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WSU Hosts Northwest Association of Teacher Educators

by Francene Watson, Director, Clearinghouse on Native Teaching and Learning

On behalf of NWATE's Executive Board, thank you Barbara and Faith from WSU's Tribal Liaison office for the invitation to share about the **Northwest Association of Teacher Educators** (NWATE). In early June, WSU's [College of Education](#) hosted the organization's annual conference on our Pullman campus, now NWATE's second year in the Palouse. With the many changes occurring in schools and public education nationwide, this year's conference theme asked presenters to dive into perspectives connected to "the essentials" in pre-service teacher preparation, as well as in-service teacher education and professional development, by asking one core question: *what should we be teaching?* Our [2014 program](#) included a dynamic range of research and practice, including topics such as the importance of culturally responsive teaching, the positive impact of establishing community partnerships for student success, as well as presentations examining new Common Core standards and teacher assessment.



Our speakers this year included Nez Perce Council member Brooklyn Baptiste of the NimiiPuu Nation, who opened our conference to welcome attendees to ancestral homelands of Paluutspu, a band of the NiMiiPuu. Mr. Baptiste shared poignant reflections on Native education and spoke powerfully to the importance of preparing culturally responsive educators. Following Mr. Baptiste was Seattle teacher-leader and social justice educator, Jesse Hagopian. [Mr. Hagopian](#) told the story of how he and his colleagues at Garfield High School generated the now [historic boycott of the MAP test](#) (Measurement of Academic Progress) of 2013 and subsequently, ignited a national movement against the abuses of standardized testing. Both of our guest speakers spoke to a core vision that NWATE members strive toward—creating schools (teachers, staff, parents and children) working in community for authentic teaching and learning, honoring the gifts of every child.

As a brief history and overview, NWATE represents a network of educators engaged in discussions and collaboration about teacher education in the Northwest region with members in Alberta, Alaska, British Columbia, Idaho, Montana, Saskatchewan, Washington, and Oregon. Members of this bioregion offer a diverse and critical view of schooling and education. For the last several years, NWATE leadership has worked to grow the organization around the idea that not only do schools work as hubs *in* communities, but also *for community*. For NWATE, this not only means holding this vision for PreK-12 schooling, but also for how we organize ourselves in ways that continue to create and deepen community. Much of this vision was brought to fruition through last year's (2013) conference when NWATE partnered with the [Plateau Center](#), [The Clearinghouse on Native Teaching and Learning](#), and the [Center for Mestizo and Indigenous Research and Engagement](#). Together we created the theme, [Language, Culture and Partnership in Our Schools](#), which in and of itself, opened an opportunity to rethink teacher education *in and for community*. We learned **so much, together**. Especially honoring indigenous ways of knowing, last year's conference set forth a path for what's possible in schooling and education and created transformative learning for attendees; in 2014, we can see the beginning fruit of our very intentional work.

NWATE's active vision is to create an organization that honors the diverse people involved in supporting strong teacher preparation and continued professional development. Through both our conference and our [on-line journal](#), we engage in rich dialogue and the open sharing of research, experience and practice between respective State, Tribal, School and College/University entities. Inside of this, we invite in-service teachers who serve as mentor teachers to pre-service and

beginning teachers, as well as teacher educators who work directly with pre-service and in-service teachers. We welcome researchers and administrators connected to teacher preparation programs, education departments, and community-based organizations with vested interest in our schools, our teachers, and our youth. We also invite pre-service and new teachers, as this sharing helps us all understand again and again the beautiful and dynamic relationship of theory and practice.

Relatively few opportunities exist for folks in these respective areas to gather together in dialogue to share critical issues and ideas. Creating space for this opportunity alone is incredibly powerful, especially through NWATE's regional association sharing many geographical borders—international, state and tribal. Because of this, we have a unique opportunity to create transformative and innovative educational realities and strength in community. To best do this, NWATE leans toward “de-siloing” our distinct areas in teacher preparation and on-going professional development in order to see anew. Conference themes in recent years have explored what's needed in “overhauling pedagogy” and delved into the tensions present on research and practice continuum. Collectively, we explore ways of knowing, the role of “responsibility, authenticity, and presence” (Starratt, 2004) in engaged student learning, and ask questions such as, Can we better build curriculum *in* community? For our 2015 conference, we invite theme ideas so please, send them our way.

In 2015, WSU Pullman will again host our annual conference, and will do so every other year. Interim years will be hosted by institutions across our region so that we best stay connected to place. **Call for Proposals** will come out by [early February 2015](#). To receive our notifications, go to <http://nwate.com> and “Follow.” By doing this, you'll receive email notifications and additions to the site such as some of our 2014 presentations coming later this summer. Follow us on Twitter at @NWATE1. Please feel free to email, call, or stop by with any questions or comments—I'd love to connect.

In appreciation,

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