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**UWSP students to get primer on Native American forestry techniques and history**

Professors in the College of Natural Resources and the College of Letters and Sciences at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point (UWSP) are teaming up this semester to collaborate on a course in the history of Native American forestry.

Mike Demchik, associate professor of forestry, and Michael Foret, associate professor of history, are teaching an upper level course titled Native American Forestry. According to Demchik this course is a great opportunity for forestry majors to learn about the ecology and natural history of North America's forests from Native American's use of the forest prior to colonization over 400 years ago.

"We actually have a historical record that stretches back four hundred years," according to Foret. "It starts with observations made by early European explorers, even though they didn't always understand what they were seeing. Later, we have oral histories and other contributions by Native Americans." Demchik added that "the historical record used in conjunction with the scientific record allows us to better understand the development of Native American forest management practices."

According to Demchik and Foret, this is a course that will enhance student knowledge and understanding of Native American forestry practices and the ways in which past practices influenced the ecology of forest land in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

"We know that many tribes utilized burning on some quite substantial forest tracks throughout the past millennium in parts of North America. Ecologists are just beginning to appreciate the importance of fire to the maintenance of forest and grassland ecosystems," said Demchik. "In our own backyard is one of the world's most successfully managed forests owned and operated by the Menominee Nation. Their sustainable forest management practices go back over a hundred years and it is incumbent on this generation of teachers to transfer that knowledge base to the state's future foresters."

The course has natural, historical and cultural components. Areas of focus within the course syllabus include ecological principles, Savanna species, and culturally modified trees; laws, treaties, and court cases that have impacted tribal forest management; current tribal forest management practices; and student-led learning circles and presentations.