

## **COLLEGE STUDENTS' FIELDWORK IN THE NATIVE-AMERICAN RESERVATION**

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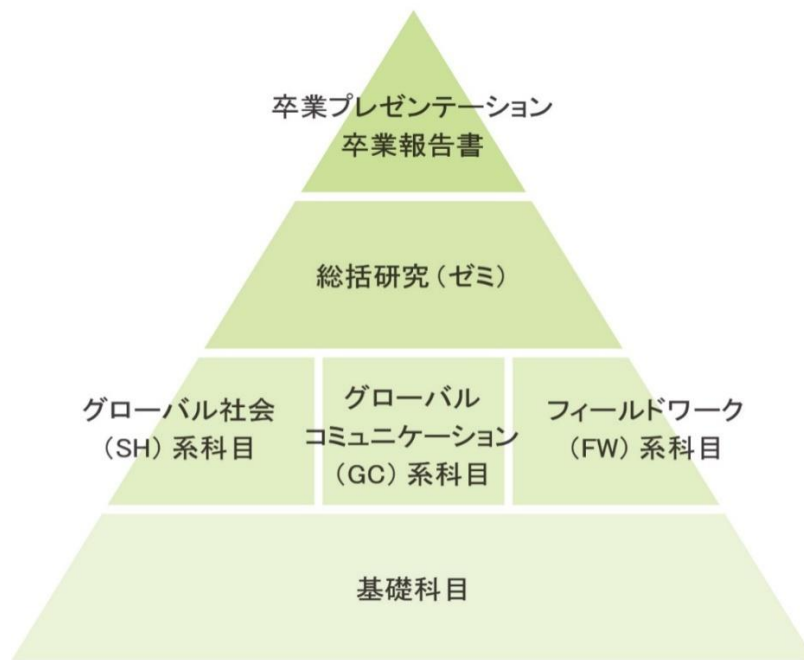
**Abstract:** This is the narrative of the fieldwork conducted by the Global Citizenship Studies Department at Seisen University. The fieldwork in the Native-Americans reservation was started in 2008 in Colville in the State of Washington. Since 2008, we have sent average of 10 students every year for 7 years. The aims of this fieldwork are:

- 1) to understand history, culture and life of the Native-Americans
- 2) to learn the importance of symbiotic relation between people and the nature
- 3) to acquire English skills through communicating with local people

**Keywords:** Native-American Reservation, multi-cultural understanding, service learning

## I. INTRODUCTION

Seisen University is a women's college established by Catholic nuns from Spain in 1950. The name of the department I belong to is Global Citizenship Studies Department and probably the only department that has this name in the world. I would like to introduce one of the fieldworks that our department is conducting.



Before I start elaborating on the fieldwork, let me briefly explain the department and its curriculum. The department was established in 2000 with the aim to foster the women who can contribute to global society with global perspective. Our motto is “Think globally, act locally.”

This is the structure of our curriculum. At the bottom as you can see, first things students are expected to gain in their first year classes are basic knowledge, fundamental learning skills, and communication skills.

In the second year, they start taking classes in the three major areas, namely, Social Sciences and Humanities, Global Communication and Fieldwork. In the area of Social Sciences and Humanities, students study, for example, history, sociology, economics, politics, culture, religion and so on. In the area of Global Communication, they learn not only English and other foreign languages but also cross-cultural communication, interpretation, translation, presentation skills and so on. And in the Fieldwork, students are expected to see, find out and feel at first-hand what they learned in the Social Sciences and Humanities and Global Communication areas.

In the third year they decide the research theme and survey the literature and make

research for the theme. And finally in the fourth year, they complete their thesis and make presentation based on the thesis.

I hope the explanation made it clear where the fieldworks are placed in our curriculum. Two overseas fieldworks are usually offered in addition to the fieldworks in the United States and England and two within the country every year. So far we have sent our students to India, Indonesia, the Philippines, Nepal, Bhutan, Malawi, the USA, England, New Zealand, Korea, Taiwan, and we will start a new program in Malaysia this summer. We have our domestic fieldworks in Okinawa, farming area in Ibaraki, the forestry area in the central part of Japan.

