



November 7, 2006

Shelley Hanson
Director
Spirit Mountain Community Fund
9615 Grand Ronde Road
Grand Ronde, OR 97347

re: Letter of Support

To Whom It May Concern:

I was recently honored with a request to write a letter of support for funding of the Lane Community College Longhouse project. I would like to begin by thanking all of you and conveying my appreciation for the valuable time that you are taking to review our request for additional funding. Regardless of the outcome of our request, it is important that you listened to our voices. In my view, I see the presence of a longhouse at the college as representing many things. Although I self-identify as an indigenous person, we do not have longhouses in our culture, so I am not writing from place of lived experience. Having stated this, it is my intention to share some of my thoughts about what your additional support for our efforts would mean.

For me, I see the longhouse as a place to gather – “family style.” In my house we have a family picture from a holiday gathering that took place a few years ago. Although a couple of the elders have passed on, and some of the children are becoming adults (they would disagree with me because they believe that they have already achieved this!), the photograph has captured the warmth and love of that moment. For me, I hope to see a completed longhouse on the campus grounds. Next, I can imagine looking at photographs that capture the warmth and love of people gathering for multiple reasons over the years to come.

For me, I see the longhouse as a place for people to stop along their journey. In the times that my wife and I have visited family in Alaska, we have been able to experience the places of indigenous Alaskans. In culturally-appropriate ways, we have always been made to feel welcome. We have always been fed. We have always felt rested. I imagine a longhouse where indigenous and non-indigenous people would feel welcomed. Where they could receive a meal. Where they could feel rested (physically or spiritually).

For me, I see the longhouse as a legacy for the future. When I think about the work that we engage in at the college, I definitely hope that our decisions impact present students, staff, and the community in a good way. But as the father of a two-year-old son, I also hope that we make decisions that will impact his generation in a good way. Thinking of the existence of a campus longhouse, I would like for him to grow up within a sense of place, where he can feel validated to be who he needs to be.

Finally, I see the longhouse as a place for teaching. I see a longhouse as a physical place where learning and teaching can take place. Lane Community College has a strong core of indigenous-inspired courses, taught by respected and respectful indigenous and non-indigenous faculty members. I see a college campus longhouse as simultaneously a sacred place where traditional ways of knowing and doing are maintained and respected in culturally appropriate protocols, and a location on campus where teaching and learning can take place.

In closing, I wish to thank you once again for considering our request for additional support, and thank you for taking the time to read my letter. If you have any comments or questions, please feel free to contact me at the information provided below.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Michael Sámano".

Michael Sámano
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