

## **WaiWai: A Compendium**

### **Community Engagement Fellows Project Report**

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I joined the Community Engagement Fellows for several reasons. First, it offered opportunity to meet new people within Western Washington University, Northwest Indian College and Whatcom Community College, as well as from the community of Bellingham and Whatcom County. In particular, I'm grateful for the opportunity to learn more about arts and arts activism in Whatcom County and to have participated in one of the CEF panel discussions about the role of art in Whatcom's community.

Second, CEF opened a space in my schedule for experimentation, intellectual cross-pollination, and opportunity unbound to career-centric goals. As a recently tenured professor at WWU, I wanted a set-aside space and time to listen, intellectually expand, and learn from others in fields different from my own. I had many such moments with CEF—a mathematical teaser courtesy of a colleague at Northwest Indian College comes to mind—that shifted my understanding of seeing and processing. I brought these moments back with me, into the classroom, and I think they made me a more astute, more open instructor.

Third, CEF gave me space, time, and sounding boards for developing an online arts compendium centered on the theme of water as life. This site, called WaiWai, will feature art and artists whose work engages the Hawaiian creed *ola i ka wai* (in water there is life). The website is an opportunity to gather some of the water-warrior, activist and educational art works that I admire and set them into conversation with one another, as well as present them to a broader audience.

The workshops helped me expand the idea of the compendium in a lot of fresh ways—sometimes in too many ways!—and this summer I've actually contracted a little so that the project would feel manageable again. But one of the best ideas or series of questions I received was around student involvement: How would students figure into this project?

This question led me to a "sub project" of experimenting with course development. In the Spring quarter of my fellowship year, I ran an Independent Study with one of our English Majors and invited him to submit copy for the website as well as experiment with his own writing. Through this experience, I developed writing exercises and course structures that I've already used to enhance my Editing & Publishing and Pacific Literature courses. In addition, I could see the work presented on the Compendium's website becoming the textual base of a new literature course, perhaps as part of a First-Year Interest Group connected to an Environmental Science class.

Because I can see the many ways that such a compendium and website could be useful—and because I have a penchant for big ideas—one of my struggles this past year was keeping the project manageable. I've had to place some of the wonderful feedback I

received from my fellow fellows into a file, to be used at a later date. That said, I feel excited about the sense of growth that can come from this project as well as the connections formed through CEF.