sub-titled “Failure to Respond Places the Future of Native People at Risk.” (Faircloth and Tippeconnic, 2010) Their study of 12 states, including the seven states with the highest percentage of American Indian and Alaska Native students and five states in the Pacific and Northwest draws a disturbing picture: on average less than 50% of the Native students are graduating from high school each year. With high drop out rates from high school, the pipeline to college is severely restricted.

Several other recent in-depth studies, one on Washington State and the other on California, clearly demonstrate that whole system reform is necessary in both K-12 and at all levels of higher education (Akweks, et. al, 2009; Pavel, et al., 2009; and Proudit and Gregor, 2014). These studies also describe a variety of effective approaches that could be scaled up and more widely adopted. While overall American Indian/Alaska Native student college participation rates are rising nationally (though not fast enough), persistence and graduation rates remain too low. Recognizing these long-term trends, some states such as Washington have set long-term higher education goals to achieve parity for underrepresented populations to counter the growing inequality in the overall student population and the society as a whole. Their goals will be challenging to meet.

In a provocative article Emily Style wrote about how the curriculum functions as an important lens on the world (Style, 1988). She contends it should function as both a window and a mirror. Windows provide students with new learning and new perspectives on the world. Mirrors, in which they see themselves and their own world and issues, give students a sense of belonging and personal validation. Mirrors and windows are embedded everywhere in the academy—in the curriculum, in the people, in the support systems, and in the physical structures of the place. Native students, we believe, find many windows but few mirrors: this, in part, accounts for the lack of educational success.

A comprehensive old but (unfortunately) still relevant study by the *Indian Nations at Risk Task Force* attributes poor educational attainment of Native students to a variety of factors: unfriendly school climates that fail to promote academic, social, cultural and spiritual development; curriculum presented from a purely European perspective; low expectations and relegation to low ability tracks that result in poor academic achievement; loss of native language ability and the wisdom of older generations; teachers with inadequate skills and training; limited library and learning resources; lack of native educators as role models; lack of opportunity for parents and communities to develop a real sense of participation; overt and subtle racism in schools combined with a lack of multicultural focus; limited access to colleges and universities because of insufficient preparation and funding, and limited use of computers and other technological tools (Indian Nations at Risk, 1991).

More recently, a 2008 report produced by the National Caucus of Native American State Legislators called for their colleagues in every state to step up to close the achievement gap, citing a broad range of needed policy changes in the distribution of resources, teacher recruitment and retention, parental involvement, and readiness that would make a difference (National Caucus of Native American State Legislators, 2008).

The research on Indian education consistently suggests that effective teaching and learning should include cultural specificity, community involvement and support, appropriate role models, and addressing community needs (Indian Nations at Risk, 1991). There is some suggestion that the scholarship on Native student success is shifting from a deficit model-perspective to an achievement model that focuses on using already existing best practices to build Native student success (Akweks, et. al., 2009, 11). These best practices include strong family support, mentors, clear goals and personal motivation, institutional support, academic preparation and academic integration, and a bicultural orientation (Akweks et. al, 2009, 12).

Recognizing this, our work began with a studied recognition that the existing curriculum had many gaps, especially when looked at from the standpoint of our current students and especially our Native students. Much of the curriculum about Native Americans, if it exists at all, is historical with no mention of the enormous changes that have taken place in the last 40 years. Being situated where we are, we were particularly aware of the void in the curriculum about the Pacific Northwest Tribes. For example, few of the many environmental studies courses in our region’s colleges contained any substantial discussion of the central roles of Native Americans in current environmental issues. How could this be when Northwest tribes have been and continue to be leaders in the salmon restoration efforts! And this is just one example. Native studies in general is often siloed off to a single course or a department when, in fact, the issues are complex and interdisciplinary and have a rightful place in many areas of the curriculum. The departmental structure of the academy has been an impediment in many ways since it often narrowly shapes much of the existing material and absolves the rest of us from any responsibility for teaching about significant Native issues.

