



Seminar  
Event

## School of Public Administration University of Victoria

Thursday, January 18, 2007

1:00 p.m. - 2:30 p.m.

Location: Cornett Building  
Room A132  
University of Victoria

### Epidemic Disease and the Creation of the BC-Washington Border, 1876 - 1910

By: Dr. Jennifer Seltz (PhD, History)

Please register for this FREE seminar  
ON-LINE at:

[http://publicadmin.uvic.ca/cpss/lgi/  
events.htm](http://publicadmin.uvic.ca/cpss/lgi/events.htm)

For more information, please  
contact Jessica Worsley at:

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In September 1876, residents of Port Townsend on the eastern edge of the Olympic Peninsula held an “indignation meeting” to protest the recent arrival of “smallpox afflicted Indians” from the town of Victoria. Although smallpox hit the West Coast from southern California to Vancouver Island that year, this was not the first time Washingtonians blamed the disease’s presence in the territory on infected Indians from across the border. Seattle newspapers waged a campaign against the danger posed by Native prostitutes, supposedly from Victoria, and Indian agents, as they had for the previous decade, traced outbreaks of smallpox and other serious illnesses at reservations and agencies throughout northwestern Washington to Native people’s unrestricted movements around Puget Sound and the Gulf of Georgia.

Epidemics and local anxieties about the travels of sick or contagious Indians stimulated some of the first concerted attempts in late 19th Century British Columbia, Vancouver Island, and Washington to make the border a barrier to movement. Smallpox, measles, and influenza epidemics, as well as periodic scares about endemic syphilis, prompted local settlers, state, federal, and colonial officials to strengthen and enforce distinctions between American and Canadian Indians. This paper will examine these efforts and Native responses, which formed a complex local history behind the later, apparently top-down implementation of more stringent medical tests for immigrants and more coercive medical practices on reserves and reservations.

Dr. Seltz recently completed her PhD in History at the University of Washington and, in 2005/06, was a Visiting Lecturer of Western U.S. History (1803 - 1945) at the National University of Ireland-Galway. Her research interests are in U.S. environmental, social, cultural and 19th Century. Starting next fall, she will be teaching at Western Washington University’s Huxley College of the Environment.