

The Developing Art of Archiving Photographs: Dolores Varela-Phillips Photographs of the Nisqually-Puyallup Fishing Controversy

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History of Collection

This collection documents the 1970 conflict between two tribes, the Nisqually and Puyallup, and Washington state law enforcement, shedding light on a critical period of national and local civil-rights history. This important event was the catalyst in revisions to Washington state laws. Varela-Phillips' donated collection is comprised of negatives she hid in her purse lining to prevent confiscation by the police.

Negative Collections & Visual Materials Archives

Negative collections are a distinctive and time-consuming variation from standard processing. This often hinders valuable materials from reaching the public; a mounting information problem archives face. Making this collection available was an exciting opportunity.

Research Value

Raising awareness about the significance of this rare collection is paramount since this year marked the 40th anniversary of the Boldt Decision, reinstating the traditional fishing rights of nine tribes. Already, these images have received user-requests for an upcoming Smithsonian exhibit and a visual presentation at the memorial held for Billy Frank Jr. (a predominate activist featured throughout the collection).

Processing the Collection

Research

- Develop historical context based on the persons, settings and events of image contents through investigative research
- Establish social significance
- Understand & apply archival standards while addressing the unique needs of the collection

Preservation

- Determine condition of the materials, level of preservation necessary & correct format to house materials
- Properly rehouse photographs into archival sleeves & boxes
- Label & number photographs, folders and boxes

Arrangement & Description

- Organize photographs into a series, sub-series & item-level structure based upon relevant intellectual order to make browsing the collection intuitive & establish relationships between the images
- Encode an EAD finding aid with item level descriptions and labels

Creating Access

- Scan entire collection to make images easily accessible online
- Create printed booklet for quick browsing
- Understanding and enforcing restrictions applied to the images
- Add links to enable Content DM
- Post finding aid on Digital Collection Site

“ I don't remember taking all those fishing rights confrontation photos. I think I was in shock since bullets were flying over my head and skirmishes were taking place all around. My camera seemed to take on a life of its own. My fingers just kept pressing the shutter, somehow, and lo and behold, this collection was created! ”

- Dolores Varela-Phillips



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