All these fieldworks are aiming at researching the specific area and understanding its culture. The purpose of these fieldworks is far from that of the sightseeing tours. Before they actually participate in the fieldwork, the students study about the host country receiving the guidance of the professor who has experience living in the area and has a strong network in the community. The people from the host country are often invited as resource persons so that our students could gain as much information as possible before they leave for the fieldwork site.

## **II. THE FIELDWORK IN THE NATIVE-AMERICAN RESERVATION**

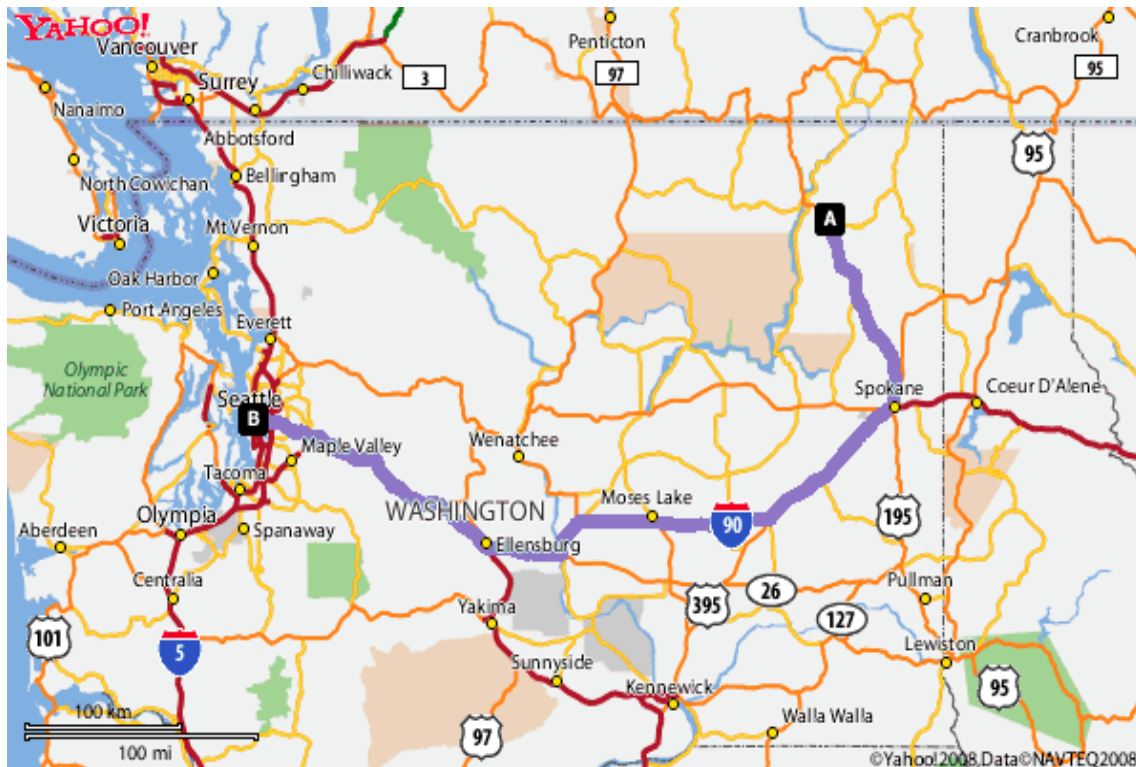
The fieldwork in the Native-Americans reservation was started in 2008 in Colville in the State of Washington. Since 2008, we have sent average of 10 students every year for 7 years. The aims of this fieldwork are:

- 1) to understand history, culture and life of the Native-Americans
- 2) to learn the importance of symbiotic relation between people and the nature
- 3) to acquire English skills through communicating with local people

### 1. The site of the fieldwork

According to the national census in 2010, the population of the United States is approximately 308,750,000 out of which 0.9 % is Native Americans. That is about 3,000,000. There are 566 reservations acknowledged throughout the country. 229 are in Alaska and the rest of 337 are scattered in 33 states. The American government approves of each tribe's right of self-government.

