

July 11, 2023

ITEM 207-1001-R0723

Request for Authorization to Confer the Title of Professor Emeritus of Native American Studies on David R.M. Beck; University of Montana-Missoula

THAT

Upon the occasion of the retirement of Dr. David R.M. Beck from the faculty of The University of Montana, the Native American Studies faculty wishes to express its appreciation for his twenty-two years of dedicated and valued service to the University and the State of Montana by recommending that the rank of Professor Emeritus be conferred upon him by the Board of Regents of the Montana University System.

EXPLANATION

As a member of the faculty, Dr. Beck provided distinguished service to the University of Montana community from 2000 until his retirement in 2022. He consistently exhibited excellence in scholarship, teaching, and service at UM, and his work had a distinctive impact beyond the university. UM recognized Dr. Beck's achievements by awarding him the George M. Dennison Faculty Award for Distinguished Achievement in 2021.

Dr. Beck published five books on American Indian history during his time at UM, all with the University of Nebraska Press, the leading academic press publishing American Indian history. All are critically acclaimed works that have been in the vanguard of the modern reimagining of the field of American Indian history, and three have won book prizes. He is nationally recognized as one of the leading scholars in the field.

Both of Dr. Beck's Menominee tribal histories won book awards from the Wisconsin Historical Society. One reviewer of his Menominee books called *The Struggle for Self Determination* "an impressive and fine piece of historical scholarship," and wrote, "no one will ever be able to write another history of the Menominee without studying Beck carefully." These books have regularly been used in the Menominee tribal college, by high school teachers, and in the new language immersion school on the reservation. They continue to be used in college and university courses across the nation. Dr. Beck's book *Seeking Recognition* is the first, and remains the only, book published on the history of the Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua, and Siuslaw Indians. This tribe was long ignored by both policy makers and historians. The tribes' education department provides every tribal member who attends college a copy of this book.

Dr. Beck's fourth book *City Indian*, a co-authored volume on American Indian activists in Chicago in the early 20th century, received the Robert G. Athearn Award for the best book on the 20th century history of the American West from the Western History Association. This is the premiere organization of historians of the West. Based on positive reviews and classroom adoptions, the book was reissued in paperback edition in 2020. An article derived from that research, "'A one-man relocation team': Scott Henry Peters and American Indian Urban Migration," was featured in *Western Historical Quarterly: "WHQ 50th Anniversary Collections"* as one of "The five articles highlighted here [that] capture a snapshot of the concerns, methodologies, and contributions made to Native American history over the past fifty years." One article was featured from each decade of the publication's history.

The final book that Dr. Beck published while at UM, titled *UnFair Labor?*, is an economic and social history of American Indians who participated in the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago. Philip Deloria, perhaps the leading scholar of American Indian cultural history, said of the book, "In this well-researched volume, Dave Beck makes a critical contribution to the emergent literature on Native labor, globalization,

and the new histories of capitalism, while always centering indigenous people's efforts to survive, adapt, and thrive." This book received overwhelmingly positive reviews. Curtis M. Hinsley, a leading scholar on the history of anthropology, wrote of the book in his review, "Beck has given us a master class in historical research and interpretation."

All of Dr. Beck's books are used in graduate and undergraduate courses. They have also been part of the curriculum in schools and Indian education programs at the Menominee Reservation, in Chicago, and by the Coos, Lower Umpqua, and Siuslaw tribe. Several tribal programs have used them as part of educational or continuing education programs. They also provide solid background material that is used by scholars of federal policy, tribal histories, and American Indian urbanization.

During his career at UM, Dr. Beck's dedication to teaching gave him a reputation among both Native American and non-Native students as an inspirational, knowledgeable, and compassionate professor in the classroom. He regularly taught both core courses for the NAS major and general education courses. Prior to coming to UM, he taught at an American Indian controlled college for about a decade. That experience prepared him to bring practical knowledge of Indian country into the classroom, which he combined with an academic foundation that deepened students' understandings of both historical and contemporary issues faced by both tribal and their surrounding communities. He also brought the results of his research into class, regularly refreshing the material he taught and keeping it relevant. His teaching duties included classes in the Davidson Honors College at UM. His Global Leadership Initiative capstone students won the top award for outstanding senior project.

