The term “key note” got re-invented at this year’s Teaching Equity Conference as Dr. Jeffrey Duncan Andrade left an audience of 160 attendees laughing, crying, invigorated, and newly dedicated towards change agency and educational excellence. Dr. Andrade’s talk was entitled “Roses in the Concrete” and his words methodically painted the picture of urban high school resistance, resilience, and persistence, even in the face of unfathomable violence, neglect, and distress inflicted on marginalized youth in major inner-city school districts.

An incessant question kept reverberating throughout the seventy-five minutes of his speech: why do these kids keep coming to school when personal safety is moment to moment in jeopardy simply on the daily concrete trek of trying to get to the building before the morning bell? Dr. Jeff clicked two images on his power point that made an indelible impression on a hushed conference crowd. The first was a class picture of his sophomore high school English class at the Oakland, California high school where he teaches daily before commuting to his “other” job as associate professor at San Francisco State University. It is a class of youngsters who have experienced the murder of friends and classmates and the generational disregard of an inequitable school system. And yet here was a photo of high school kids filled with hope – which is the second revelation flashed on the screen. Dr. Andrade’s lecture was a discourse about hope, bared however of sentimental adages, but rather a hope infused with critical analysis and shaped by the unrealized changes in schools which simply must materialize.

“When the talk is over and nobody leaves their seats, you know it’s hit its mark,” said Alice Madsen, Highline Community College ECE faculty member. In fact, much of the audience remained in the auditorium for Dr. Andrade’s Q&A which followed the key note. Among the many specifics which were taken up at this time, one of the most important was the issue of white ally-ship – how can white teachers who are committed to social justice support initiatives towards teaching equity?

Questions such as these provided the natural segue for more than twenty workshops which were offered at the conference, following Dr. Andrade’s speech. Each and every workshop was highly regarded and appreciated by the attendees. Of special note was a workshop entitled “Since Time Immemorial: Tribal Sovereignty in Washington State Online Curriculum Project” presented by Denny Hurtado. This was especially timely as some of these same facilitators returned to CWU’s Des Moines center a few weeks later for a repeat presentation that was attended by graduate and undergraduate classes in the education programs (see p. 3).

The Teaching Equity Conference has become a Spring mainstay on the Highline Community College and CWU Des Moines campus. Having joined forces with The Center for Excellence in Careers in Education, and the WEA Cultural Diversity Project, this conference is now a force to behold on the Puget Sound educational landscape. It also has been wonderful to welcome the Foundation for Early Learning as a sponsor. The Foundation helps provide an early childhood education dimension, which is commensurate every theme and message resounded during this electrifying day.
Kindergarten Goes to College

It’s common to talk about kindergarten readiness, but in our community the talk among kindergarteners has been about college readiness. The Power of Diversity, in conjunction with Highline Community College welcomed 130 kindergartners from the Kent School District for a morning of exploration, conversation, and high order education. These early childhooders arrived wearing T-shirts announcing the class of 2023. They toured the campus, looked for the library, for totem poles, and for “students studying.”

Seated in classrooms, these Pine Hill and Millennium Elementary students participated in a recycle sorting activity, and then most importantly had a chance to offer advice to the college students who are learning to be teachers.

What follows are some of the advice gems that these six year olds were happy to offer:

“Help kids learn to read big words in books!”
“Be good to others. Be kind.”
“Don’t give up.”
“Share toys.”
Teachers, help me when I need help.”
Teachers need a smart board.”
Help kids learn about butterflies.”
Laugh and have fun!
Help us count to 10 or 100 or 1,000!
Teach us how to solve our problems.
And finally...
“You need a classroom!” (The most cogent advice of all).
Since Time Immemorial: Tribal Sovereignty in Washington State

The West Side Elementary, ECE, and Graduate Education Programs were lucky and honored to be able to host a presentation by Denny Hurtado and Shana Brown who revealed this rich and vast curriculum about tribal sovereignty. This curriculum is now available free of charge simply by clicking on the OSPI website. These presenters walked a packed room full of education majors students through the history of bringing the curriculum to fruition, and then through the ins and outs of navigating the curriculum as a classroom teacher.

The magic of this curriculum is that there are Tribal sovereignty units for every U.S. history and Washington State history unit that OSPI recommends. Therefore there is a Native American perspective immediately at the ready as teachers tackle historical or contemporary issues. The curriculum is founded on the concept of “The Big Five” - which are the key learnings that every student should take away from years of schooling no matter what the school district. What follows is the big five for elementary:

By the time Washington State students leave elementary school they will understand:

- That over 500 independent tribal nations exist within the U.S. and they interact on a government-to-government basis.
- That tribal sovereignty is “a way that tribes govern themselves in order to keep and support their ways of life.”
- That tribal sovereignty predates treaty times.
- That treaties limited their sovereignty.
- That students will be able to identify the names and locations of tribes in their areas.

This presentation was arranged and facilitated by Dr. Don Woodcock whose EDF 507 class attended along with guest classes from the Des Moines Early Childhood and elementary education cohorts and the Kent Elementary Education Program. Every one of these teachers or future teachers left the workshop emboldened with the mantra “I can do that!” a reference to a firm recognition that tribal sovereignty can and must become a perspective in every classroom.