Exhibit on Restoration of Elwha River Held at WSU Museum of Anthropology

by Rio Fernandes

A chronicle of the Elwha River restoration was held in the Museum of Anthropology at Washington State. The exhibit, provided by the Burke Museum, fits into the “fish, water and people” theme the College of Anthropology is focusing on this year.

Dr. Shannon Tushingham, assistant director of the museum, wanted to augment the Native American experience into the museum and believed this collection would be the perfect fit.

“This collection was small enough and cost effective enough to be what we were looking for. It’s extremely well done,” said Tushingham.

The exhibit includes breathtaking photos spanning nearly a century along the Elwha River and the removal of the dams along the river. The dam removal which took place on the river was the largest in US history, and the photos provide a window into the groundbreaking experience.

Each photo is accompanied by a short newspaper excerpt explaining what is going on in the photo. The photos and excerpts came from the Seattle Times award-winning coverage of the momentous event and were compiled by the Burke Museum.

The exhibit includes a time-lapse of the dams coming down and the river returning, which spanned over three years, in only a few minutes. There is also a short documentary running on a loop about what the process of restoring the Elwha River meant to the ecosystem.

Students from the interior design program decided on the best way to organize the exhibit to increase the experience for visitors. The photos tell the beginning of the story and allow the audience to easily move through the timeline of events because of the efficient design laid out by the interior design program.

On April 9, ASWSU Ku-Ah-Mah, the Anthropology Museum, and the ASWSU Environmental Sustainability Alliance featured a reception at the exhibit and a special screening of a movie. The film, Return of the River, took nearly four years to make and tells the story of the mighty Elwha River and the battle it faced to become restored and what is happening to it now.

The exhibit ended in April and was the final event of the year for the museum. It provided students and faculty a fantastic opportunity to learn about the restoration process of the Elwha River and was a treat for all those that experienced it.