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THE JOURNEY TO A WIND RIVER

BY AMELIA ANDRESS (SENECA HAUDENOSAUNEE)

Ten Members of the Urban Native Education Alliance Internship, Chaperones, and kids started our journey to Wind River with a very long drive to Billings, Montana, on the first day. On the second day, we set out for Big Horn National Park to visit the largest and oldest medicine wheel in North America. The hike up was beautiful, offering various stunning views from the mountain's peak. Along the way, we heard elk calls and saw plenty of pikas and chipmunks. Once we reached the top, we laid down tobacco and shared a song. One highlight of that day was spotting a black bear on the other side of the valley as we drove to the medicine wheel.

The next morning, we left early for Bear's Lodge and began a hike around the loop. I felt a profound spiritual presence, especially with the prayer ties lining the trails. According to the story, the Northern Cheyenne people used the top of the rock to hide from a large bear, a narrative depicted at the trailhead. With binoculars, we could see a wooden ladder remnant on the right side of the rock. Later that day, we reached Thermopolis, Wyoming, and enjoyed the healing waters of the hot springs.

The following morning, we returned to the Thermopolis Hot Springs and took a short hike to see the river into which the springs flow. We also explored the different springs around the area. Afterward, we visited the Thermopolis petroglyph site and saw the sacred carvings on the rocks.



The next day, we hiked out to Sink Canyon, an incredible river site that left me feeling deeply grateful for the opportunity to visit. We laid down tobacco to honor this sacred water source. After visiting the lower canyon, we drove to the next trail loop, but I chose to sit out due to a shoulder and ankle injury from the previous day. While waiting with Tia Hiller, another intern, we laid down tobacco and harvested some sage. Harvesting my own fresh sage was an honor, and I'm excited to gift it to my family, just as Tia mentioned.

Later that day, we returned to Sarah's late father Crawford White and Jackie's home, where we prepared Indian tacos and frybread. This was definitely one of my favorite meals of the trip. The food was homemade, tasted amazing, and was filled with good medicine and prayers.

To wrap up this amazing trip, we went fishing, visited the Buffalo Ranch Initiative, and saw 128 buffalo. We also visited the mouth of the Wind River and participated in a Cree sweat lodge. The prayers during the sweat lodge were incredibly powerful, making it the perfect send-off as we returned to Washington. I am deeply grateful for this experience, and I'm still feeling the effects of the prayers and good medicine we received.

NATIVE YOUTH POLITICAL YOUTH SUMMIT

BY: OLIVIA ANDRESS

On Saturday, the 10th of August, some of the UNEA interns went to a summit at Cedarbrook Lodge in SeaTac, hosted by Native Action Network. The goals of this event were for youth to build connections with their peers, learn from the workshop facilitators and speakers, and for youth to gain confidence to enact meaningful change in their communities. The event started at 9:30am, where participants checked into the event and got breakfast. Everyone ate while listening to the keynote speaker, Senator Claudia Kauffman. Sen. Claudia Kauffman is Nez Perce, and was sworn into the Washington state senate in January 2023.

From 10:45 to 11:30 am, we had our first breakout sessions. There was SkoVoteDen: Voting 101 with Native Vote Washington, talking about why voting is important. Along with SkoVoteDen, there were another two workshops for that session, Federal Indian Law 101 with the American Civil Liberties Union, which provided an overview of the cases and policies that make up Federal Indian Law; and Securing our Power: Electoral Safety and Election Protection with the Native American Rights Fund, providing tips, information, and resources from national and grassroots organizations on how to build strong electoral safety plans in communities.

The second breakout session was from 11:40am to 12:25pm, with the breakout sessions being SkoVoteDen, Electoral Safety, and Indigenous Justice in Education with the American Civil Liberties Union, covering Indigenous Justice developments in Education. After the second breakout session, there was then lunch, lasting from 12:30 to 1:30pm.

From 1:45 to 3:15pm, there was Democracy is Indigenous, where we made posters showing how we plan to get native youth to vote. These consisted of a name for our project, what you were going to be doing, and what communities you wish to engage; as well as collaborators needed, a timeline, and any roadblocks you may run into with this project. We then presented our projects to the other groups.

From 3:30 to 5pm, there was the third and final breakout session, consisting of Storytelling for Change with Children of the Setting Sun Productions, where they shared the stories of our people, educating people on a better way of being together in this world. The second workshop was Active Voter to Voter Activation: how you(th) can bring the power of community to the ballot box and beyond with Washington Bus, talking about the how-tos in organizing community.