Colville reservation is located 115 kilometers (71 miles) north of Spokane, Washington. It covers the southeastern part of Okanogan County, the southern half of Ferry County and the southern tip of Stevens County. The population is about 8,700 which consists of 12 different tribes. Their native language is Salish, however, there are less than 100 people who can use the language.



In order to enter the reservation, the ferry boat is the only way and that is why the area is called Ferry County. The ferry boat can accommodate 12 cars at a time and runs from 6:45 in the morning to 9:30 in the evening free of charge. There are no street lights or traffic signal. As you can easily imagine, you don't have Wi-Fi access, either. There is only one small gas station and a tiny supermarket.

The natural environment is just wonderful. They don't have any kind of pollution. There are lots of different kinds of wild animals. You can find many beaver dams in the Twin Lakes and you can see ospreys flying high above the sky and diving in the lake to catch fish. Deer come very close to where people live and wild turkeys march in line. If you are lucky, you will see a moose and if you are unlucky you will meet a skunk. We should never leave food out in the house because bears would come in to get it. You hear them roar at night and you may run into them. The reservation is just like a safari park.



Our students appreciate the beautiful nature. They enjoy canoeing and swimming in the lake and meeting the various wild animals. Rick, one of the Native-American rangers in the reservation told us the ecology of the wildlife. He told us that animals do not attack us unless we do some harm to them and that the Native Americans do not catch animals more than they need. In the reservation, one has to have an ID as a Native-American to shoot animals or catch fish.

## 2. The History of the Native-Americans

It may be easy to associate Native-Americans with Pocahontas in Walt Disney's animation. They have dark skin and dark braided hair wearing leather clothes and ride their horses very well. However, the Native-Americans we met in the reservation are not at all like them. Blue jeans and T-shirt is the most typical outfit. They live in a common house, drive a car and cook whatever other Americans eat other than authentic food such as wild deer meat stew, wild huckleberry jam, and fried bread.



However, we should not forget the history of the Native-Americans. We take our students to three museums nearby to acquire general idea of the reservation and tribes. They look around the exhibits and ask the curators questions about history, lifestyle, culture, and art of the tribes. These pieces of knowledge help the students gather information through hands-on experience exchanging with local people.

It is a very famous story that Columbus left Spain in 1492 bound for Japan sailing the Atlantic Ocean and he ended up landing on the United States. He believed it was India and therefore called the native people Indians. After Columbus, for 400 years, many Europeans came and repeated the brutal act and also they brought them such diseases as smallpox, the measles and tuberculosis. The Native American population decreased drastically. In addition, alcohol and guns had undesirable effects to the large extent the life of the Native-Americans.

In 1830, the American government decided to set forth administrative policy to assimilate the Native-Americans into mainstream of the American society. They had to change their names, religion, language and way of life. They were told to change their hunting life to agricultural life and driven to the unproductive land. Children were sent to Indian schools many of which had dormitories so that they were forced to live apart from their parents.

Our students learned the Native-Americans' regrettable history, traditions and culture



and at the same time the problems they are facing: poverty, unemployment, lack of education, alcohol and drug dependence, destruction of family and so on. They try to find the solutions to these problems. They become aware of the link between what they learned in the classroom and what they actually see and feel through their experience outside of the classroom.

### 3. Inchelium School and More

Students spend most of the time with children and students at Inchelium School in the reservation. Ms. Denise Seeley, the teacher who teaches the 5<sup>th</sup> graders, really likes the idea of this cultural exchange program and she is very cooperative. Our students and the 5<sup>th</sup> graders exchange letters and emails prior to their visit and they introduce themselves with each other so that they feel familiar when they meet. When they visit the class, they answer whatever questions the Inchelium students have and help them do the assignment. They also play games together.



