

**Longhouse Education and Cultural Center
at The Evergreen State College**

Capacity Building Plan

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INTRODUCTION

As a grantee of the Ford Foundation's Indigenous Knowledge and Expressive Culture portfolio's IllumiNation cohort, the Longhouse Education and Cultural Center (Longhouse) participated in a capacity-building planning session on August 3, 2006, in Olympia, WA. The purpose of the capacity-building planning session was to:

1. Identify critical capacity issues facing the organization; and
2. Identify uses for \$25,000 in technical assistance funds from the Ford Foundation intended to assist with organizational capacity-building to strengthen re-granting capacity.

The following people participated in the capacity-building planning session:

Staff:

Tina Kuckkahn, Director
Laura Grabhorn, Assistant Director
Bonnie Graft, Program Assistant
Ginny Ith, Program Assistant

Advisory Committee:

Lois Thadei
Ann McCormack
Jennifer Scott
Mario Caro
Joan Staples-Baum
Trudy Marcellay
Joe Feddersen (Evergreen Faculty)
Yvonne Peterson (Evergreen Faculty)
Gail Tremblay (Evergreen Faculty)

The capacity-building plan was facilitated by Pamela Kingfisher of LarsonAllen Public Service Group, consultant to the Ford Foundation. The planning process took place through a six-hour roundtable discussion among the participants. It builds upon an organizational self-assessment conducted by LarsonAllen with the Longhouse in 2005 and a follow-up strategic planning session in early 2006.

Strategic Plan Issues (from February 2006 strategic planning retreat)

1. *Integrate Longhouse more fully into Evergreen College*
2. *Strengthen tribal ties*
3. *Increase staff capacity*
4. *Develop new revenues from individuals, government, tribes, foundations*

IllumiNation Grant Deliverables

In its proposal to the Ford Foundation for participation in the IllumiNation program, the Longhouse outlined the following uses for its two-year, \$250,000 IllumiNation grant:

1. Longhouse will make a regional resource available nationally by increasing the number of individual artists grants (\$2,000) from six to 16 per year (six grants to artists in Washington and Oregon, 10 additional grants available nationally).

2. Longhouse will create opportunities for master artists to share their expertise with other Native artists by offering five residencies per year (\$5,000) that will be based at the Longhouse and throughout the country.
3. Longhouse will provide Native students opportunities to learn about Native arts administration by hiring and training two student interns per year to assist with administration of Longhouse annual events.
4. Longhouse will increase staff capacity to administer a national fund by hiring an additional staff member at half-time.
5. Longhouse will contribute to the field of Indian scholarship by publishing a catalog featuring work and essays by Native artists involved in the project.

The Longhouse's staff and advisory committee decided to use this facilitated session to discuss capacity issues relevant to achieving the above IllumiNation grant outcomes. The group decided to begin with the last and least complicated areas and then work backwards to the top. Following is a summary of the discussions about each of these areas.

CONTRIBUTE TO INDIAN SCHOLARSHIP THROUGH PUBLISHING

The Longhouse has produced catalogs in the past but its leaders want to better tell the stories of the Longhouse's gatherings and begin to document the long-term effects of its programming through publishing efforts. Institutionalizing publishing within Longhouse will assist to:

- Document Native master artists and art forms
- Preserve and promote Native art forms
- Establish a Native arts presence
- Allow Native artists to represent themselves
- Chronicle participants
- Present more in-depth stories of artists and art forms
- Promote Native scholarship

Longhouse staff and advisors discussed the need to continue to develop this aspect of Longhouse programming and begin to systematically think of Longhouse as a publishing house. Currently, they are ready to produce a book about the traditional Northwest carvers with the data they have collected. Other ideas to broaden publishing activities included adding DVDs, presenting more Native artists and art forms, all the while identifying and nurturing Native scholars.

