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Lack of information plagues Native American students

BY DEBBIE ASMUND
Evergreen Staff

Second of a three-part series

Facing a lack of encouragement among Native Americans toward college, what can the Native American Office here do

to get students to attend? What kind of services are available, and how do students view the job the office is doing?

Eloise Best, a counselor in the Okanogan School District, summed up the university's biggest problem: students do not know how to go about entering the college, or what kind of programs are available to them once they get there.

Enrollment here is down this year for Native Americans, but the reasons are not clearcut, said Bill Willard, director of Native American Programs. One possible reason might be problems students had finding housing in the fall, he added.

A new recruiter hired last summer should boost enrollment with a new system he implemented, said Andrea Boyea, Native American counselor.

"I see a real big increase in enrollment over the next two years," said Bennard Dallas, the recruiter.

Dallas contacted all possible college-bound Native American high school students in the country this fall, sending them information about the university. The systematic approach should reach many more students than before, he said.

At present 153 Native Americans are enrolled here, according to the Native American Counseling Office. The figure represents a 14 percent decrease, down from 177 last year.

It is always hard to pinpoint the figures accurately since every student is not in contact with the office, said Boyea. The registrar's office releases a count every year based on the number of students who "check" in answer to what race they are on registration forms, but sometimes students do not answer the question or answer it inaccurately, she said.

The office's main objective is to convince more Native Ameri-

can students to attend the university, she said.

Makah Indians on the Washington coast feel WSU is too far away and too big a university, said Ted Noel, director of the Makah Department of Health, Education and Welfare.

Most Native Americans prefer to attend school close to home, or a community college which makes the adjustment to a university easier, said April Eng, a Seattle recruiter for community agencies serving Native Americans.

For these reasons the Native American Counseling Office works harder to keep students satisfied. The office started about 11 years ago, and provides counseling and information for students about academics, financial aid and personal problems plus arranging various social activities.

"They get involved with each student individually," said Melanie Halsey, a transfer student from Yakima Valley College. They sent me plenty of information when I told them I planned to attend WSU, she said.

"They helped me quite a bit," said Michael Herrin, a freshman from Spokane. "When I was really discouraged about the middle of the semester this year, Andrea talked me into staying."

One student suggested a better recruitment program as a last resort. "I usually solve problems on my own," he said. Another student said, "They need to reorganize a Native American Club. It used to be a really good club, and now they don't even have one." "Lack of finances and interest caused the club to fail," said Boyea.

The other group in the Native American office is Native American Programs that started in 1970. It operates separately from the counselors office, and offers a minor in Native American Studies to Indians and non-Indians.

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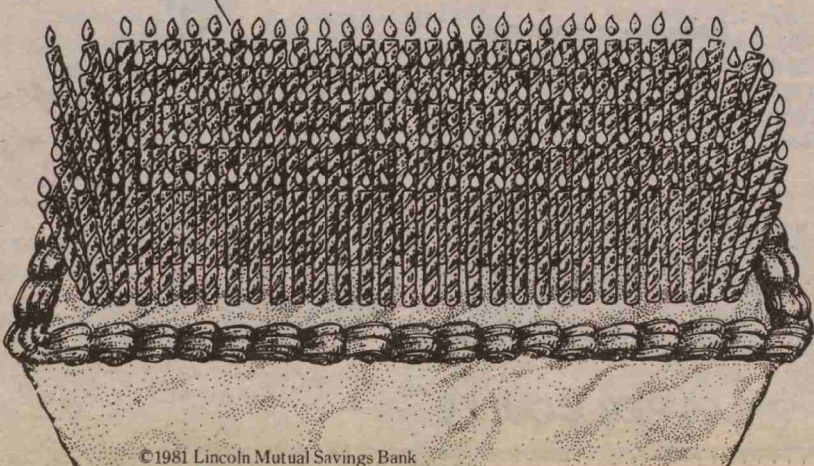
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Mount St. Helens caused money woes, concern about ash

PULLMAN, Wash. (AP) — Financial questions and worries about volcanic ash were the main concern of Eastern Washington residents after the eruption of Mount St. Helens last May 18, say two researchers.

Marsha Roberts and Joye Dillman, two sociologists at Washington State University, sampled 900 households from the Cascades to the Idaho border.

In their questionnaire, the researchers asked what it would take to force people to move from the area.

"What we're seeing is a reflection of value systems that domin-

ate American culture," Roberts said.

The two questions prompting the greatest concerns related to health. If the area were declared dangerous, 71 percent said they would move.

If it became necessary to wear face masks outdoors, 58 percent said they would move.

More than half, 56 percent, said they would move if it was no longer possible to continue to make a living as they had before the blast.

And 53 percent said they would move if there were repeated ash-falls like that of May 18.

If the ashfalls were to continue every several months for the next year, 41 percent said they would move.

And, 38 percent of those responding said they would move if they had to continually clean the ash from their property or if the ash made it impossible to use the area's recreational attractions.

"We were very interested in the response to the recreational question because that's why so many people are attracted to this area," Roberts said.

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