



The Evergreen State College Announces Name Change for Northernmost Point on Campus

by Evergreen Communications Office, October 20, 2011

Application by Evergreen and Squaxin Island Tribe to Rename “Squaw Point” to “Bushoowah-ahlee Point” approved by the US Board of Geographic Names

Members of an Evergreen ‘Name Change Committee’ recently announced that the US Board of Geographic Names has approved the name change of “Squaw Point” on the Eld Inlet beach of The Evergreen State College to the ancestral indigenous name: “Bushoowah-ahlee Point.”

The name “Bushoowah-ahlee Point” was requested in a joint application by The Evergreen State College and the Squaxin Island Tribe to identify the northernmost point of the campus.

The beach sits on a cape on the property of the college (by the Geoduck House). The Evergreen State College, including Bushoowah-ahlee Point, is part of the land base that was ceded by the Medicine Creek Treaty Tribes in 1854. The location for Bushoowah-ahlee Point has long been recognized as a meeting place for the Coast Salish people living on the southern inlets of the Salish Sea.

“We changed this place name both out of respect for Native women, and out of respect for the language that has been spoken on this land since long before our state or campus was founded,” says Art Costantino, chair of the ‘Name Change Committee’ and vice president for student affairs at Evergreen.

The effort to rename the point began during fall 2009 when a group of staff were reviewing maps of the campus for hazard mitigation purposes. Members of the Evergreen staff were surprised to see that a portion of the college's property on Eld Inlet was designated as "Squaw Point."

Wrong term, wrong region

While the roots of the term “squaw” lie in the Algonquin language on the East Coast, it has evolved to take on a more derogatory meaning that is not an appropriate reference for indigenous women.

With the support of the college, a group of faculty, staff and students has been meeting to initiate a change in the name. The group includes Longhouse staff, Evergreen’s First Peoples' Advising Services, and students, staff and faculty.

Specifically, ‘Name Change Committee’ members included Chair and Vice President for Student Affairs, Art Costantino; Longhouse Staff Members Tina Kuckkahn-Miller and Laura Grabhorn; faculty members Frances Rains and Zoltan Grossman; Raquel Salinas of First Peoples Advising Services; students Derek Jones and Shonri Begay, and College Engineer, Rich Davis.

A process of consultation and research

The group consulted with the Squaxin Island Tribe, who historically owned the land, and with whom Evergreen has a long-standing and valued positive relationship.

The State of Washington encourages state agencies to work directly with tribes -- on issues such as this name change -- as part of the 1989 Centennial Accord and the 1999 New Millennium Agreement, which encourage government-to-government collaborative actions that benefit both entities. Evergreen honors these government to government relationships established by the Centennial Accord and affirmed by the Millennium Agreement (see www.goia.wa.gov) through its partnership with the Squaxin Island Tribe.

Squaxin Island appointed Lushootseed language scholar Zalmai Zahir to research the ancestral name of the area. Mr. Zahir had worked for many years with the late Vi Hilbert (Upper Skagit) who was the region's primary Lushootseed language expert and scholar on indigenous place names of the region around the Salish Sea.

Mr. Zahir documented the original place name in Thomas Talbot Waterman's 1922 book Puget Sound Geography. Waterman was an anthropologist who was most interested in recording Native languages and cultures and depicting how those languages appeared phonetically. He traveled widely in the area and among the many things he collected, he also collected geographic names. A recent reproduction (by Vi Hilbert, Jay Miller, and Zalmai Zahir) contains Waterman's original manuscript. T.T. Waterman lists the name of the point as B1cuwa'3ali, (1= uh, c=sh, and 3= glottal stop in his orthography).

The name Bushoowah-ahlee is very old and there isn't a comparable English translation. The Squaxin Island Tribe has requested that the phonetic spelling of the name in the Roman alphabet be officially adopted, rather than the Lushootseed alphabet. The ancestral name, Bushoowah-ahlee Point serves as a reminder of the history of this place that goes much further back in time than the mid-19th century and offers a chance to appreciate the area as it was originally known.

Community Recognition; Official Recognition

As of September 15, 2011, the US Board on Geographic Names recognized the beach officially by its original name. Bushoowah-ahlee Point is now in the USBGN's Geographic Names Information System (GNIS). At the Washington State level, Caleb Maki of the Washington Board on Geographic Names has directed the Washington DNR cartography office to change Squaw Point to Bushoowah-ahlee Point on any new state maps.

The change is automatic on all federal maps, according to faculty geographer Zoltan Grossman.

The name change enjoyed tremendous support from the Evergreen community. Students working with First People's Advising gathered some 300 letters of support from students, staff and faculty for the name change.

Evergreen's Board of Trustees also offered its support for the change, and a Geoduck Student Union initiative was backed by 87 percent of students in the Spring 2010 election.

Bushoowah-ahlee Point Renaming Ceremony and Coastal Jam

On May 26, 2012 at The Evergreen State College Longhouse, the Renaming Ceremony for "Bushoowah-ahlee Point" will take place on the Evergreen Beach at 3:00 pm. At 5:00 pm, a community dinner will be hosted at the Evergreen Longhouse, followed by a Salish Tribal Coastal Jam session.

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The ancestral indigenous name “Bushoowah-ahlee Point” was requested in a joint application by The Evergreen State College and the Squaxin Island Tribe to identify the northernmost point of the campus on the Eld Inlet beach of The Evergreen State College. This application was approved by the US Board of Geographic Names and released to the public in October 2011.

“We changed this place name both out of respect for Native women, and out of respect for the language that has been spoken on this land since long before our state or campus was founded,” says Art Costantino, chair of the ‘Name Change Committee’ and vice president for student affairs at Evergreen. The committee included: Chair and Vice President for Student Affairs, Art Costantino; Longhouse Staff Members Tina Kuckkahn-Miller and Laura Grabhorn; faculty members Frances Rains and Zoltan Grossman; Raquel Salinas of First Peoples Advising Services; Native students Derek Jones and Shonri Begay, and College Engineer, Rich Davis.

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