The staff would like to place even more emphasis on Native scholarship in their publications. This includes hiring Native writers to assist the Longhouse in writing about the techniques of the different art forms. The staff has access to doctoral candidates in the field; at Evergreen there is a young scholar available now and participants noted that it is exciting to be able to tap into these young Native scholars in training.

This stimulated a discussion about partnering, and it was noted that the Native American Arts Studies Association is gaining Native memberships, and the Association could be a resource for the Longhouse when seeking writers. There are about 10 to 15 Native people in the field who are writing in art history and it is good for their careers to be published. It is important that writers can provide Indigenous interpretations and perspectives about the art, helping to build a basis for others who are interested in

Native arts. Longhouse should find and mentor those writers who have community contacts, who are comfortable talking about their culture, and where the tribal “context is rich and not made up.” Native artist Jaune Quick to See is compiling a list of such writers, and it would be possible to host a conference at the Longhouse and bring those young Native writers together.

The Longhouse decided to allow the Native writers to retain copyright on their writing and in this way build a new model in publishing.

Other ideas around publishing were to:

- Make a commitment to the writers in order to create an accessible pool
- Identify alumni who can participate
- Convene a conference and issue a call for papers
- Develop curricula suited to the new state law on tribal histories and curriculum development
- Create another way a community artist can access the program through contract work and still get a degree while being protected within Evergreen

It is important to think about the public work of the Longhouse that also enhances student opportunities and then connect the two. There are many talented students at Evergreen and the Longhouse can connect them into the larger community through internships.

INCREASE STAFF CAPACITY

Ginny Ith, a long time friend of the Longhouse, has been hired to fill this new half-time position, and was able to participate in this process with the group. This new position will provide the capacity to shift their programs from a regional to national base.

ESTABLISH INTERNSHIPS IN NATIVE ARTS ADMINISTRATION

Participants felt that it is time to institutionalize paid Native arts administration interns at the Longhouse. The IllumiNation grant will provide salary for the first two years. Staff members will select two interns per year, one each semester. While staff members have already identified Mellissa Bob as the Longhouse’s first Native student intern for the fall semester, they are currently designing the recruitment, interview, and selection process for the internships. Longhouse advisors cautioned staff to “be cautious as you grow it; you don’t want to get your door beat down before you are ready.”

Everyone agreed that interns must “fit the bill” for Native arts and administration, which will allow staff to “grow a particular type and get to a level of depth with each one.” Longhouse will look for candidates who have strong interest and are self-starters and highly motivated students. Longhouse is especially interested in current students who are already committed to the rules at Evergreen and are in college there.

It is also important to determine which other universities to link with, as Native students are going through college degree programs and then branching out into the Native subspecialties. For example, there is a new higher education program in Arizona for Native librarians, so there are also specialty programs popping up with a high potential for partnering.

Connection to Community

The group discussed the need to connect with the community whenever possible, as this brings in prospective students. This will also give faculty a chance to talk about internship possibilities before students graduate and thereby create a pool of prospective internship candidates. Ideas included:

- Offer one internship at the graduate level and one at the undergraduate level each year
- Award college credit to community members
- Explore offering similar internships to tribes as a separate service

Next Steps for Internship Program

- Finalize an internship program design that includes mentoring, structure, and opportunities for up and coming arts administrators
- Develop the specific job description to reflect a typical arts nonprofit administrative position, e.g. researching and writing grants, reports, administrative and production responsibilities for an exhibit or event, documentation, etc.
- Provide a letter of recommendation if interns do a good job to help build their resume.
- Consider a publishing intern (writing, editing, photo shop and layout).
- Conduct a thorough search on what other internship programs are out there, in order to avoid duplication or to partner with.
- Make a list of desirable candidate attributes and selection criteria (Advisory committee can help here).

ESTABLISH MASTER ARTIST RESIDENCIES

The Longhouse currently hosts three artist residencies per year, two of them are regional residencies and the last is with a New Zealand artist. The regional residencies are for a short period of time and they work with the Longhouse network of Northwest artists at the Longhouse. Currently, the Longhouse pays a small stipend to help all the residency artists cover room, board, and travel.

