WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY
College of Liberal Arts

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
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December 19th, 2002

Larry Davis
Executive Director
Washington State Board of Education
Box 47206
600 S Washington St.
Olympia, WA 98504-47206

Dear Mr. Davis,

I am writing to express my support for WAC 180-78A-700.

As Dean of the College of Liberal Arts at Washington State University, I have had numerous occasions to work with representatives of native tribes and have become increasingly aware of issues facing Native people. As a rhetorician, I heartily endorse tribal beliefs that native language is a key element necessary for the survival of their cultures and support their efforts to enliven their languages through WAC 180-78A-700.

Through years of research I have learned, language is the cornerstone of understanding and is the foundation on which most life experience is built. I strongly believe passage of WAC 180-78A-700 will enable tribal peoples to incorporate culturally relevant curriculum into tribal, local and public schools proving a platform for a multicultural educational experience which will enrich all people in our state.

We had an interesting experience here at Washington State University which seems worth sharing. Lillian Ackerman, a cultural anthropologist who has conducted extensive research on the Nez Perce reservation, worked in conjunction with tribal members to contribute authenticity to the story lines of 6 new books about Kaya, a new, historical Nez Perce doll. At a reception, which included tribal members and their children, I got to see first hand the expression on the faces of Nez Perce children when they held a doll which looked like them and read stories about a child who shared their history. It made a lasting impression on me and deepened my understanding of what it

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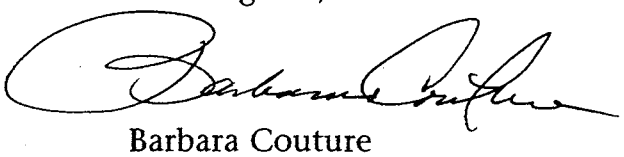
must be like to exist in a culture which does not reflect your heritage and cultural identity. Without a doubt, it was a compelling argument for the power of cultural validation.

I ask that you join me in supporting WAC 180-78A-700 as an important first step toward the rebirth of Washington State First Peoples' languages and the cultures which depend on their survival.

Kind regards,



Barbara Couture
Dean

Cc:
First Peoples' Language/Culture Committee
Tulalip Tribes
Cultural Resources Department
6410 23rd AVE NE
Tulalip, WA 98271