



Seattle Clear Sky Newsletter

Thriving Through Education. Culture and Tradition

JULY 2024 ISSUE

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A DAY OF INDIGENOUS GRADUATION

BY: AMELIA ANDRESS (SENECA HAUDENOSAUNEE)

Graduation season is very important for indigenous communities, it's a sign of our resilience, cultural identities and power and on June 16th ,2024 a Indigenous Graduation ceremony took place.

When the boarding schools were in place that tried to erase our culture and our people created multiple generations of trauma around the links of family culture, and traditional learning. Native communities are still trying to rebuild from this colonization of our daily lives, many urban natives are forced into these predominantly white schools with little to no native-centered education. This time last year was when I celebrated my own graduation season, it's what helped me realize that I had native culture around me, I embraced my culture as much I could do with what I had around me. It was when a Essay contest opportunity was presented to me that lead to me being with indigenous culture with strong connections. I was honored last year with an eighth generation blanket at the Edmonds powwow. Then a couple days later, I attended the UNEA 2023 graduation ceremony and its how I found my self as a intern with UNEA and its something I'm so grateful for.

At the 2024 graduation ceremony many eighth graders going into the high school and many seniors attended, many proudly wore regalia, ribbon skirts and shirts and Keffiyehs worn in solidarity representing our indigenous relatives in Gaza. The day was filled with amazing commentary from our amazing MCKasey Nicholson, and meaning speeches from our keynote D'Andre Fisher and student speakers Landon Brewer and Isabella Haawkson. Before students walked across the stage ,families shared a meal together. Amazing traditional foods from Liiv for Flavor, brought everyone close together. As the ceremony started the 8th grade graduates walked and were honored with beadwork necklaces, eighth generation notebooks and eighth generation towels.

The graduating seniors were first gifted with beadwork necklaces, a cedar box with various gifts inside, cedar headband from Elder Lora Pennington, then wrapped with a 8th generation blanket and handed flowers and a art print. Seeing all the graduates looking so proud and happy as they walked off the stage with some thing I really enjoyed and it made me think back to something I heard in passing, statistically our people should not be here, indigenous communities were devastated by colonization, and the new generation of indigenous youth are finding our own paths and ways to honor our ancestors. I see graduation as that way of honoring our ancestors that didn't get have the opportunities a way to empower and show our resilience and keeping our culture alive.

So congratulations to the 2024 graduates!

MULTICULTURAL NIGHT AT BISHOP BLANCHET

BY: ROYAL OLEBAR-HUGHES

During my time at Bishop Blanchet's multicultural night, I had a great time, and was there because I wanted to see and experience things from cultures which I haven't yet. What stood out to me the most was when they were dancing with wooden poles closing and opening and dancing between the two poles. They started to dance and the girl who was painting my face said, "we should stop and watch them dance for a bit its really cool, and they do it every year." That form of dancing is called Tinikling and is a dance that originated from the Philippines, specifically Leyte, one of the Visayan islands. I have only ever seen it done online and had yet to experience it in person until then. The performance I think that was the best were when one of the students was playing the guitar. It may have not been the best in my eyes, but my favorite was when there were 20+ students and even a few adults dancing in the rectangle. I not only enjoyed their performance but ours too because now I know most of the songs and just need to work on the projection of my voice when I do sing. We may have messed up a few times but with the little time we had to practice we did pretty good.



RIBBON SKIRTS

BY: CAMERYN HUBBARD

In June, many of the interns spent the day at NSC making ribbon skirts. Ribbon skirts hold a deep cultural significance for many Indigenous communities across North America. These skirts are not just pieces of clothing; they are symbols of identity, resilience, and heritage. Traditionally, ribbon skirts are handmade garments adorned with colorful ribbons sewn onto fabric, each ribbon often representing different aspects of the wearer's life, community, or personal journey. The choice of colors, patterns, and the number of ribbons can carry specific meanings, reflecting personal stories, tribal affiliations, or honoring specific events and individuals. The process of creating a ribbon skirt is itself an act of cultural preservation and expression. Many Indigenous women learn the art of making these skirts from their elders, passing down techniques and stories through generations. This practice reinforces community bonds and ensures that cultural traditions remain vibrant and alive. The skirts are often worn during ceremonies, powwows, and other significant events, serving as a visual representation of cultural pride and continuity. In recent years, ribbon skirts have also become symbols of resistance and activism. For instance, they are worn to raise awareness about issues such as the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW) crisis.

By wearing ribbon skirts, Indigenous women and their allies bring visibility to these critical issues, using their cultural attire as a powerful statement of solidarity and demand for justice. The resurgence of interest in ribbon skirts among younger generations is a testament to their enduring relevance. Many young Indigenous women are embracing this tradition, customizing their skirts to reflect contemporary influences while honoring their heritage. This blend of traditional and modern elements showcases the dynamic nature of Indigenous cultures, which continue to evolve while staying rooted in their historical foundations. Moreover, the ribbon skirt has transcended its original cultural boundaries, gaining appreciation and respect from broader audiences. Non-Indigenous people are increasingly recognizing the significance of these garments and the stories they embody. This growing awareness fosters greater understanding and appreciation of Indigenous cultures, promoting cross-cultural dialogue and respect. In essence, ribbon skirts are much more than beautiful garments; they are living embodiments of cultural identity, resilience, and continuity. They tell stories of individual and collective journeys, honor traditions, and serve as powerful symbols of resistance and pride. By wearing and creating ribbon skirts, Indigenous women assert their presence, celebrate their heritage, and inspire future generations to carry forward these rich cultural traditions.