The New Zealand residency is much more in-depth, bringing in a Maori artist to the Longhouse for 12 weeks. They are paired with Native students with a Native master artist in order to teach out in the community as well as at the Longhouse. The partnership with New Zealand brings in artists as cultural ambassadors to share their culture as well as their art forms.

The staff expressed concern that the residencies are misnamed since artists are asked to teach others, rather than receiving time and space to do their own work, the standard definition of a residency. Mentoring, on the other hand, means sharing friendship and knowledge, and there is an Indigenous term for this, *siam*, which means someone at master level teaching another person. Everyone liked this culturally appropriate approach and terminology.

Master Artist Pool

The master artist residency program must further the Longhouse's mission of cultural exchange and can be built upon the existing process. Previous residencies were filled by artists familiar to Evergreen and the Longhouse. Staff must now move beyond the Longhouse's close circle of artists, tapping into the broader national pool of quality master artists. In addition, it will be important for the Longhouse to find

a balance between traditional and contemporary artists. Longhouse staff has ready access to a huge pool of Northwest artists and then pockets of connections nationally.

Residency Program Design

The master artist residency program will include two residencies at the Longhouse and three national residencies in communities in other geographic locations in the country. Residencies will focus on performing and visual arts. Staff is currently designing the master artist residency program. Ideas that have emerged include:

- Hold participation down to 10 students per master class for an intimate experience
- Invite participants at all levels of artistic skill (This provides exposure to quality art and art making to all levels of artists, creates a pool of emerging artists, builds relationships between artists that enable them to promote their work, etc.)
 - Beginning artists find their talents
 - Emerging artists begin to see their natural talent
 - Master artists learn tips, work in a new art form, and benefit from one-on-one mentoring
- Explore potential residency products/outcomes such as:
 - Community-based exhibits
 - Community purchase of master's artwork
 - Promotion opportunities for artists
 - Catalog publication

National/Off-Site Residencies

There will be three national community-based residencies available. Longhouse will let the community partner propose a class and master artist. If the community has not identified a master artist, then Longhouse staff could provide a list of master artists in each art form and provide assistance to the community in selecting an appropriate artist.

National residencies could also focus on specific communities or art forms:

- Virtually lost art forms
- Communities without ongoing art development efforts

Support systems need to be in place for this program to go out in communities nationally, and it will be important to broker these relationships up front. Staff will also need to leverage money from community partners to help pay for artist travel, room/board, and workshop materials.

Staff members shared their concerns about the national residencies. Up to now, residencies have been held at the Longhouse, allowing for close supervision and on-site troubleshooting by staff to ensure success. They are looking for the best way to monitor artists and workshops off-site and geographically distant. Concerns include:

- Ensuring oversight and high standards without micro-managing
- Handling expectations (master artist and community) up front
- Being clear that this is a one-time deal
- Managing the time investment for the staff
- Leveraging funds for a stipend for community participants as well
- Ensuring commitment and assurance from personnel on-site

- Partners must be reliable
 - Shared expectations regarding outcomes
 - Willingness to report on the program at the end
 - Evaluations very important especially from the audience

Applications

The application process should be rigorous, with the questions well thought out regarding the information that Longhouse needs, so it is collected up front. The current application form can be appended with more detailed instructions and the proof of tribal affiliation requirements.

Opportunity to Leverage Additional Residency Support

IllumiNation offers new opportunities for partnerships and leveraging additional support for the artist residencies. Longhouse could approach current supporters like the Boeing Foundation and invite collectors like Microsoft. Staff will need to focus on making new friends who can connect Longhouse with collectors and individual donors of high wealth.

