West Virginia University has a long tradition of supporting open access to scholarly communications. Of special significance is a prediction made in 1996 by Chief Jake Swamp of the Mohawk Nation at the West Virginia University Peace Tree Ceremony where he made a profound statement about open access.

“And by the year 2000, I predict that it’s going to arrive. People suddenly are going to understand the meaning of what they need to do.

This means they are going to share information freely with one another. People who are now holding information to themselves[…] they’re going to give it all because other people are looking for that information so that something can be developed to heal our world.”


True to his prediction, by 1998, WVU had become the second school in the world to have implemented an electronic thesis and dissertation (ETD) submission requirement. Over the following decade many other schools around the world followed WVU’s pioneering path to share research information freely.

In 2009, Chief Jake Swamp’s prediction served as a dedication to the “Global Outreach through Open Access Colloquium” segment of the International ETD2009 Conference co-sponsored by WVU. Presentations included major announcements including the Developing Nations Access Initiative hosted by JSTOR, the Open Science Directory hosted by UNESCO and the Library of Congress’ World Digital Library project.

Today many government agencies around the world, including the National Institute of Health have open access mandates for publicly funded research. Additionally many options are now available for scholars to publish in refereed open access journals and repositories.

Sadly, Chief Jake Swamp passed away this past Monday, October 18th at the age of 68. His spirit remains with us as we celebrate International Open Access Week.

Swamp was a diplomat, author, teacher, chief, husband, father, grandparent, great-grandparent and friend to many.

He was a Mohawk sub-chief and ambassador of the Mohawk Nation of the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) confederacy for more than 30 years in which he served as a counselor and spiritual leader.

In 1984, Swamp founded the Tree of Peace Society, which is based on the teachings of the Peacemaker and the formation of the Iroquois Confederacy. He traveled the world, sharing Haudenosaunee knowledge and planting white pine trees that symbolized universal peace.

Chief Jake Swamp’s prediction was indeed followed by global efforts towards advocating open access and healing this world. He has served as an inspiration along the long and winding journey in open access scholarly communications at WVU and beyond.

In honor of Chief Jake Swamp’s legacy and in commemoration of International Open Access Week, this dedication is declared on October 21st, 2010, day of the WVU Peace Tree Ceremony.

Sources
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