**Brief history of Enduring Legacies Project**

The Enduring Legacies Initiative began at Evergreen State College in 2005 as part of a larger initiative to serve Native American communities in Western Washington. The original partners in the project included two tribal colleges, Northwest Indian College and Salish Kootenai College, and a local community college, Grays Harbor College. Grays Harbor was involved because they developed an Associate of Arts bridge program to closely articulate with Evergreen’s upper division, reservation-based BA program. The Native cases became a key part of the reservation based program curriculum at both Evergreen and Grays Harbor, and they served as test sites for the new cases. Partner institutions also produced cases and held faculty training sessions with a common goal of exposing large numbers of their faculty to case teaching. They were very successful in this endeavor.

As the project expanded other colleges and universities and Indian organizations became partners as well. These included the University of Alaska-Fairbanks and the University of Alaska-Anchorage, the National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA), and Peninsula College which developed a Native studies program to serve the tribes along the northern Olympic Peninsula in Washington State. Each of these partners brought specific expertise and interests to the project and contributed new resources and energy to the work and the case collection as it continued to grow.

The Enduring Legacies Initiative has a threefold focus on 1) producing original teaching cases on significant issues in Indian Country, 2) faculty development so teachers can learn to successfully use cases, and 3) widely disseminating the cases. We believed that a case-based curriculum on contemporary issues that were important to Indian people and their communities would empower and engage students and create stronger connections between tribal communities and the academy. We hoped that faculty would be willing to learn new teaching approaches and redesign their curriculum to use these cases. At Evergreen we saw this new curriculum resource as an important part of our overall interdisciplinary undergraduate and graduate programs, especially our Native studies programs and our three graduate programs in public administration (with a special concentration in tribal administration), environmental studies, and education.

With generous funding from the Lumina Foundation for Education, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and the National Science Foundation, the Enduring Legacies initiative began with a brainstorm session with 40 tribal leaders and educators to identify important topics that should be in the college curriculum The brainstorm session quickly yielded a list of dozens of issues that could be turned into case studies in a variety of subject areas including education, health and wellness, economic development, natural resources, and cultural preservation. The participants then prioritized the list that became an important resource for establishing the direction and focus of the new initiative. Over the next decade, the Enduring Legacies Project produced more than 100 case studies and teaching notes on a variety of interdisciplinary topics and held summer institutes and workshops for faculty to learn how to use them. At last count, we know that more than 90 colleges and universities are using these cases, as well as some high schools, but we know this is a low count since we cannot effectively track usage of this open source resource that can be freely downloaded off the web.

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| **Looking at Tribal Sovereignty & Contemporary Issues through Cases:****A short sampler****The Salmon Series** The on-going story of the salmon is central to understanding the history and current issues of the Pacific Northwest Indian people. A series of interdisciplinary cases provides historical and contemporary perspectives on these issues. Sample case titles include: * [Ancestral Roots and Changing Landscapes: The Impact of Seattle’s Development on the Salish People of Central Puget Sound](http://nativecases.evergreen.edu/collection/cases/ancestral-roots-changing-landscapes.html)
* [Native Fishing Practices and Dissolved Oxygen in Hood Canal](http://nativecases.evergreen.edu/collection/cases/native-fishing-practices.html)
* River Flow for Riparian Health
* Co-Management of Puget Sound Salmon
* Salmon Contamination on the Columbia River
* Back to the Future: Dam removal and Native Salmon Restoration on the Elwha River
* Dam Removal on the Elwha River: Salmon Recovery, the Restoration of Klallam Livelihoods and the Role of Cost-Benefit Analysis
* Pacific Northwest [Salmon Habitat: The Culvert Case and the Power of Treaties](http://nativecases.evergreen.edu/collection/cases/pacific-northwest-salmon-habitat.html)
* Darkness to Dawn: Columbia River Native Tribes’ Science and Salmon Restoration Success
* Pebbles of Gold or Salmon of Time: Pebble Mine and the Cultural and Environmental Economics of Alaska Natives

