

ROOTED WISDOM: SIGNAGE FOR NATIVE FLORA
COMMUNITY SIGNAGE PROJECT FOR CAMPUS

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Executive Summary

Problem Statement:

Western's campus does not have signage for informing students on the **native plants**. We believe that with the reputation we have, as well as the general **sustainability goals** of campus, students should be informed about the **plants surrounding campus**, as well as the flora that has long been on these lands.

Description of Project:

The goal of the "ROOTED WISDOM" project is to create signage for the native plants on Western's campus. With the help of our project, students will be able to incorporate their own art to campus in the form of sculptural stands. We will create laser engraved signs to create consistency between the signs, allowing students to also save money on the costs of the project. Students will also be encouraged to use recycled materials, as well as media they enjoy working with. The only rules we require is that the stands are durable, water proof, and be able to be installed with minimal damage to the garden beds.

Summary of Recommendations

- We will create uniform signs for 12 native plants on campus
- We will create a poster to put up to find 12 students to create the stands
- Oskar, the landscape supervisor of campus will install the signs with his team once finished
- Students will also be given credit for the stands created
- Students will be encouraged to use recycled materials of any media

Introduction

Statement of Need:

We believe that with the incorporation of more signage around campus, students will be more educated on the plants that have been on these lands long before the campus. There are tons of native plants and trees around our campus and they all have incredible uses that have helped the first nation people for anything between medicinal uses to building boats and fishing equipment.

Project Goals:

- Create uniform signage for the plants and tree around our campus
- Hold an event that will allow students to incorporate their art into campus
- The only rules for the installation is that they should be made of mostly recycled materials
- Stands should be able to endure the elements for the years to come and also be able to be placed in the garden beds with minimal damage.

Background Research:

We have performed lots of data gathering from standing in red square and asking students their opinions, to talking to the campus land management teams, and everyone has been extremely fond of the idea. We have also done research around how much a project like this would cost, and since the school would only have to fund the top section of the sign itself, it would be fairly affordable. The rest of the sign being upcycled helps western with its Sustainability Goals as well as giving a fun and affordable challenge for students.

Idea Representation


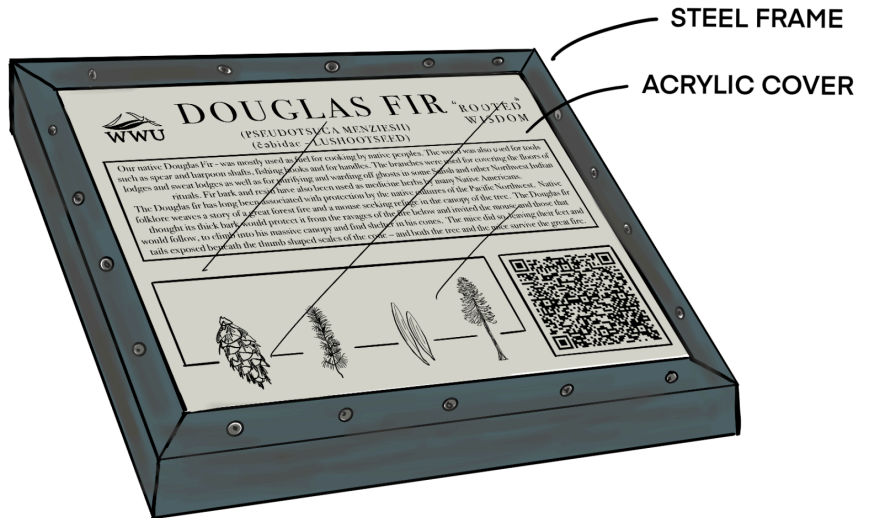
ROOTED WISDOM

HOW IT WORKS!
 ~STUDENTS WILL RECEIVE A SIGN TO INCORPORATE IN THEIR DESIGN

~NO REGULATIONS AS LONG AS STAND IS DURABLE, WATERPROOF, AND IS ABLE TO BE INSTALLED WITH MINIMAL DAMAGE TO SOIL

~HAVE FUN AND BE CREATIVE (TRY TO USE RECYCLED MATERIALS)

THE GOAL OF THIS PROJECT IS TO CREATE SIGNAGE FOR THE NATIVE PLANTS AROUND OUR CAMPUS! WITH THE HELP OF STUDENTS, WE WILL BE ABLE TO CREATE UNIQUE STANDS FOR EACH GARDEN BED, AS WELL AS ALLOW STUDENTS TO HAVE THE CHANCE TO INCORPORATE THEIR ART INTO OUR CAMPUS.





