

IMAGES OF PRAIRIE DIVERSITY VERSUS MICROSOFT'S MONOCULTURALISM

**DOUGLAS CAULKINS*, ANTHROPOLOGY, GOODNOW HALL, GRINNELL COLLEGE,
GRINNELL, IA 50112**

Abstract: Every day, millions of PC computer users boot up Windows XP and see "Bliss," a famous image of newly mown green fields, blue skies, a touch of cloud, and a glimpse of mountain peaks. As an uncluttered design, Bliss is brilliant, but as a statement of aesthetics and values, it unfortunately normalizes the concept of biological homogeneity. Aesthetic preferences can be influenced, subtly but strongly, by prestigious and familiar images. To replace Bliss with an image of diversity, anthropologists in the Prairie Studies Program established a set of criteria for a new desktop image and reviewed hundreds of photos of prairie landscapes. Defiantly named "Diversified Bliss," the selected image was installed on every public access computer at Grinnell College. The image is available to students and alumni who want to support the cognitive model of biological and cultural diversity, an important value at the college.