**Education Reform**. Building effective tribal communities often includes a focus on improving the education system. Sample **c**ase titles that tell the story of improvement efforts including: * Making the high school diploma mean something
* Whose History should be taught?
* Waiting Patiently 500 years
* Since Time Immemorial: Developing Tribal Sovereignty Curriculum for Washington’s Schools
* Enhancing Native Student Achievement: What Works?
* Should Indian Mascots be Repealed?
* Two schools, one culture
* Honoring our Children: Acceptance within the Indian Community

 **Landmark Cases in Pursuing Sovereignty and Cultural Preservation.** Sample case titles include: * The Will of the People: Citizenship in the Osage Nation
* It’s in Our Treaty: The Right to Whale
* Tsi-Whit-Zen: An Ancient Village Reclaimed, Territory Taken but not Forgotten
* Back to the Bison: The Confederated Salish-Kootenai [Tribes and the National Bison Range](http://nativecases.evergreen.edu/collection/cases/back-to-the-bison.html)
* When our Water Returns: Gila River Indian Community [and Diabetes](http://nativecases.evergreen.edu/collection/cases/when-our-water-returns.html)

The Enduring Legacies website is at <http://nativecases.evergreen.edu>. The case collection can be searched by title, theme, tribe, and academic discipline. All cases come with detailed teaching notes. The entire collection is open source.  |
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**Educational theories** **underlying case teaching**

While the development of culturally relevant content in the form of case studies was important to us, we recognized that pedagogy also makes a big difference. We wanted to use engaging and empowering forms of teaching and learning that built a sense of community and developed multiple skills in students. The Enduring Legacies pedagogy is probably best described as a convergence of three educational approaches: problem-based learning, and collaborative learning, and our own version of a Native-centric place-based learning.

*Problem-based learning*. Case studyteaching is one type of problem-based learning (PBL). The basic principle underlying all forms of problem-based learning is that learning is stimulated by a problem or puzzle the learner wants to solve. (Duch, et. al., p. 6) The various forms of PBL pose problems for students to identify, research, analyze, and resolve. The approach builds skills in working with others and with organizing information. Students will usually better retain the learning because it is an issue that is learned and understood in a real world context. (Duch et. al., p. 7)

*Collaborative learning.*  While cases can be taught using a traditional lecture with little to no student interaction, we believe using cases with collaborative learning approaches has clear advantages. Research indicates that collaborative learning is superior to the lecture format in fostering meaningful and lasting learning (Herreid, 2011; Davidson and Worsham, 1992; Tinto, Goodsell and Maher, 1992; and Kohn, 1986). It also builds a variety of other skills that are transferable and needed in the workplace such as teamwork, critical thinking, listening to others, and working to solve problems. There are many different types of collaborative learning and a large literature that usefully describes approaches, implementation, and impact including *Collaborative Learning Techniques* (2005) by Barkley, Cross and Major, *Lecture-Free Teaching* by Bonnie Wood, *Enhancing Thinking through Cooperative Learning* by Davidson and Worsham, *Start with a Story* (2007) and *Science Stories* (2012) by C. F. Herreid and others, to mention a few. Small group discussion, role-playing, jig saw seminars, and debate are some of the commonly used forms of collaborative learning with cases.

*Place-based learning*. While the term place-based learning is often applied primarily to educational approaches that take students into the community through service projects, we think of our case initiative as a form of Native-centric place-based learning because we share common assumptions and goals. We believe focusing on issues relevant to the student’s personal lives and communities will be personally and intellectually engaging as a means to fuel student learning and achievement. Place-based learning builds knowledge about local communities and their issues and promotes community vitality and sustainability. Place-based learning also recognizes the diversity that exists in the world, and the 566 federally recognized tribes are very diverse. While many significant issues such as economic development, health and wellness, and climate change affect most communities, the power of their individual stories is often contained in the details of how issues are framed and confronted. Students invariably find case studies about their own regions highly engaging and the lessons transferable to their own communities.

**Faculty development**

For many educators, using cases is a new approach to teaching. Our project recognizes this by offering substantial opportunities for teachers to learn how to use cases effectively. Two and three day residential summer institutes have been offered for the past ten years. Typical institutes include faculty from 10 different colleges and universities. High school teachers are also encouraged to attend. The Native Case collection is an excellent companion to Washington’s Tribal Sovereignty curriculum ([www.indian-ed.org](http://www.indian-ed.org)), which is being widely adopted. Interdisciplinary teams are especially encouraged since we believe this will lead to wider understanding and adoption of the approach.