DOUGLAS FIR

(PSEUDOTSUGA MENZIESII)
 (čəbidac - LUSHOOTSEED)

“ROOTED”
WISDOM

Our native Douglas Fir - was mostly used as fuel for cooking by native peoples. The wood was also used for tools such as spear and harpoon shafts, fishing hooks and for handles. The branches were used for covering the floors of lodges and sweat lodges as well as for purifying and warding off ghosts in some Salish and other Northwest Indian rituals. Fir bark and resin have also been used as medicine herbs by many Native Americans.

The Douglas fir has long been associated with protection by the native cultures of the Pacific Northwest. Native folklore weaves a story of a great forest fire and a mouse seeking refuge in the canopy of the tree. The Douglas fir thought its thick bark would protect it from the ravages of the fire below and invited the mouse and those that would follow, to climb into his massive canopy and find shelter in his cones. The mice did so, leaving their feet and tails exposed beneath the thumb shaped scales of the cone – and both the tree and the mice survive the great fire.



Methodology and Results

The methodologies used for this project centered around personal interviews. We interviewed many different people who play a role in maintaining the campus landscape and/or are highly familiar with the local ecosystem. The interview questions primarily focused on:

- Ideal locations for signs and recommendations for choosing flora
- The contents of the signage and information about the species

All responses were then corroborated in order to understand how they could best be implemented. The interviews guided the overall trajectory of our project and informed the contents and locations of proposed signage.

Another important method for gathering information was the use of student surveying. On May 9th, 2024 a survey was conducted of WWU student body to gather background information on student awareness regarding campus signage. A total of 20 participants were interviewed. Participants were selected at random and identities shall remain anonymous. The survey asked two questions:

1. Have you noticed signage for specific plant species around campus?
2. Do you think that adding (more) signs like this could support your relationship with the campus environment?

The responses were unsurprising, with 95% of students answering “No” to Question 1 and 100% of students answering “Yes” to Question 2. An overwhelming number of participants noted the lack of flora signage on campus. Only one respondent said they witnessed signage near the Ridge complex. Participants, from both in-and-out of State, expressed interest in learning more about local species and said they would be thrilled to see more signs around campus. While further surveying could be necessary, current responses indicate a severe lack of flora signage on campus and a genuine interest to learn more about local flora. We believe that the Rooted in Wisdom project will address both of these concerns by providing attractive signage and helping us get to know our local ecosystem a little better.

Recommendations

Recommendations our team has for this project are to have around 12 native plant ID signs around campus with QRcodes that lead to more information about the plant life around campus. When speaking to Oskar Kollen, the landscape supervisor for Western Washington University, he suggested places where many native plants live including the Arroyo Staircase, the newly planted lot next the the Fine Arts building and the islands in the middle of the campus. Additionally, our group suggested placing them near the Fairhaven Pond, and in the Bird Sanctuary across from Old Main.

Our project and recommendations speak to the localized sustainability project by providing visitors with knowledge about the local vegetation that will in turn help relationships with the environment on campus. Our project would provide information on indigenous uses, names and relationships to the plants, helping build stronger relationships and awareness by weaving indigenous culture onto Western's campus.

Plant ID signs connect to the Sustainable Development Goals. Specifically, Life on Land SDG #15, Quality Education SDG #4, and Sustainable Communities SDG #11. The project connects to Life on Land because we are providing information about plant life on Western's campus, harnessing a better dynamic between students, visitors, children and staff to their local vegetation. Secondly, Quality of Education connects by allowing people passing by to have the opportunity to get educated on native plants. This grants the opportunity for a learning experience on campus that isn't within the classroom. Lastly, Sustainable Communities links with our project because it is attempting to bring together the community to care more about our environment around us. The goal is to use sustainable materials and incorporate the community into designing the signs.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The project will be tracked by how many people use the QRcodes. We will have some type of counter everytime someone uses the code to see the number of people every month that use it. We will also be keeping track of which signs are the most popular by tracking which site is visited the most.

Additionally we will take an annual survey asking students or those walking through campus about whether or not they have used/use the plant ID signs and if they have been beneficial to their educational experience. This will ensure that we are better understanding the affects the plant ID signs have on the community.

Budget

*Our goal with the LEAD Signage Project is to incorporate signs all around campus in areas that are diverse and can encourage involvement, excitement, and awareness of native flora. We have 2 options for signs. One with a wooden frame and one with a steel frame

We are looking to add around a dozen signs around campus.

