

Sunday December 27, 1992

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## UW-Stevens Point Menominee language to be taught

*The university will offer  
the course on Indians  
beginning in January*

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Special to The Journal

Stevens Point, Wis. — In what possibly is a first, the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point plans to offer a course in the language of the Menominee Indians.

The class, Menominee 101, begins in January, and will continue with Menominee 102 in the fall semester of 1993.

History Prof. David Wrone, who pushed the university to add the class, cites several reasons for offering the course at Stevens Point.

"First of all, the land the current university and surrounding areas sits on originally belonged to the Menominee Indians," Wrone said. "The land was ceded to the United States with the treaty of 1837. Therefore, the language being taught in this course is the original language of the area."

Wrone says the Menominee language also is one of the first three Indian languages to become known within the borders of what is now Wisconsin. The other two are languages of the Winnebago and Chippewa.

Another reason that the school has decided to offer the course is that it is developing the Menominee Clans Project, which is a museum exhibit that covers the 34 Menominee Indian clans. The project will feature hand-carved wooden figurines, maps and tribal memorabilia.

Wrone says that when the exhibit is finished in about two years there will be "nothing like it anywhere in the United States."

Wrone praised the talents of instructor Marvin Steven Askenette, a language teacher in Menominee Indian Reservation schools in Keshena and Neopit.

Askenette, who spoke the language exclusively as a child, says he began teaching it to help preserve it.

"When I was in college, there were several teachers who understood the language a little bit, but they couldn't completely understand it and converse in it," Askenette said.

"The language has many different complexities that make it culturally very beautiful," he said.

Both Wrone and Askenette said the Menominee language is very beautiful when it's spoken correctly and understood. It is for that reason, Askenette said, that he'll take the time to put words and phrases in context by explaining their meaning and significance in the culture as understood through Indian legend.

"Everything in nature has a significance in our spirituality, and the language reflects this," he said.

He said the Menominee language isn't alone in that respect.

"Indians, as well as other peoples around the world have their own cultures and value systems, and all of them need to be preserved and understood," he said.

Wrone said the Menominee language also was chosen because it had well-developed educational materials, including Menominee dictionaries, that could be used at the collegiate level.

Wrone said that UW-Stevens Point planned to make the class permanent, and, based on the heavy response so far, he feels that there shouldn't be any problems in doing that. Plans are also under way to introduce Menominee 103 and 104, if interest remains high.