

**Cascadian Spirituality:
Religion, Nature, and Social Inclusion in the Pacific Northwest**

Final Report Submitted to: The Religion and Diversity Project

Principal Investigator: Paul Bramadat

Research Assistants: Rachel Brown and Samantha Bahan

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1. Project Goals

Aims and Objectives: I sought support for a small project that addressed matters of interest to the Religion and Diversity Project, particularly the goals of Stands One and Four. In this project we collected and assessed the various sources of empirical and theoretical data available in order to initiate a thorough account of Cascadian religion and its relationship with the social and political realities of the region. The questions this smaller project addressed (and which will be fully considered in a proposed SSHRC project) will be: 1) How inclusive is Cascadia: with a special focus on how newcomers from non-European and non-Christian societies experience Cascadian religious and cultural sensibilities; 2) What difference does the border make: the differential impact of U.S. and Canadian national (or provincial/state) policies and norms (with respect to ethnic, religious, and racial diversity) on the emerging Cascadian style of religion; and 3) What are the public implications of this form of religion/spirituality: if conventional forms of religion are being eclipsed by Cascadian modes, what are the implications for the public sphere (e.g., the effect of declining church-based volunteer labour on the provision of social services; the disjuncture between this emerging form of religion and the existing laws related to religious freedom and discrimination).

2. Researchers and Students Involved;

Principal investigator: Dr. Paul Bramadat, Professor and Director, Centre for Studies in Religion and Society, University of Victoria; Research Assistants: 1) Rachel Brown, Wilfrid Laurier University doctoral candidate and CSRS Visiting Fellow, and 2) Sam Bahan, University of Victoria senior undergraduate student who, as part of a directed readings project, worked with the PI and Ms. Brown on themes related to religion in Cascadia. Ms. Brown's activities were supported by the RDP, whereas Ms. Bahan's work was part of her course requirements: both helped to contribute to the objectives of the project.

3. Rationale

The “Cascadia” region encompasses the lower half of British Columbia and the states of Washington and Oregon (although some definitions include all of B.C. and parts of northern California). Scholars and journalists have recently begun to reflect on the arguably distinctive religious and spiritual characteristics of this region; nonetheless many questions remain unanswered and many implications remain unconsidered. Traditional forms of religion are alive and well in Cascadia – e.g., evangelical Christianity in the Fraser Valley of B.C. and in the suburbs of Seattle and Portland; and rapidly growing traditions such as Sikhism, Islam, and Hinduism around Vancouver, B.C. However, when people speak of the religious features of Cascadia, they are generally referring to a progressive, post-institutional, eclectic form of spirituality characterized by a suspicion of tradition and an identification with the natural environment of the west coast.

4. Methods

Methods: Innovation Grant funds were used to hire a doctoral student (Rachel Brown) to gather and review existing research on the nature of this phenomenon to provide an account of both its empirical characteristics and its symbolic role in conversations about religion in North America. Specifically, we were able to: a) identify and collect existing data sources (e.g., surveys, historical accounts, sociological and ethnographic work, dissertations, court cases); b) determine and report on provisional answers to the above three questions; c) identify remaining work to be performed in Canada and the US in order to answer these questions fully; d) create a team of scholars to collaborate on a major international research project in the following year; and e) draft a proposal to SSHRC to support this research.

5. Ethics, permissions (include any delays)

As human subjects were not involved in this project, ethics approval was not sought.

6. Summary of Activities

With the support provided by the RDP, I was able to hire and work closely with an excellent doctoral student from Wilfrid Laurier University as we assessed the existing and emerging research terrain related to Cascadia. In particular,

- We addressed the three questions in our objectives (see above);

- I visited religious or spiritual sites in Victoria, Vancouver, Seattle, and Portland to get a stronger “lay of the land” and determine the best approach to the issues that interest scholars and policy makers;
- We produced a report (attached) summarizing our initial responses to the three questions;
- We produced a list of scholars engaged in research on the region (attached);
- We produced an annotated bibliography (attached);
- Using these resources, we were able to produce an application for a SSHRC Insight Grant (to be submitted in October 2016)

7. Provisional Findings

See three attached documents.

8. Outputs

In addition to giving a presentation in religion/spirituality in Cascadia at the RDP meeting in Montreal (May 2016), and producing the three attached documents, this research endeavour has allowed me to write a grant application to be submitted to SSHRC’s Insight program. This support has been extremely valuable; the proposal is far stronger than it would otherwise have been.

9. Finances

Breakdown of Expenses for <i>Cascadian Spirituality: Religion, Nature, and Social Inclusion in the Pacific Northwest</i>				
Student Funding*	Amount	Name	Dates	Project
Student Stipends	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Student Assistantship	\$6,669.69	Rachel Brown – Research Assistantship	August 2015 – August 2016	<i>Cascadian Spirituality</i>
Research Funding	Amount	Project	Dates	Specifics**

Funding for Research Costs	\$60	Sam Bahan – SurveyMonkey survey to produce quantitative data	March – April, 2016	<i>Cascadian Spirituality</i>
Funding for Research Travel	\$2,820.31	Paul Bramadat – Research travel to Vancouver, Washington and Oregon (Cascadia Region)	May, 2016 June, 2016 July, 2016	<i>Cascadian Spirituality</i>
Funding for Administrative/Supply Costs Related to Research	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
TOTAL AWARD	\$9,550 (original allocation = \$6,650 student assistantship, plus \$2,900 research travel; actual allocation = \$6,669.69 student assistantship, plus \$60 research costs; plus \$2,820.31 research travel.			
*(Please see Assistantship/Student Funding Guidelines above)				
**If items were purchased, indicate item, relationship to project and cost				
***All research are required to submit research reports related to their student/research funding.				