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## PERSPECTIVES

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## Proudfoot strives to aid native cultures

University Professor Rob Proudfoot recently visited Australia and New Zealand

"I come from a traditional culture which still exists. We were fortunate to have survived the cultural genocide that so many indigenous people faced with the long invasion," said Rob Proudfoot, member of the Six Nations Seneca-Haudenesaunee (People of the Long House) and University professor of international studies, in a gentle voice.

We sat at his table in the back corner of Espresso Roma. I wanted to find out about his journey down under with four graduate students during winter quarter. I wasn't looking for a travelogue; and even if I had been, I would not have gotten it from Rob. Instead, I was looking for a connection with him and through him to a web of experience, perspective and understanding different from my own in order to enlarge the place from which I stand. Stories provide in their own way.

Proudfoot returned to Eugene at the end of March with an image in his mind. It is of a 16-year-old aboriginal girl hanging from a tree, swinging in the wind. She had been raped, carved with racist epithets and hanged in Alice Springs, Australia. Alice Springs is the center of the Northern Territories and the new frontier for development, one again based on cultural genocide, Proudfoot said.

The aboriginal people, who have the oldest continuous practicing culture, have been challenging the way the land is being developed. "The landscape there is ancient, the people are of that ancient landscape and they know it, which is why they are trying to sustain it." It is a matter of survival, Proudfoot explained, and the aboriginal people's challenge is being answered brutally.

An elder woman told Proudfoot: "We are the land. We see ourselves differently from others. We're all part of a bigger picture — rock, tree, land, individuals — each has a

spirit which must be respected. Yes, we hunt, but we acknowledge the spirit of the animal. We do things to keep in balance."

Proudfoot and his students are involved in creating dialogue with other indigenous peoples around the world to focus on how to ensure each other's survival. This winter, his group stayed within a Maori community in Aotearoa, which we know as New Zealand, and were given the opportunity to look out at that country through Maori eyes. A different vantage point than a view from the Hilton.

Then onto Australia, where they were received as a native delegation at the Aboriginal Institute of Development, which was recently granted university status in Alice Springs. While there, they were taken to the inner places of the aboriginal culture and spiritual world "in so much as an outsider can be allowed." The delegation also stayed in the bush with families and were led to sacred spaces and invited to be a part of them. Proudfoot said, "There are non-articulated levels of a shared set of universals among indigenous peoples."

Proudfoot sees his work as creating a cultural and economic link with other native peoples in order to be supportive of and learn from one another. They ask each other what the things are that have led to the long-range survival of their values, traditions and cultural-intellectual traditions. They discuss the challenges facing them on a global scale at present and possibly into the future.

Balance is a key for the aboriginal people. The elder woman told Proudfoot: "Our



CHRIS HUTCHINSON/emerald

world would crack apart if women's dreaming and men's dreaming were consolidated into one. Both create the balance and keep our world whole. Can you explain to me what it's like to be in a woman's body? No? That is why we need both."

Proudfoot leans toward me at the table, tilts his head and brushes back some stray hair that has escaped from his long ponytail. His blue eyes narrow as he says, "How easy it is to cover up racism in this culture and pretend it doesn't exist as in Alice Springs." Establishments in Alice Springs have the right not to let in any aborigines except by "invitation only," which is posted on some of their doors. "There, it is cultural space, not public space." In fact, his group was met at the

door of a restaurant and turned away because the guy said they had trouble with some blacks in the place the previous week.

The thrust of Proudfoot's work in international studies since 1980 has been with indigenous cultures in North and South America, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia and most recently Australia and New Zealand. "We are slowly creating linkages and bringing them back to non-indigenous people for the benefit of all." He has also been instrumental in breaking down traditional academic walls by establishing Field Schools, or schools without walls, in Vietnam, Australia and New Zealand. These schools provide those of North American culture and indigenous people a collaborative learning opportunity to write, research, study and plan with one another (as opposed to studying each other) in order to create a foundation for concrete local results. Such collaboration produced a redo-

ing of all the displays in Vietnam's National Women's Museum so that it is a truly bilingual museum — English and Vietnamese.

Three of Proudfoot's grandparents were forced to go to Indian boarding schools. His maternal great-grandmother took a job as a cook at one of the schools just so she could see her children.

I asked Proudfoot how he maintains an equilibrium.

"When I was 5 years old, my grandfather and I were walking in the forest. My feet made impressions in the moist moss and my grandfather told me to look closely at my footprints. I looked down and he instructed that we mustn't do that — we had to walk carefully. Then, when I was around 13 and a light-skinned native struggling with the identity stuff, I wanted to strike out, be angry. Again, grandfather and I were walking close to that same spot in the forest. He said, 'Remember a long time ago, we were here? As angry as we feel, we have to remember that other people are human beings.'"