**Situating cases in your courses**

Cases are being used in many different courses using a wide variety of teaching approaches. They are used in both face-to-face and online courses, in small and large classes, and in a variety of academic disciplines. Embedding case teaching in standard required courses in general education is one approach that ensures wide use. Standard required courses such as English Composition are a frequent site of case use in our state. Many colleges also have first year seminars that can easily accommodate case-based learning. Clyde Herreid’s National Center on Case Teaching in Science has worked for many years with cases in science courses and has a large collection of cases keyed to central topics in various scientific disciplines (see Herreid, 2007 and Herreid et. al., 2012). The Enduring Legacies Project also has a large number of science cases. Most of our interdisciplinary cases can be adapted to different academic disciplines simply by changing the questions students are asked to address.

Cases can frame the major content of a course by connecting multiple cases around the course theme, topic, or problem. This creates opportunities for problem solving and a major transfer of responsibility for learning to participants. In an introductory or broad overview course, multiple cases can be used to introduce and orient students to the facets of a new subject area like American Indian education policy, or Indian fisheries and energy in the Northwest, or introduction to Native studies.

Cases can be adapted to a number of alternative structures for embedding them in a course. For example, a course could begin and end with a case. The first case functions to orient students to the subject matter and course objectives. A pre-class assignment for working a case opens the door to facilitating a discussion during the first class meeting. The initial case targets three important facets of learning:

* Discovery of key points, people, motivating factors, and dynamic elements in the context
* Determination of the nature of a conflict, collaboration, issue or significant event and
* Introduction of a mode of analysis, methodology or analytical technique

The ending case links information to problem-solving by targeting applied analytical, summative, innovative, and/or resolution skills. An ending case is structured so that class participants select and apply a mode of analysis or generate alternatives. Ending cases may follow a decision-process through the stages of analysis, discussion, justification and resolution in a summary application of course learning.

In courses that are developed in a sequence of increasing complexity, multiple cases allow deeper reflection. In a course like tribal-state relations, for example, the sequence may move from historical context and descriptions to social, legal and economic analysis. Another potential use of multiple cases is in courses that follow a policy process in a series of events occurring across time with several institutions. The sequence may move from agency policy formation, public meetings, legislative process, trials, and applied administration. An introductory course in tribal sovereignty can be designed with multiple cases.

Full term, or even all-year courses can be designed around problem-based learning with cases. Cases are an effective way to demonstrate the interdisciplinary nature of problem-solving through cases linked by a common problem and a progressive shift in complexity. Cases work especially well for team-building over longer time spans. Written work and out-of-class research assignments attached to cases builds writing and research skills. Rich opportunities to supplement cases are to be had through speakers, field trips, surveys and lab work.

Finally, multiple cases can be embedded in courses designed with a particular sequence of events. The first case works to identify all the parts: events, people and subject areas where information is needed. Students divide tasks for information-gathering and seek out the information. They may discuss findings, make presentations, produce posters, share opinions and approach further analysis. In subsequent cases, they may seek resolution, conduct reviews, identify different approaches, examine and compare decision processes, and evaluate outcomes.

**Assessing the impact of cases**

Several questions are typically asked about using cases: first, how are students assessed when you use cases, and what do we know about the impact of using cases? The most substantial research on the impact of cases has been done in the sciences (see, for example, Lundeberg. 1999; Lundeberg and Yadav, 2006; Lundeberg, 2008; Prince and Felder 2007). The results generally indicate that when compared to conventional teaching approaches, cases improve retention, attendance, reasoning and problem solving, high-order reasoning skills, the ability to make objective judgments, the ability to identify relevant issues and multiple perspectives, and awareness of ethical issues (Prince and Felder, 2007). These studies also indicate that this depends strongly on the character of the assessment tasks given with assignments that include higher order reasoning making the largest difference.

