Teachers Energized by Summer Institute

For three stimulating and exhausting weeks in July, a group of teacher-participants, staff, and presenters immersed themselves in global issues and activities without straying far from Bloomington, Indiana. All were participating in the first Indiana University Summer International Studies Institute for Teachers, sponsored by the Indiana University’s Center for the Study of Global Change under the direction of Brian Winchester, and the Office of International Programs. Five of IUB’s area studies centers (African Studies Program, Center for Latin American & Caribbean Studies, Inner Asian & Uralic National Resource Center, Russian & East European Institute, and West European Studies National Resource Center) were also active institute partners.

The goals of the institute, subtitled “Internationalizing Your Teaching: a Best Practices Institute,” were to encourage critical thinking and problem-solving, to stimulate the application of global issues to the local setting (“Think globally, think locally”), to advocate taking action (“Think globally, act locally”), and to promote innovative teaching methods (“best practices”). Each week focused on a different global issue: the politics and economics of global environmental change; diverse problems of population and gender; and conflict resolution in deeply divided societies. The institute provided information and materials, divergent viewpoints from well-known invited speakers, and a variety of teaching methods, all designed to actively engage the teachers and integrate these issues into their curricula.

Dennis Meadows, co-author of the landmark book, Limits to Growth (1972), spoke of the dire need to conserve natural resources, cut pollution, and control population growth. His counterpart, Dennis Avery, director of the Center for Global Food Issues, was equally adamant in saying that the environment could be saved with increased use of high-yield crops and pesticides. Not surprisingly, the discussions were lively! The group then participated in the simulation game, Fishbanks, which realistically brought out the complexity of the issues.

The week included a field trip to water and sewage treatment plants, an in-depth panel discussion on water problems in East and Inner Asia, and a roundtable discussion of the worldview taught by the gorilla in Daniel Quinn’s Ishmael (1992). Participants completed the week at the IU’s Bradford Woods Outdoor Education Center, where they were led through challenge activities to illustrate how to use the environment to teach such concepts as alternative solutions, cooperative problem-solving, and productive group leadership skills.

Joni Seager, author of the New State of the Earth Atlas (2nd ed., 1995), opened the second week with her presentation on population, gender, and the environment. Kim Crews, director of Public Education Programs of the Population Reference Bureau, led participants through a number of activities. A presentation by Alyce Hill, assistant director of Peace Corps Domestic Programs, and two returned Peace Corps volunteers described the benefits of using the World Wise Schools materials developed by Peace Corps to supplement the standard school curricula.

In the population and gender panel, two African Studies Program experts spoke about gender, HIV/AIDS in Africa, and issues of migration. A Latin Americanist described the conflicts between natives and developers. Three Indiana teachers, who regularly integrate international studies into their classes, shared a wide variety of their best practices. James Becker, internationally known as the “grandfather of global education,” led a discussion on internationalizing the curriculum, while Anna Ochoa Becker, emeritus professor of...
education, examined the alternative perspectives of maps.

Ambassador Ralph Earle, deputy director of the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, introduced the third global issue by leading a discussion on conflict management at the level of arms treaty negotiations. Translating theory into practice, Dudley Weeks, director of the Partnership LifeSkills Center and two-time nominee for the Nobel Peace Prize, guided the group through numerous scenarios of conflicts and their cooperative resolutions. He also made clear the relationship between conflict resolution at the level of individuals and at the level of nations. Speakers from other world areas described the ongoing conflicts between Tibet and the Peoples’ Republic of China, and between Chechenia and Russia. The video, Talking Peace (1995), with Jimmy Carter, stimulated a thoughtful discussion of the action which participants could take to contribute toward global solutions.

For their part, participants created three lesson plans, for which they could receive graduate credit. These plans were to reflect some aspect of each global issue, and show how international materials and concepts could be integrated into the standard curricula. These lesson plans will eventually be published so that a wider audience can benefit from them. More general activities included an Internet tutorial on international resources and Web sites, a joint area studies workshop offering the teachers various outreach resources, a interactive video link with teachers in Soweto, South Africa, and an international college and career opportunities panel to guide them in counseling their students. Each area studies center hosted a culture night of music, food, and customs.

“I finally understood—emotionally—‘Think globally, act locally!’”
—Lois Silver, International Institute Participant

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The recent dig, concurs with that finding.

Pyburn has always been interested in the rise of class formation and economic relationships in Maya societies. But unlike other Maya scholars who have focused on the larger well-known sites where the politically powerful ruled, she has preferred to work in the smaller cities and communities, seeking evidence of political and economic changes in the lives of everyday folk. The recent skeletal and artifact evidence provided by the two tombs point to a shift of power away from the inheritance of land to one based on other sources of power, such as manufacturing and trade. Her reconstruction could eventually lead, she hopes, to an explanation of why some Maya communities collapsed while others continued to thrive long past the 10th century.

Pyburn’s work at Chau Hiix also enables her to put into actual practice an ethical dimension of archaeological work that she strongly believes in. Beyond merely contributing to scientific inquiry, she sees the need to have her work bring meaning as well as tangible benefits to the community in which her work takes place, so that they have a real interest and a stake in the project. Their vision of “community-oriented archaeology” led Pyburn and Wilk, in 1992, to found the Center for Archaeology in the Public Interest, which publishes a journal, Public Archaeology Review, dedicated to promoting this archaeological ethic.

They realized that their good fortune in finding Chau Hiix was due to the trust they had been able to build among the nearby local community members, a non-Maya people who had lived in the area for more than 300 years, had known of the Maya site, but had protected it from the outside world. Today the site is being worked, maintained, and preserved by members of that community, Crooked Tree, under Pyburn’s direction. Any museum-quality artifacts found at Chau Hiix will remain in Belize as property of the country’s Department of Archaeology.

Pyburn’s long-range vision is to reconstruct and preserve Chau Hiix as an archaeological park which will provide educational and cultural programs for the community, be a source of national pride for the country, attract outside visitors, and sustain the local economy through tourism. “If it should come true, the villagers will be rewarded for their selflessness and vigilance,” she says.

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