Additional development targets:

- Gen X - young Natives in their thirties
- Alumni from Evergreen
- Folks connected to Evergreen
- Native associations like the Western Indian Alumni Association

Next Steps for Master Artist Residency Program

- Determine the Longhouse's criteria for "artistic balance." In particular, what percentage of the residencies will be performing arts? The performing arts constitute a huge part of community cultural identity and activities, and the Longhouse will need special criteria for master artist residencies in performing arts.
- Develop application process
 - Develop an online application with a built-in mechanism that will allow Longhouse staff to answer questions
 - Research the cost and need for an 800 number
 - Explore whether Longhouse will establish a policy on "give back" from the selected artists to their home communities

INCREASE INDIVIDUAL ARTIST GRANTS FROM 6 TO 16 PER YEAR

In partnership with Artist Trust, the Longhouse recently started a program to provide individual artist grants. Artist Trust and Longhouse raised money together, and The Fund for Folk Culture allocated some money to this effort as well. The grants have a professional development focus to help artists move to a new level in their career. Last year the Longhouse made six \$2,000 grants to artists in Washington and Oregon. With IllumiNation funds, Longhouse will add ten national grants to this effort.

Grant Amounts

The group decided that the new grant applications should read "up to \$2,000" to build in flexibility for the awards. Many of the previous applications were good \$1,000 projects and did not really need the full amount.

National Scope

There was agreement that grants should go to Indigenous First Peoples, including Native Hawaiians.

Selection

Core questions were outlined regarding eligibility, as well as the application and selection process. Some of the group's suggestions were:

- Select Native artists following the Indian Arts and Crafts Board guidelines. This will include Hawaii and Alaska.
- Select artists on the merit of previous work, as well as proposed outcomes, deliverables, and/or products from the new project

Reporting

Evaluation is mandatory in both programs. It was suggested that staff should change the process to withhold the last grant payment until the artist reports back to Longhouse to ensure accountability and final reports.

Declinations/Rejections

Longhouse staff provides critical feedback to artists whose applications are declined. The group stressed the importance of communicating to the artists what strengths are evident in their work, as well as reasons for declination. This is to provide continuing encouragement of artists and constructive feedback on their art work and application.

Next Steps for Individual Artist Grant Program

- Clarify Native criteria – **Disagreement among the group here. Ideas included:**
 - Follow IACA guidelines for defining who is Native
 - Require enrollment in federally recognized tribe
 - Decide if state recognition is enough
 - Define what this means for Alaskan tribal corporations and Native Hawaiians
- Define the process for funding individual artists with predetermined outcomes and deliverables
- Determine services to offer to the individual artists on a national basis (i.e. photos of art, resume writing, etc. will be hard to continue for national participants)
- Prioritize and define the staff roles and responsibilities

IMPROVE GENERAL PROGRAM MARKETING AND ADVERTISING

While Longhouse uses a number of mechanisms for marketing its programs, staff wants to determine what is really effective and develop their standards of where to publish with good results:

- Utilize free media
 - Tribal newspapers need six months lead time
- Send post cards – very effective for events
- Place human interest stories in newspapers
- Obtain free TV coverage
- Utilize radio – mainstream and Native stations
- Place stories about the artists in Washington (and other states) tourism magazines

ENSURE A STRONG ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The advisory committee's deep community knowledge has contributed greatly to the success of the Longhouse. One of the most important roles of the advisory committee is to be ambassadors for the Longhouse out in the world. The Longhouse and its advisory committee must define the work of a good ambassador and what those protocols are for the advisory committee.

The group discussed how the advisory committee will need to change to support the Longhouse's growing national programming and profile. The advisory committee can be strengthened by recruiting and retaining:

- Youth representatives
- National representatives
- Tribal representatives
 - Washington State Memo Of Understanding comes into play

Committee Work

Because this is an advisory committee rather than a governance board, there is flexibility in how the committee can operate. Some changes that were discussed are:

- Meet on Saturday so advisory committee members do not have to take leave from work to attend meetings.
- Participate in the grants selection process (with staff)
 - Be transparent
 - Be unbiased and fair – declare conflict of interest and excuse self from process if necessary
- Identify and recruit new representatives
- Explore funder representation - *Should there be a seat for a funder representative on the advisory or development committee?*
- Assume advisory aspect for each committee
- Assist with volunteer management – *How can the advisory committee step up here?*