Former students regularly comment on the impact that Dr. Beck made on not only their college careers, but their lives. One former tribal council member who was a student of his recently told him, "Thank you for instilling the confidence I was lacking in knowledge. I now know my role." Another recently told him that he has kept all the readings from classes he took from Dr. Beck some twenty years ago, and shares them with his students at the tribal college where he now works.

Dr. Beck's work with students and faculty in Canada and Mexico gave him a broad base to teach North American indigenous history and issues. Through his work as a principal investigator on a federal FIPSE grant, and his work with Americans for Indian Opportunity, he visited and worked with indigenous communities not only in North America, but Guatemala, Bolivia, Peru, and Venezuela as well. All of these experiences contributed to the unique background he brought into the classroom.

Although the NAS department is an undergraduate only department, Dr. Beck served on numerous M.A. and Ph.D. committees in a broad variety of fields, but primarily in History and Anthropology. He also taught graduate courses at the University of Montana, usually as extra to load, and a graduate seminar at the Newberry Library in Chicago as part of the Newberry (Library) Consortium in American Indian Studies. In fact, Dr. Beck was instrumental in bringing the University of Montana into that consortium, which significantly benefited UM graduate students who participated in workshops and symposia, as well as earning them Newberry Library fellowships. He also led an effort to bring UM graduate students to Washington DC over several summers to digitize tens of thousands of Montana tribal records held in the National Archives. These records are now part of the Mansfield Library digital collection.

Dr. Beck's service to the university also included work on numerous standing committees and search committees. He served multiple terms on faculty senate, including as chair; the UM press advisory board; the Institutional Review Board; and the University Faculty Association board, among others. In all of his service he sought to advocate on behalf of students, Native American Studies, faculty, and the university as

a whole. He also served as faculty adviser to the Kyiyo Native American Student Association when they gained a base of permanent financial support from the UM administration.

Sharing his skills and knowledge with the public was also important to Dr. Beck. He regularly spoke at community events and institutions in and out of Montana. His service to Native communities, including but not limited to those which he wrote about, was deep and far-reaching. He believed that ethical historical research includes learning from and sharing results with the Indigenous communities about which he wrote, as well as providing research services to communities at their request. He regularly shared his research with the communities he wrote about, at children's summer camps, tribal leaders' meetings, educational and cultural heritage institutions, and in public talks.

The Menominee Historic Preservation Department regularly consulted with Dr. Beck. He also worked with the tribal council, the treaty office, and the language immersion school that was established on the Menominee reservation. He provided historical research reports for the Menominee Treaty Office and the tribal chairman's office. These research reports played a role bringing sturgeon back to the reservation after a hiatus of a century, and the concomitant re-establishment of the annual Menominee sturgeon ceremony in conjunction with their work with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources; the successful battle of a multi-tribal coalition to protect the Wolf River from mining interests; and successful Menominee efforts to prove the southern expanses of their aboriginal land base to the Bureau of Indian Affairs. He also worked with the Menominee Historic Preservation office and tribal elders in their preparation of history books for the tribe, including one on Menominee Veterans from the French and Indian War through the Vietnam War. He was regularly asked to speak about tribal history to language immersion teacher trainees on the Menominee reservation.

In Chicago, Dr. Beck was asked to speak about his research at the American Indian Center. In Oregon, he shared his knowledge of Coos history with children at that tribe's summer camps and spoke on CTCLUSI history at tribally sponsored events. In Montana he worked with scholars from Harvard University on an oral history project related to cyanide heap leach mining on the Rocky Boy Reservation, and helped students at Browning high school understand the historical uses of photographs. In addition, he regularly volunteered at Indian community events on the Blackfeet Reservation and in Missoula for more than two decades.

Nationally, Dr. Beck co-developed the academic focus of the Americans for Indian Opportunity (AIO) Ambassadors Program. This is recognized as the leading culturally based American Indian leadership development program in the country. He served as a mentor for many of the Ambassadors for more than a quarter century. While at UM, Dr. Beck received numerous awards from tribal organizations and communities for his work with them. Internationally, in addition to travel with students and American Indian leaders, Dr. Beck lectured at two universities in Mexico and provided training on American Indian cultures, history, sovereignty, and current issues to corporate leaders in both the U.S. and Canada.

For his scholarly work, his teaching, and his service to campus, to Indian country, and to the larger public, and for his professional recognition and status beyond Montana, Dr. David R. M. Beck is highly deserving of recognition as an Emeritus Professor of Native American Studies.

ATTACHMENTS

None