BILLY MILLS RUN!

BY: OLIVIA ANDRESS

On Sunday, the 25th of August from 1:00-3:00pm was UNEA's annual Billy Mills event. The Billy Mills run has been hosted by UNEA for three years, always consisting of a race and a chance to meet and talk to Billy Mills.

The event started with people signing in and getting their running number, before moving over to the shirt stand to get a t shirt. The t-shirts were yellow in color with Billy Mills' winning number on them. The participants then waited while the event commentator Kasey Nicholson introduced Matthew Warbonnet, an Oglala Lakota elder, to do the blessing. He then introduced Billy Mills and everyone who was running the event, then he handed the mic over to UNEA and their interns to introduce and sing an opening song. The song that was sung is called War Party, taught to us by Matthew Warbonnet, who joined the interns in singing the song and even dancing along. Kasey introduced the vendors and caterers before stating that all of the runners should go to the start line.

Billy Mills' full name is William Mervis Mill. He is enrolled Oglala Lakota, born on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota. He attended the University of Kansas, majoring in Physical Education with an athletic scholarship, winning an individual title at the Big Eight cross-country championship in 1960.

He graduated in 1962 with a degree in Physical Education. When he competed in the 1964 Olympics, he was a First Lieutenant in the Marine



When the race was concluded, there was some free time to eat and go do activities, like taking pictures at the photobooth, or playing games, as well as look at vendors, and get a signed copy of Billy Mills' book, "Wings of an Eagle". They then announced the winners of the races, handing out prizes and taking pictures with the winners. Billy Mills gave a speech after, stating that whenever he felt like he was close to giving up, he would look up into the stands and look at his wife, and said that just seeing her gave him the strength to keep running. He said "I was going to come first, even if I didnt win." After the speech, everyone gathered to take a group picture, before we had closing words and the event ended.



BILLY MILLS RUN/WALK FOR SUICIDE PREVENTION

BY KAYLA HARSTAD (TURTLE MOUNTAIN CHIPPEWA)

On Sunday, August 25th UNEA hosted our annual Billy Mills Run/Walk for Suicide Prevention at North Seattle College. It was an outstanding success this year, bringing our community together in support of an incredibly important cause. This year I took a bigger role as being a part of the planning committee, I had the unique opportunity to be deeply involved in organizing the event. My responsibilities included coordinating vendors, managing table arrangements, organizing catering, partnership building, creating the layout, and planning small games. This year, we were joined by a new group of summer interns who were working at this event. Despite being a different group from previous years, the majority of us worked really well together. I enjoyed seeing some of the youth open up and engage with our community in conversations, games, and organizing prizes for our running winners.

One of the most rewarding aspects of the day was interacting with Billy Mills and his wife. I always look forward to their visits and the conversations we have. I often share with them how their presence and the values they embody affect our community positively. It's inspiring to see heroes like Billy Mills who not only share our values and traditions but also visibly reflect the diversity of our community. Billy Mills involvement with Indigenous communities shares the importance of having role models who resonate with our experiences and aspirations as Indigenous people.

The Billy Mills Run/Walk for Suicide Prevention was more than just an event—it was a powerful demonstration of community coming together and having a shared purpose. I'm grateful for the chance to be part of such a meaningful group of UNEA interns, volunteers, and board members, and look forward to continuing our efforts to make a positive difference together.



GAINING PREVENTION CORE COMPETENCIES PREVENTION TRAINING WITH NATIONAL INDIAN EDUCATION ASSOCIATION TRAINERS

BY JAZELL JENKINS

In early August, I had the opportunity to attend a three-day conference at the Tulalip Resort Casino, hosted by the National Indian Education Association in collaboration with the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. This training was a deeply enriching experience, diving into the critical topic of substance abuse prevention with a particular focus on the Indigenous community.

The first day of the training laid a strong foundation with an introduction to prevention, needs, and resource assessment. We explored the science behind substance use and brain chemistry, which was enlightening. Understanding the physiological impacts of substances provided a solid base for the discussions that followed. We also delved into the importance of assessing community needs and resources, which are vital for effective prevention strategies. On the second day, the focus shifted to prevention interventions and policies. We examined evidence-based interventions that have proven effective in reducing substance use among youth. The policy discussions were particularly valuable, highlighting the necessity of culturally relevant approaches in policy development and implementation.