Creating Friends of the Longhouse

Staff discussed how the newsletter can be strengthened as an education piece about the individual artist grants and the selection process. Some participants noted that in the public Artist Trust grant process, the Native artists are new to the grant writing and awarding process. Some artists who do not get the grants get mad at the advisory committee and express this frustration publicly. The group agreed that educating the artists about the process and providing constructive feedback about proposal writing is key to the re-granting process.

The staff discussed being more deliberate in their interactions with the producers of the college newsletters that go out to Evergreen alumni. The staff would like more opportunities to highlight the history of its work and educate alumni about the current Longhouse programs and accomplishments. This is part of a larger strategy to identify donors or those who can connect the Longhouse to donors.

Another strategy will be to connect to the tribal museums and establish good relations with them, as they offer venues, staff capacity, stores with sales and tourism, and collection acquisition budgets. They do not have a national association, so they do not really communicate among themselves.

Next Steps for Advisory Committee

- Recruit national and inter-tribal representatives
- Strengthen tribal ties regionally
- Recruit an undergraduate to serve on the selection committee
 - Define the process for selecting students
- Mentor future participants - with an emphasis on Native youth
- Develop the capacity to deal with negative public perceptions and artist rejection

CAPACITY-BUILDING STRATEGIES

The participants identified and prioritized the following capacity-building strategies. There is \$25,000 available in the Ford Foundation IllumiNation technical assistance funds for the Longhouse to implement any or all of these strategies. In addition, the Longhouse may choose to focus part of its two-year \$250,000 IllumiNation core grant on these capacity issues.

1. Sustainable Funding

- Leverage the IllumiNation grant to develop or deepen other partnerships and donor relationships
- Build staff capacity to develop a national fundraising strategy
- Deepen college relations and support

2. National Programming

- Strengthen application and selection process for national programs
 - Define guidelines for Native identity
 - Recruit new Advisory Committee representatives, especially youth
 - Plan throughout the fall with a longer dissemination time
 - Move to EGrants software - get applications on line

3. Publishing

- Research and define sustainable publishing practices and budget
- Develop a strategy for national and international dissemination
- Publish a catalog on the residencies
- Contact Native American Journalists Association and the Native American Arts Studies Association for Native writers

4. Advisory Committee

- Clarify the role of the advisory committee as the Longhouse moves to a national presence
- Create advisory committee structure
- Recruit national artists for the steering committee

5. Marketing

- Access all free media

SUMMARY

Thank you to Longhouse staff and advisory committee members who contributed to this capacity self-assessment and strategy session, all of whom were passionate and forthcoming about the Longhouse and its work.

The Longhouse came to life as a unique collaboration between an institution of higher education, regional tribal governments and culture keepers. The stability of the staff and advisory committee has led to solid relationships and programming throughout the region.

The Longhouse is fortunate to have one of the most important foundational elements for sustainability in place – thoughtful leadership and the institutional support to create arts and culture programming that benefits an intertribal community and meets its cultural mission of hospitality. The expertise on the advisory committee is greatly strengthened by the participation of Evergreen faculty, which signals an even deeper level of institutional support.

The Longhouse is well positioned to build its part of the field, especially as this grant provides for additional staff and interns. As a program in the early growth stage, Longhouse's opportunities for success depend on implementing careful strategies that build upon the organic connections and partnerships it has nurtured.

Longhouse is seen as a leader in the Native arts and culture field in the Northwest region and with international partners in New Zealand. The Longhouse is poised to position its cultural leadership model nationally by building the organizational and financial capacity to support that growth and broad mission.

It has been a pleasure to work with the Longhouse throughout this process. We look forward to further facilitating your participation in the Ford Foundation's IllumiNation cohort. We wish you the very best in all of your endeavors.