Inchelium School has always been ranked in the worst 40 in the States in terms of academic standard and the very worst among 500 schools in the State of Washington. The children are not very good at writing and even the 5<sup>th</sup> graders could not write more than 5 lines. However, those who had our students in class and spent quite a while with wrote beautiful essays. Let me share with you some of them.

# Cross Cultural Program

Before the Japanese visit I felt excited and nervous at the same time. But it was a good feeling. After they left I felt very super sad. I believed that I would never see them again. Before the Japanese visit I thought that speaking different languages would be interesting or be very hard. I found out that it was very easy. I remember when we played Quail Shooters. Those made me feel really happy because it was fun to be with the Seisen students. The Japanese changed my idea about being friends with people from across the world because now I know that you can be very good friends with people from across the world. What surprised me most from there visit was how fast we became friends because it didn't take very long. The Japanese showed me that respect is important. This experience with the Japanese taught me that friendship is valuable. I learned that they have very different houses in the Japanese culture that I didn't know before. If I could share one more part of my Native American culture it would be Indian Taco's because they are good! My favorite memory of the visit was the Ropes Course. That made me feel happy because it was so fun. If I could have spent more time with the Japanese I would like to go swimming. I hope that I could see them again! :)

By, Rylee Desautel



# Gross Cultural Mountain

*Before the Seisen girls visit I felt so excited about meeting them. After they left I felt so sad I was almost crying but then I thought I could facebook them. My behavior. I found out that it did change my behavior.*

*I remember when I fell and the girls were laughing so hard. That made me feel so happy that they were laughing, because even I was laughing really hard activities.*

*The Japanese students changed my ideas about culture because now I know more about their culture and they know more about my culture. What surprised me the most during the visit was they liked me because most people don't like me at first. The Japanese showed me that respect is important in their world.*

*This experience with the Japanese taught me that friendship is way more important than anything else. I learned a lot about the Japanese cultured that I didn't know before. This is important to me because it's important to them.*

*If I could share one more part of my Native American culture it would be our Native American language. My favorite memory of the visit was making them happy. That made me feel happy because they were happy. If I could spend 1 more time with the japans I would like to make more memories. I hope that I get to see them again.*

*By. Amaya Rae Simpson*

As you can see, they have so much to write about and willing to write. When children have some feelings and emotions, they want to express them. They enjoy changing font and giving a designed title. Ms. Denise Seeley commented that these essays seem to be love letters from Inchelium children to Seisen girls.

Not only in composition class but in math class, too, there was a big change. Their grades in math jumped up only in this class among all the 12 classes in Inchelium School. Again Ms. Seeley said she did not do anything special but that each child came to have self-respect and became aware that it is importance to be considerate to each other. The change of behavior in their everyday life and the change of attitude toward study had a great influence on their

grades.

A boy who had to go to the principal's office 45 times a year as punishment for doing something wrong went there only 5 times this year. Another boy was very violent and sometimes Ms. Seeley had to evacuate all other students out of the classroom, but after experiencing this exchange program, he never caused a single problem.

These changes were such remarkable phenomena that those teachers who were reluctant to invite our students to their classes had to change their mind. They were afraid of running out of time to teach composition or math if these Japanese college students come and the class will be doing something extra other than the regular curriculum.

The older students have such questions as what young people are most interested in, what are the most popular fashion, music, and cartoon. They play basketball and cook typical dishes of their own culture for each other. Inchelium School is kind enough to let our students have lunch with the students in the cafeteria. They usually serve salad, bread, milk, and meat, fish, pasta, and so on. It is not a fancy food but children could have as much as they want. Some parents with alcohol or drug dependence do not cook for their children and so the lunch they have at school could be important nourishing food for them.

Outside of Inchelium School, the community holds friendship pow wow, a kind of prayer meeting while we are there. The Native Americans dance, sing, and play the drums in their native costumes and our students also dance and sing in yukata, a kind of kimono. They show how to dance with each other. Other than the pow wow, we had chances to share a very good time with local people at family night out and parties held by church. Our students showed and told how to do folding paper and let the children try on Yukata.





