

ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: THE DYES INLET INDIAN
COMMUNITIES: AN ANALYSIS OF THE
HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE OF AN OFF-
RESERVATION SETTLEMENT

Degree Candidate: Leonard Andrew Forsman

Degree and Year: Master of Arts in Historic Preservation, 2004

Thesis directed by: Charlotte Garrido, Ph.D.
Welch Center for Graduate and Professional Studies
Goucher College

This analysis of systems to determine significance of tangible and intangible resources of American heritage shows a history of negative bias toward places of historic significance to American Indians. The hypothesis asks if formal, informal and tribal standards used to determine significance are relevant to judge these properties. I tested the hypothesis by analyzing three evaluation systems, designated as formal, informal and tribal, and applying their standards to remnants of an off-reservation Suquamish Indian community in Kitsap County, Washington.

Methods included a literature review, ethnographic interviews and comparative analysis. The literature review provided background on Suquamish families that

established unique late 19th century settlements by homesteading lands near aboriginal villages on Dyes Inlet. Interviews with former residents offered insights on cultural importance of the communities. The literature review also describes the origin of the National Register criteria, preservation philosophy, and tribal significance standards. I analyzed the buildings, sites, landscapes, objects, and places in the study area under each of the criteria. A comparative analysis showed the tribal system was more inclusive than the other systems, showing a bias in systems used by the preservation establishment.

Thesis findings have the potential for impact on local and national preservation practice. A critical piece is the set of tribal criteria for evaluation of tribal heritage resources that evolved through discussions with study area residents and review of works by tribal preservation experts. This criterion forms the foundation for development of standards for the American preservation community as they work to recognize places associated with American Indians. The historical accounts of Indian life in the study area testify to its significance to the Suquamish people, stressing the urgency for action by the Tribe, local military installations and County government to preserve the surviving pieces of this chapter of local history. The elders' passion for their homeland, the intriguing history of off-reservation Indian settlement and the absence of local awareness of study area history shows the need for future action. New initiatives include tribal/federal meetings on local preservation issues, educational curriculum, interpretive signs and exhibits, and local historic preservation ordinances. These efforts will effect local change while the proliferation of new tribal significance criteria will affect preservation on a national level.