- 8\$ Per Acrylic Sheet
- 10\$ Per Wooden Frame
- 18\$ Per Sign in Total. $18\$ \times 12 = 216\$$ in Total for all 12 signs

We are looking to add around a dozen signs around campus.

- 8\$ Per Acrylic Sheet
- 26\$ Per Wooden Frame
- 34\$ Per Sign in Total. $34\$ \times 12 = 408\$$ in Total for all 12 signs

*Funding: We plan on funding this project with the help of the Sustainable, Equity, and Justice Fund. We will apply for a small grant through Western Washington University. Since the deadline has already passed for May 1st, we look to apply for the grant in the following fall around early to late October. The action of engraving these signs and doing all the intricate designs would be done by our team and other students in the design program

Acrylic Signs	Wooden Frame	Total Price	Amount of signs	Acrylic Signs	Steel Frame	Total Price	Amount of signs
8\$	10\$	18\$	1	8\$	26\$	34\$	1
8\$	10\$	36\$	2	8\$	26\$	68\$	2
8\$	10\$	54\$	3	8\$	26\$	102\$	3
8\$	10\$	72\$	4	8\$	26\$	136\$	4
8\$	10\$	90\$	5	8\$	26\$	170\$	5
8\$	10\$	108\$	6	8\$	26\$	204\$	6
8\$	10\$	126\$	7	8\$	26\$	238\$	7
8\$	10\$	144\$	8	8\$	26\$	272\$	8
8\$	10\$	162\$	9	8\$	26\$	306\$	9
8\$	10\$	180\$	10	8\$	26\$	340\$	10
8\$	10\$	198\$	11	8\$	26\$	374\$	11
8\$	10\$	216\$	12	8\$	26\$	408\$	12

Conclusion

To wrap up our report we would like to summarize why our group is doing this project and what it means to Western Washington University and our community. Looking at our surveying of students on campus when asked if they noticed signage for specific plant species around the campus, 95% answered No. Yet 100% of the students that were surveyed believed that if there were signs around campus regarding native flora their relationship with the environment on campus ground would improve and be supported. It shows that it's not a lack of awareness but a lack of information being presented to the public. That is the goal we are trying to fix. We want there to be accessible signage around campus so students, faculty, children, and other people visiting the campus have the ability to learn about the nature around them. By having more people understand the local ecosystem around them better it will create an environment of sustainable and environmentally focused goals and practices. People will only implement eco-friendly ideas and methods in their life when they know about it. By implementing these signs our group believes that people will start to care more about the native species around them and they will see how their lives are impacted by them.

Talking to Gabbrielle Lund, Brandom McWilliams and Oskar Kollen they recommended places for signs by the Arroyo staircase, islands in the middle of campus, fairhaven pond, miyawaki forest, and the rain gardens all around campus. Places with a dense concentration of native flora with a high concentration of people are the places that we deem best for signage. Our group also believes that by incorporating QR codes and possibly making it into an interactive element that could be a showcase for the college of the environment or new student recruitment would be a great idea. If this gets approved by WWU, our group is thinking about talking with professors about incorporating these signs in their class. It could reach a wider audience and provide learning in the form of fun and awareness.

Appendices

Sponsor Interview Questions: Gabrielle Lund/ Brandon McWilliams

1. What area on Western campus is lacking when it comes to signage and accessible information regarding native and invasive species?

- Wade king site, miyawaki forest, around rain gardens all around campus,
- landscaping stuff around campus
- arboretum signage-old signs 20 year old

2. If we came up with a sign prototype, is there a high chance that western would want to adopt this project idea?

- Has to go through western branding, specific logos involved is their concern, adding structure through facilities

3. How would we come up with funding to produce signs all over campus? Would we need to get a grant, or could we go to the college of the environment department to have them fund this project?

- SEJF: Sustainability, Equity, and Justice Fund, Funding from previous projects
- Art annex project

4. Do you think students really would care about this? Would WWU value this project and see the benefit it would add to the campus and to its people?

- Boils down to placement, general student body
- Tying it into extra activities, Talk with professors about using it with class
- Interpretive loops, Highlighting cool stuff about representation
- Using qr code/interactive element
- Something desirable for students, Treasure hunt for all signs
- Word of mouth, Networking
- Make it an art piece/interdisciplinary, Textured
- Working with design student/make a beautiful design
- Work with student admitted orientations/scavenger hunt
- New student recruitment, Showcase for college of environment