Recently only a few people attended pow wow and family night out, and people don't get together and spend time together, however, the pow wow and family night out held while our students were there became the biggest ones in the past.

#### 4. Impacts of the Fieldwork on the Native-American Reservation

What our students brought to the Native-Americans may be only a fragment of our culture and not a common culture shared by many Japanese.

It could be very personal, however, we could say that the impact that they made on the community was quite huge. Very few non-Native-Americans, if any, enter the reservation and needless to say, there are hardly any foreigners' visits there. The small children always gathered around our students and some high school students came to see us every night at our lodge. The adults extended hospitality to us to offer places and food for our cultural exchange in spite of the fact that they live in poverty. It seems as if we made a big ventilation hole in the society for a wind of change to go through.

The children from the very beginning were so curious and came closer to us, talked to us and played with us without any hesitation, while adults were cautiously stood by without showing any emotion at first. However, once they realized that we were harmless and doing our best to communicate with them because we really wanted to know about them and be friends with them, they started asking so many questions and extended hospitality to us.

We often heard the words to express their gratitude by adults by saying that our visits to the reservation reminded them of importance to protect their identity and strengthen the solidarity

of the tribe. They also helped the people there make a step forward to know that there is a world different from their own.

Our students noticed that they could change the world around them, and they became more eager to learn about what they don't know. I discussed the impact of the fieldwork on the Native Americans from the perspective of service learning. We also conducted questionnaire on the impact of the fieldwork on Seisen students and my colleague, Kathy wrote about the findings. Of course our students learned so much through this fieldwork and we found the comments of our students very interesting and inspiring.

### **III. CONCLUSION**

There is one thing that we have to keep in mind about conducting fieldwork in Colville because of its uniqueness. As it was mentioned above, this reservation is closed to non Native-Americans and therefore the people there did not open their mind at first. But once they opened their heart to us, it seems that they had complete trust in us. Most people there have given up establishing long-lasting relationship with outsiders and therefore we should keep our program to visit them regularly in order to sustain and strengthen our bond. Especially we should not disappoint the children who are expecting Seisen students to come and visit them every summer. The 4<sup>th</sup> graders are so anxious to become 5<sup>th</sup> graders because they can have our students in their class. It is our hope that this fieldwork will be of any contribution to make the community a better place to live.





Lastly two episodes will be introduced before I finish my presentation. There is one Native-American college student who has been assisting our fieldwork. His name is Neil. He is always wearing a cap with “Native Pride” on. He was studying information technology at a university in Texas. Few young people in this reservation go to university since the academic level is extremely low, most of the families cannot afford it, and they cannot get accustomed to a new environment because the life in the reservation is very different from the life elsewhere. He is a graduate from Inchelium School and young children seem to respect him and envy him. He said he is proud to be a Native-American and his plan was to become a teacher at Inchelium School after graduating from college.

In the spring of 2009, Neil came to Tokyo. He was staying with our students’ families and faculty members. While he was supporting our fieldwork, he became more and more interested in Japan and he chose this country for his first travel overseas.



He came back again in 2011 for the second time. He changed his major to TESOL and now he is planning to teach English in Japan. Nobody was expecting this. It is sure that the impact of this young man as a role model on the children in the reservation is great and many of them will be determined to go to college and choose to visit Japan as the first destination of their overseas travel. In fact, lots of boys and girls were saying that they want to go to Japan.

We met a boy when we were visiting Pascal Sherman Indian School which is located in the other end of the reservation in March this year. He used to go to Inchelium School a few years ago and when he found us he came up to us and took out a wrinkled piece of paper from his pocket and showed it to us. On the paper were some expressions in Japanese he learned from our students when he was in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade. Since he never knew that we were visiting his

school that day, it is sure that he carries the piece of paper all the time.

Finally let me introduce the words by Margaret Mead, a famous American anthropologist. It is not exaggeration to say that her words literally mean what this fieldwork is aiming at: “Never doubt that a small highly committed group of individuals can change the world: indeed it is the only thing that ever has.”