Abstract

The goal of this project is to make information about the relationship between local Native American tribes and the Chehalis Watershed available to the community of Grays Harbor. Information was gathered in a literature review and through personal communication with tribal members. The information gathered will be used to write the text for informational signs to be placed around the Grays Harbor College campus.

Methods

• A literature review was conducted.
• Community members who could potentially contribute information were contacted.
• Interviews were conducted with Justine James and Bethany Barnard.
• The information gathered from the literature review and the interview was summarized.
• Other successful information signage projects, such as those at the Crosby Arboretum at Mississippi State University, along the Lake Swano trail at Grays Harbor College, and along the trail at the Cape Meares Lighthouse near Tillamook, Oregon, were studied.
• The gathered information was converted into a similar format to that of the successful signage projects, and supporting quotes and poems were added to supplement the information.

Discussion

Because the aim of this project is to educate the community of Grays Harbor about the relationship between local Native American tribes and the Chehalis River, members of the Quinault, Chehalis, Chinook, and Cowitz tribes who could potentially contribute information on that topic were contacted. There was not a very large response to the inquiries, so the first-hand information that was able to be included is fairly limited. A literature review was also conducted to gather what information had already been published about the role of the Chehalis River in the lives of the local Native American tribes.

The information gathered from the interviews and literature review was used to create outlines for six informational signs. The theme of the six signs is the Nature/Culture Divide, or the ways in which the epistemologies of Western societies differ from those of indigenous societies. Each sign has a different focus – an explanation of the epistemological differences, the cultivation of marine resources, the way in which the way the indigenous epistemology’s perspective on water differs from that of the Western epistemology, the use of and respect for plants in each society, and a discussion of the significance of the Nature/Culture Divide in and around the Chehalis Watershed.

Interpretive signage will be an effective way to display the gathered information available to the community because it will create what Wandersee calls a “communal information display area” (2007). This means that the information will be consistently available in a set location, making it possible for many people to see and interact with it.

When the informational signs are made to be placed around the Grays Harbor College campus, they will include original artwork that supplements the information and adds to the impact of the signs by drawing the attention of viewers and thus helping to stimulate interest and encourage contemplation and discussion of the topics and the relationship of the topics to the Chehalis River and the local environment.

References

James, J. (2017). Personal communication.

Acknowledgements

This project was funded by the Rose Foundation for Communities and the Environment, and was carried out as part of the GHC Fish Lab Summer Research Program.

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