In her substantial assessment work, Lundeberg makes an important observation about gaps in the current research:

Studies that examine gender and cultural similarities and differences in learning are needed. Because faculty use cases in a multitude of ways and use different kinds of cases, we need more research investigating the different kinds of cases…What kinds of cases are most relevant to students and does relevance matter, in terms of understanding?...How do students interact with the case, or with others, for learning to occur? How the instructor interacts with students also matters and we have very few studies of classroom instruction at the undergraduate level.….Does case pedagogy improve the ability of undergraduates to articulate and address urgent global issues affecting our physical and social environments? (Lundeberg 2008)

The Native cases project is singular in its focus on a particular student population so the results of this project are important. Much additional research is needed but do know some things about how faculty are assessing the impact of Native cases and what both faculty and students say about the impact of using cases.

We’ve learned that faculty use many different approaches to assess student learning. Of course this is somewhat dependent on how they employ cases in their classes and their goals. A simple way to assess student learning immediately after doing a case is through in-class reflection questions. This has become standard practice whenever we use cases. Questions we ask students to respond to are typically about the substance of the case and the major lessons and new learning from the case. We also ask students to assess the group process. There are a number of tools available for assessing the performance of groups. These reflections are usually done in class immediately after they finish doing the case and handed in. This assessment is especially helpful when collaborative work is done since it provides a quick way of seeing each student’s learning. Since one of our case based courses is based on a theme (examples include tribal administration, Indian activism, ethics for tribal vitality, sustainability, economic development) each quarter, we can look back at student’s reflections over the entire quarter and assess their cumulative learning related to that theme. We can also see their growth in working in teams from their group process assessments.

Public presentations of their conclusions is another assessment approach that we use. Requiring public presentations of their conclusions keeps their work focused, creates group accountability, and shares results. This is particularly useful when the teaching approach divides students into multiple groups with different tasks or questions. Reporting out provides peer-to-peer learning and sharing and builds skills in public speaking as well. Students initially report that this public performance is terrifying but they quickly become comfortable doing this.

Having students produce a product is another approach. This can be done using conventional approaches through papers and/or exams (Herreid, 2006). Some faculty have students do pre-and post case writing as a way of gauging their knowledge about a subject. One of our faculty at Salish Kootenai reported that she uses a case as a capstone, final exam project in her Environmental Ethics course. This is often as a take home assignment where students apply the ethical theories they have learned to a case they have not yet read. In our program we use a similar approach as a mid term exam where students write short cases on ethical issues in the workplace.

**Student Views of the Impact of Cases**.

Students give various reasons why they enjoy and learn from cases. **They especially enjoy the collaborative small group method and learning from one another**. As one student put it “the class benefited by encouraging students to work with co-students with similar yet different work experience. This really helped me during various discussions. “

Another student said, “breaking up a large group into 6/8 people at round tables is a real advantage.  This way each person is allowed to share their views and opinions and the discussion can go into more detail because there are fewer people involved.  Other amazing things can happen at those round table discussions.  Our last case study was *Indian Fishing Practices* *and Dissolved Oxygen in Hood Canal*.  I happened to be sitting at a table with a very young, intelligent fisherman.  Despite his young age, he has been crabbing and fishing for many years.  There was also an older fisherman at our table who was relatively inexperienced because he just started his fishing career a few years ago.  The young fisherman knew the scientific data presented inside and out.  He took the time to explain the scientific facts of the case to us in a way we could more easily understand.  During this process, I observed the older fisherman have one of those “aha moments.”  You could see him thinking ‘wow, this fishing can be turned into a real learning experience and this scientific data really does apply directly to my life as a fisherman.’  I really enjoyed being able to witness the exchange that took place between the fishermen at my table.”

**Cases can be an effective way to celebrate and meet Indian leaders**. Students were especially enthusiastic when tribal leaders joined the case sessions. We were fortunate to have Micah McCarty, then Tribal Chairman of the Makah Nation, present the case on Makah Whaling. James Jaime, Executive Director of the Quileute Tribe, co-led the session on the land dispute between his tribe and the Olympic National Park with student-author Larry Ralston.