UNEA'S TEA WITH MATRIARCHS EVENT

BY:OLIVIA ANDRESS (SENECA/HAUDENOSAUNEE)

On Tuesday, May 14th 2024, UNEA held a "Tea with Matriarchs" event. The event was organized by UNEA intern Amelia Andress, Sajali Keeline, Hilary Penfield, and Kayla Harstad. The evening started off with the group coming together to say the land acknowledgement. Lisa Monger said a blessing, then she led the circle in singing Happy Birthday to one of the Matriarch guests.

After this, it was time for the food! The event was catered by Chef Olivia. There was quote the spread, including a Salmon linguine, salads, two kinds of rolls, some cupcakes for after dinner, and Teas by Tess for the drinks.

After dinner, there was an earring contest. There were different categories including longest earrings, most colorful, crowd favorite, best story, and the last minute addition of best political statement. After the winners were selected, we sat down and shared messages to mothers that people had written on the white board. We then ended the evening by giving gifts to all the matriarchs in attendance.

There were also crafting stations to make things, and a photo booth set up. My mother Tiara Andress said "It was great to be surrounded by so many other families, honoring and remembering all the mothers, and memorializing the time with a photo".



INDIGENOUS PEOPLES FESTIVAL

BY OLIVIA ANDRESS (SENECA/HAUDENOSAUNEE)

On June 8th, 2024 at Seattle Center, the Indigenous Peoples Festival took place from 12–5pm. UNEA had a booth there for our program, with information on internship, Clear Sky, athletics, and events. Some of the other booths there included: Seattle Indian Health Board, Whitefoot Fish and Catering, Bark n Branch, Raindrop Regalia, and many others. While there were vendors, there were also dancers and groups performing, such as Blue Heron canoe Family and a Makah dance group. The Makah group had flute players and did a traditional hoop dance.

I was there as an intern with UNEA, the Urban Native Education Alliance, to share about our programs. There were many people who came by and asked questions, and while answering those questions, I feel as though I learned many new things as well. Some of the questions were broad, such as “What does your organization do,” or “What is your organization,” but some of the questions were more targeted to certain things, such as people asking when the Native warriors club starts and the age range, as well as asking about our newsletters and photobooks that we had from our DC trip and the GONA photos.

I asked my fellow intern Alex Espana what she enjoyed the most about the event, and she said “I enjoyed seeing all the people coming together to celebrate our indigenous roots”, and that she hoped to be able to go to more events like this



RITE OF PASSAGE CEREMONY

BY: TIA HILLER

The rite of passage ceremony is one of UNEA's annual events of the year which we celebrated on Sunday June 16th which was also on Father's Day, so UNEA had gifts for the fathers and father figures. This year's rite of passage ceremony was UNEA's 17th annual event for the graduating seniors and the eighth graders going into high school. Before the event had started me and other interns went early to help set up and decorate for the afternoon, when we were starting to get closer to the start of the event, I was starting to get nervous because I was going to be reading the clear sky land acknowledgement. When I had time to practice saying the land acknowledgement before I had to go up and say it, I would practice saying it out loud, making sure that I'm saying every word right, and that I'm reading it not too fast and taking my time with reading the land acknowledgement. Right before I was about to go up, I had got really nervous but taking a couple of deep breaths helped a little, when I got up there, I was still nervous, but I was trying to keep calm and read the land acknowledgement after I was done with reading the acknowledgement I felt relieved that I was done but also proud that I went up and read the land acknowledgement in front of a lot of people and I would say that overall I did good with reading the acknowledgement and that my public speaking was gotten a little better. After the opening prayer and song, land acknowledgement, our keynote speaker De'Andre Fisher, and MC Kasey Nicholson and then the drumming and singing from the UNEA interns and the 206 drum group/singers. We had dinner and then called up the eighth graders up for their recognition and gifts then after all the eighth graders went up was the graduating seniors who then also got there recognition and there gifts. After the seniors and eighth graders got their gifts there was an announcement for all of the fathers and father figures there at the event, so when the announcement was made the interns went out and gave a gift to the fathers and father figures in the room. After that there was more drumming and singing from the 206 and then we started wrapping up for the evening and handing out flower bouquets to the families there. "It was nice to see indigenous students from several different school districts recognized for their achievements" -Tiara Andress





Urban Native Education Alliance

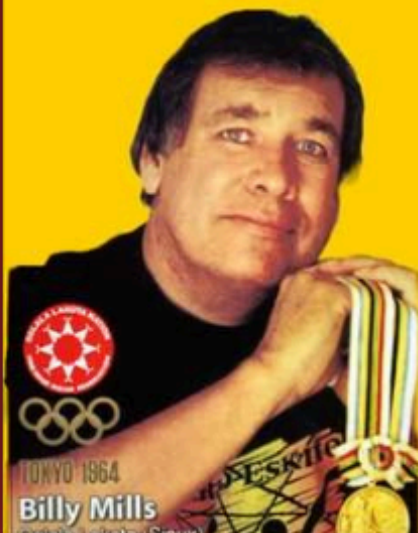


BILLY MILLS RUN/WALK FOR LIFE

Sunday August 25th, 2024

1:00-3:00pm

**Prizes, Food, Drinks,
Photo Booth, Resource tabling
Contest and categories for All ages**



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