However, it was the third day that stood out to me the most. The content on this day was both comprehensive and practical, covering the preparation and implementation of prevention programs, ethical considerations for professionals in the field, and the importance of continuous quality improvement. As someone who works directly with at-risk youth through the Urban Native Education Alliance, I found the interactive game we played on day three particularly impactful. This activity allowed me to apply the knowledge I had gained in a practical setting, providing tools that I can directly use in my work.



The game was not just an engaging way to consolidate what we had learned; it also offered specific techniques and strategies tailored to different age groups. These tools are essential in my role, where I work with youth who are not only at risk of substance use but are also navigating the immense pressure and temptation to engage in these behaviors. The conference equipped me with strategies to identify risk factors and intervene early, helping prevent drug and alcohol use among the youth in our community.

On a personal note, as I absorbed the information presented, I couldn't help but think about my younger brother. Like many teens, he is growing up in a world where substance use is often glamorized and normalized. The insights I gained from this conference will not only inform my work but also guide me in helping him navigate these challenges. I now feel better equipped to communicate with him and the youth I work with, using language and strategies that resonate and can make a real difference.

The normalization of drug use in society today is a significant challenge, but through the knowledge and skills I gained I am more prepared to counteract these influences. The continuous quality improvement aspect of prevention work, which was emphasized on the final day, is something I am committed to integrating into my professional practice. Developing a professional development plan, as encouraged by the conference, will ensure that I remain effective and informed in my role.

In conclusion, the National Indian Education Association's training provided me with invaluable insights and practical tools that I am eager to implement in my work with the Urban Native Education Alliance. The experience reinforced the importance of culturally relevant, evidence-based approaches in prevention work, and I am confident that the skills I acquired will help me better serve the youth in my community.

THE FUTURE THROUGH OUR BALLOTS

BY: AALIYAH CHAPPELL (COWLITZ/NISQUALLY/YAKAMA)

In August, we began transitioning into a new season filled with the excitement of school starting and the promise of new opportunities. Alongside these changes, us youth are stepping into election season. With local, state, and national elections approaching, it is crucial for young people to become actively engaged in the political community. As interns, we had the privilege of attending the Native Action Network Youth Political Empowerment Summit, where we spent the day honing our skills in nonpartisan civic engagement. We explored the significance of voting, learned how to register, and envisioned our roles as future voters or even potential government leaders.

Voting is at the heart of democracy, and it's vital for Indigenous youth to grasp its power and importance. It's not just a civic duty; it's a way for us to shape the future of our communities, whether at the local or national level. The day kicked off with a keynote speech from Senator Claudia Kauffman, who energized the room and spoke ardently about why political involvement is essential for both Indigenous youth and adults. Addressing the challenges she faced, including doubts about her ability to represent non-Native constituents, she boldly stated, "If you go on that theory, how can anyone else represent me?" This powerful statement emphasized her commitment to not just Indigenous communities, but to all people, because true representation transcends cultural lines.

Throughout the summit, we engaged in workshops focused on mobilizing our communities to register to vote and explored other avenues for civic engagement. It was a powerful experience, equipping us with the knowledge and inspiration to shape our future—starting with the simple yet profound act of casting a ballot.



THE BILLY MILLS RUN/WALK FOR LIFE **BY NATHANIEL IKE (YAKAMA)**

Participating in the Billy Mills 5K Run/Walk has always been a special experience for me. As a young Native American, I have had the opportunity to attend the event multiple times. Each time I return, it feels like reconnecting with a part of my identity that runs deep in my veins. I remember the first time I joined the run, feeling a mix of excitement and nerves. The energy was electric, and seeing Billy Mills in person was incredibly inspiring. His story of resilience and triumph as the only American to ever win Olympic gold in the 10,000 meters resonated with me, reminding me of the strength and determination that runs through our people. Even though I do not come every time, coming back to the event always wants to come. The 5K isn't just a race; it's a celebration of our culture and community. I have grown each time I have participated, not just as a runner, but as someone who is deeply connected to my heritage. Walking among the vendors, enjoying the food, and hearing the stories from other participants always leaves me feeling uplifted and proud. The Billy Mills 5K Run/Walk is more than just an event to me—it is a reminder of where I come from and the path, I am forging for myself.

The Billy Mills Run/Walk for Life at North Seattle College is more than just a race; it is a celebration of life, culture, and the enduring spirit of community. It is a day to honor the legacy of a true American hero while committing to healthier, more vibrant lives.



Your life is a gift from the Creator. Your gift back to the Creator is what you do with your life.
By Billy Mills



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