A number of our cases were written by or about Native leaders, such as the director of Indian Education at the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction and State Representative John McCoy, a legislator from the Tulalip Tribe. Some of these leaders came to class and led the class discussion. Many students noted how much they appreciated just getting to know the “big players” in Indian Country. Without exception, these leaders encouraged the students to step up and accept their roles as future leaders in Indian country. The visitors were highly enthused about seeing so many Native students and watching them work the case.

**Students say that a strong feature of our cases has been their relevance to current issues and students personal lives and work.**  Since most of our students work in their tribal communities, the discussions often generate information and solutions that can be quickly acted upon. As one student remarked, “Sometimes our case studies provide information that I can immediately use in my job with my tribe.  During one case study, we discussed some Indian Child Welfare (ICW) issues.  I brought some of that information back and shared it with several people at my tribe.  Now we have organized a group of people who will visit another tribe’s ICW program with the hopes of improving our own.  That never would have happened had I not attended that class.”

The project’s external evaluator interviewed the students and said that the “cases were seen as especially helpful in showing students that many tribes face similar issues. They don’t always see this bigger picture from their own tribal perspective.”

**Another interesting aspect students often mention is how cases help them learning how to engage productively in difficult dialogues.**  One student observed that “another case study discussed tribal enrollment issues.  I was reluctant to attend this session because I know people have very strong emotional opinions about this topic.  I feared some people would be deeply offended before the session ended.  I was pleasantly surprised that everyone’s opinion was allowed to be expressed and we all listened with great respect.  What really grabbed my heart was the deep, genuine concern everyone held for those that would be left out.  This turned out to be my favorite case study thus far.”

**Empowerment and finding voice was a common theme among students**. One woman said, “I was reluctant to go to these Battlegrounds classes at first because I never wanted to be involved in Intergovernmental issues. Plus, I've always been a person that is quiet and standoff-ish, more of a follower. But after going to these classes a few times I realized that everyone gets to be involved and express their own views, and it is accepted.

Some of the issues in the case studies really got my blood pressure boiling and I realized that we don't just have to sit back and take it when something is going on that is wrong. I've always felt like a nobody and didn't think that anything I had to say would matter. But after hearing about the things that have been going on and seeing how people can stand up for their rights, I realized that this class has been really good for me…the encouragement from everyone, especially the staff, has been great. I didn't realize that by doing these case studies it helped with changing things for the better in each case, which really made me feel good about being involved in the class.”

Another student said, “I’m on fire about Battlegrounds. This is the bread and butter of what we are here for. They hit a heartstring with me. The approach I take is to empower the work Natives are doing. I love to see a discussion turn from ‘here they are picking on us Natives again’ to ‘we can take charge.’ As we become empowered, we will end up feeling like an asset to our communities. This builds my self esteem.” (Smith, 2008)

**Faculty Views on the Impact of Cases**.

The response of the hundreds of faculty we have worked with is overwhelmingly positive to the using Native cases. Participating in actually doing cases at one of our faculty workshops is often important in really understanding how to implement collaborative learning in the classroom and getting confident with the methodology. Clear directions is always critical in small group work.

The following faculty stories about their use of cases is indicative of some of the many ways cases are used:

Last year I decided to add a sustainability module to the Univ. of Alaska Fairbanks

allied health core chemistry course. I used two lectures, one on sustainable development

and one on the carbon cycle. In lab, we did a carbon cycle lab exercise and in a second lab period the students discussed the Pebble Mine Project.  We used the Case Study on the Pebble Mine dispute, which was developed by Evergreen State College's Native Cases Project as the prelab reading exercise. The students used the case study as the basis for their Science and Society lab essay. The case study was well received by the students and led to very good essays.

 –Chemistry faculty at U of Alaska-Fairbanks

Another faculty member said she teaches a course called Critical Thinking and Social Consciousness through Film and used cases in that course.

We cover race, LGBTQ, corporations/economics/government, and other topics of social concern.  My go to case during the LGBTQ section is *Honoring our Children: Acceptance within the Indian Community* by Vivian Arviso.  It not only provides a small view into Indian County, but also lets the students see that we struggle with similar issues as the dominate world.