Proudfoot said, "I have a responsibility for all who have struggled, died and paid an enormous price for me to be where I am. We have an obligation to be who we are. I am a learner-teacher, which should never be separate. Western education has lost its ability to pass on balance. It creates a deficit learning situation. Some of us have to give up part of ourselves, subordinate our own cultural intellect, to the western cultural intellect so that we can participate. I try to create a non-deficit learning environment. Each place I go with students — we see, grow, learn, share and collaborate with other students and faculty. I feel so hopeful, so filled with possibility, but it doesn't take away the pain, the struggle. Still, I see the girl swinging from that tree in the wind. ... Learning is about breaking down western cultural-intellectual tradition and forcing it inside with the circle of other cultural-intellectual traditions to interact. Then, its beauty is allowed to emerge, not its dominance."

Amen.

Hannah Dillon is a columnist for the Emerald. Her columns appear on alternate Fridays. Her views do not necessarily represent those of the newspaper.

## OPINION



Hannah Dillon

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## Unfair boycott

I am deeply troubled by a letter to the editor submitted to your publication by Bill Miner (ODE, April 6). This letter contained several inaccuracies that misrepresented our company, Gardenburger Inc., and other facts relating to an unfair boycott brought against it by the Northwest Tree Planters and Farmworkers Union (PCUN).

First, Gardenburger is a copyrighted trademark of Gardenburger Inc., a publicly owned company based in Portland. Neither the product trademark nor the company are now, nor have ever been, under any controlling interest of NORPAC Foods Inc., the target of PCUN's boycott. Second, none of our eight varieties of Gardenburger veggie patties contain any ingredient grown on any of the 150 Oregon farms that together make up the cooperative known as NORPAC Foods Inc.

Gardenburger Inc. has been unfairly targeted by PCUN because it uses a company known as Robert Arneson Sales Agent Inc. to distribute a relatively small volume of its products to club and warehouse stores, such as Price/Costco and Sam's Club. Robert Arneson also does business as NORPAC Food Sales, using the name of its largest customer for marketing purposes. In fact, Robert Arneson is a sales brokerage for a number of companies other than NORPAC Foods Inc., and the two have separate and distinct ownership.

In contrast to what your readers might think, having read Miner's letter, Gardenburger Inc. has an outstanding record on issues of social responsibility. In fact, the magazine Business Ethics cited the company as one of the nation's 100 best corporate citizens, in part because of its record on social responsibility.

As president and chief execu-

tive officer of Gardenburger Inc., I ask anyone reading this letter to thoughtfully consider these points before making judgment against Gardenburger on these charges.

Lyle Hubbard  
President and CEO, Gardenburger  
**OSPIRG farewell**

It is with both sadness and gratitude that we write to you. The recent ASUO elections yielded a decision by the student body to close our chapter of OSPIRG. We are writing to thank the campus community for its support, guidance and hard work over the years on behalf of the public interest. Your involvement with the OSPIRG chapter has helped us fight many battles for students and citizens in this state on issues of extreme importance. We will miss the chapter dearly, as will many in the campus community.

OSPIRG has had major suc-

cesses over the past 27 years. It has been a watchdog for students' interests — protecting our environment from pollution, conserving our resources, revitalizing our democracy and fighting for consumer rights. This work will continue because of the chapters at other Oregon campuses. It is unfortunate that the University, which is the birthplace of OSPIRG, will not have a voice and will be without this effective watchdog. Clearly, the students here have benefited greatly from involvement with the organization directly through involvement as statewide leaders and indirectly as recipients of cleaner air and water, consumer information and active civic culture on campus.

We have learned a tremendous amount over the past weeks. A group of campus leaders has formed a committee to re-establish OSPIRG and are looking to rebuild the chapter as early as

next year. The advice and help of the campus community will be needed.

Without our supporters, OSPIRG would not have accomplished so much. Countless faculty members have sponsored course-credit internships; most student leaders have joined us in coalitions at one time or another; and thousands of students have coordinated projects and made the key decisions that have built OSPIRG into one of the state's leading public-interest organizations. This is our opportunity to thank the campus and to promise that we'll work hard to restore student-body support for having a chapter again. Please contact us with your ideas and questions at 346-4357 or ospirg@gladstone.uoregon.edu.

Glenda Marshall  
State Board Chair, OSPIRG  
Jereme Grzybowski  
University Chapter Chair, OSPIRG