# Final Report

INDIGENOUS CONNECTIONS DJS FELLOWSHIP PROJECT
Spring 2022
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The Indigenous Connections project focused on gathering information on how PLU has interacted, represented, and treated Indigenous people for the creation of a new Land Acknowledgement website. This project started off as gathering points for a timeline to be published along with a land acknowledgment. I also wanted to capture the current Indigenous students' thoughts on PLU's Indigenous Connections, which was done through a gathering/ focus group.

## Archives and Timeline

*Methods*

-Using the university digital archives and **searching keywords**: Indian, Native, Lushootseed, Nisqually, Totem

-Saving everything in relevance ("points") to the **excel shee**t in its own section, one for Mooring Mast, one for Saga yearbook, one for the matrix, and one for oral histories

-I gathered **oral histories** from Nicole and Lace in a 2-hour meeting in which they shared important events on campus that they thought were necessary to record. PLU is an oral community, where information is not gathered digitally but by word of mouth. When one person leaves their information leaves as well.

-The **information** for each archival point was the date, the title, the archival link, page number, picture, and description of the point if necessary.

*What I noticed*

-There is **silence** around Indigenous people. There were important events we had orally recorded that were not recorded or were yet to be recorded in media outlets or the yearbook.

-The digital archives search system has some faults in the **word recognition system,** especially with the Saga. Because of this, I was not able to thoroughly search through the Saga for points. Yearbooks that the software did bring up from the search of keywords were recorded.

- I began to search through the Saga **book by book,** skimming each page for Indigenous connections. I completed searching through the 30s, there were no Native connections in that decade that I could find. If someone were to pick up this project again, continue looking in the Saga (past what the word recognition system alerts to) starting from 1940, skimming each page. Some things are better/easier done in person and it might even be beneficial to go into the physical archives and search that way for less strain on the eyes.

*Outcomes*

-The outcomes of these searches were **63** points across all the media formats and oral tellings that were cataloged in a google sheet

- **13** of those points were analyzed deeper in a Timeline sheet, points that I thought were the most necessary to put on the new Land Acknowledgement website.

*Next Steps*

-If this project were to be picked up again, there is "**MISSING**" written in cells that are missing information, either it has not been uploaded to archives yet or was not able to be found in the time restraints of this fellowship

-The Saga needs more analysis, it has the least amount of points because of the word recognition software. There is more to find, even if it is just one or two points.

**Indigenous Student Gathering and Focus Group**

*Methods*

-I drafted emails to send out to Indigenous students, those who clicked boxes that identified them as First Peoples

-Set up a meeting with Suzane Crawford O'Brian on what would be the best questions to ask the focus group, and what would be the most beneficial information to the NAIS program.

-With more guidance from Nicole Juliano, we narrowed questions down so that the questions could foster good conversation between the students and added questions that would be beneficial for the Diversity Center to know

1. Why did you choose to attend PLU? Has PLU met your expectations?
2. What does it mean to/feel like to be an Indigenous student at PLU? Is this identity you think of often? Have you been able to engage with this identity in the classroom or in co-curricular?
3. How do you feel supported as an Indigenous student? How could you better feel supported?
4. What would you like PLU faculty, staff, and your peers to know about Indigenous student experiences?

-Lace Smith was sitting in and helping me lead the gathering since Nicole was not able to attend. We split into two separate groups to go over the key questions.

-The conversations were recorded and I analyzed them for themes to share forward with NAIS

*Findings*

**-Wanting more spaces for Indigenous students to be in the community and fellowship with one another.** With this, better communication of these gatherings. Many of the students did not know about the previous gatherings from this school year. Things like *posting* them on *social media*, and having posters up in the *AUC* to spread the time and date would be helpful. The benefits of having more meetings like this the opportunity to engage with others who have gone through similar experiences, have *space to exist* in academia with Native as a primary identity, and being able to share between different Indigenous cultures

**-Training staff and faculty** to respect Natives. Some suggested a guidebook or resource that staff could refer to for knowledge such as awareness that indigenous individuals ARE individuals, we don't all look the same. There were reports of having unfavorable and negative experiences in some university classrooms, such as the word "Indian" being used in a

*derogatory* sense even when requested not to be used and teachings referring to Native peoples as something of the past that do not exist in the current day. This could also include how to write a Land Acknowledgement for the course syllabus.

**-**creating a **PLU Land Acknowledgement** for the overall University and encouraging each college and department to write their own. This land Acknowledgement should be visible on plu.edu's home page and on each department's drop-down menu or other accessible areas. It shouldn't be hard to find.

*Personal impact story*

This small meeting of Indigenous students introduced me to another member of my own tribal clan. It was the first time for both of us meeting another Tlingit Raven that was not family, a monumental first. We were able to share family stories and share our own stories with one another. As a college student, this was the first time I was able to talk with another about being raised separated from our tribe and how that has impacted my identity. Our conversation was short but really helped me.

*Overall Recommendations of Next Steps*

It is important when recognizing Indigenous people in academia that it is not only a study of the past but of the present as well. Native erasure has been a part of American culture for generations. In this project, it was important to not just have PLU history of Indigenous connections but to involve current Indigenous students and modern connections. The archive point had past connections as well as more modern points of connection. The focus group of current Indigenous students helped focus on what the university needed to be doing to promote a feeling of belonging on campus, which helped narrow points for the website down. The creation of a page on the plu.edu website would be beneficial to Indigenous students. Having the public story of PLU's connection and interactions published would show the University's commitment to its Indigenous community. It would be a place for Indigenous students to feel seen and belong beyond student diversity metrics.

PLU has the opportunity to change and grow in their Indigenous connections by:

- Meeting the requests of current Indigenous students by providing opportunities for Indigenous students to share and for the university to listen
- Educating all new students in New Student Orientation and faculty/staff about the place the university is built upon and the Native communities that were the original caretakers of this place
- Establishing formal relationships with local tribes and tribal universities that is ever-present throughout the year, not just when events such as Camas harvesting are happening. This will promote community engagement and recruitment
- Restarting the First People's club for a space for Indigenous students to engage in fellowship with one another. Connecting with students who have similar identities will help students grow in those identities with each other
- Encouraging professors to expand courses to include Native scholars' relevant works

- Reporting and recording *actively* Indigenous events, impact, and connections that have been ignored by university reporting and records should become more of a priority for the whole university, not just the NAIS department and Diversity Center.