A science teacher at a local community colleges says,

I have used the case study in my oceanography class at SPSCC and it brings up issues about misconceptions on salmon management as well as personal attitudes. As long as we focus on the facts, the class as a whole is able to put those aside and come up with a solution. We usually break up into groups and have each group come up with what the issues are and mini solutions. Then as a whole class we whittle down the solution or the essence of what we can all agree upon. It is like creating our own totem pole!

Another English teacher at a tribal college said,

I have been looking for a method of teaching that truly forces students to apply their in-class thinking to solve real world problems beyond the classroom walls. The Native Cases provide high stake scenarios that demand leadership, creative thinking, debate, collaboration, and elaboration from the students engaged in them. I can personally say that abstract concepts and terms such as "Tribal Sovereignty" and "Federal Policy" never registered much with myself and my students until we clashed over them in the context of the Native Cases. Students became animated, irritated, impassioned, and in the end suddenly empathetic with their opposition. They became great ambassadors for their causes and great diplomats toward their critics. In my opinion, teaching with Native Cases is the closest one can get a classroom toward real world experience. Any teacher serious about taking the many lofty ethereal notions of academia and grounding them in real world applications for their students must teach these cases.

At Evergreen we use Native Cases in many different programs. In the Reservation-based program we offer a totally case-based course called “Battlegrounds in Indian Country” which combines students in the upper division Evergreen program and the lower division Associate of Arts degree bridge programs at Grays Harbor College and Peninsula College. The program director, Cindy Marchand Cecil observes that cases have been an important element of the overall program design:

The Battlegrounds class mixes up students at our multiple reservation sites and the lower division and upper division students. This creates a wider set of peer relations and role models and has been a significant way of increasing motivation to stay in school and graduate. It also builds student skills in collaborative learning and the transfer of knowledge about important issues in Indian Country across reservations sites.

Case themes each quarter are tied to the overall theme of the upper division core course. Several of the assignments in the core courses have included having students write cases. Exemplary student cases are featured in an end-of-quarter case symposium. The Ethics for Tribal Vitality quarter and the quarter focused on Tribal Economic Development both produced strong cases and a student casebook that was widely distributed.

Other feedback from faculty on the impact of using cases comes from faculty surveys of those attending summer institutes and workshops. In a recent survey, the respondents reported very positive results with large majorities agreeing with the following statements about impact:

* Students learn to view issues from multiple perspectives-97% agree
* Students are more engaged-93% agree
* Students develop stronger critical thinking skills-90% agree
* Students have a better grasp of the practical applications of core course concepts-89% agree
* Students strengthen communication skills-85% agree
* Students develop positive peer-to-peer relationships-78% agree
* Students gain confidence working in groups-61% agree

Additional benefits of using cases reported by smaller numbers of faculty include attendance increasing, fewer students failing or withdrawing, and student evaluations of faculty becoming more positive.

When asked more specifically about the impact of NATIVE cases the respondents pointed to several noteworthy dimensions:

* Students gain understanding of important issues in Indian Country-100% agree
* Native cases raise awareness of non-Native students about Native perspectives and issues-100% agree
* Native cases enhance the scientific curriculum for Native students-100% agree
* Students feel the curriculum is more culturally relevant- 83% agree

**Conclusion**

Native cases have proven to be a very successful teaching innovation. In addition to conveying important information on contemporary issues in Indian Country, they develop skills in problem solving, working in teams, and dealing with issues that do not have easy answers. Case development has also fostered good communication between tribal leaders and our faculty and students with tribal leaders often attending classes when particular cases are used as well as in the writing and research process when new cases are being developed. They provide an excellent avenue for tribal leaders to suggest issues that need to be in the curriculum to address important community issues. Most importantly, cases empower students. At the conclusion of one of our sessions, one student remarked that he now “got it.” “Your message which we hear over and over again in these cases,” he said to the faculty, “is that we need to become the leaders of our communities. We need to step up and work for positive change. This is what education should be all about!“

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