



Seattle Clear Sky Newsletter

Thriving Through Education. Culture and Tradition

MAY 2023 ISSUE

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CONNECTING GENERATIONS

BY: IZZY HAAKANSON (OLD HARBOR TRIBE)

April 14 & 15, UNEA had hosted Wichoni Waste 'Good Life' Wellness Retreat at North Seattle College. The retreat workshops included; meditation, fitness, and many other outputs to help improve lifestyles. A major take-away from this retreat was learning about the Seven Circles with Chelsey Luger and Thosh Collins. They pulled together both youth and children in a circle for an 'energy ball' exercise, but first we started with introductions, then Thosh had created what he called an 'energy ball', he had formed with his hands and put all of his good energy and thoughts into it. He then threw it to someone across the circle and they added their good thoughts and energy to it. Everyone in the circle eventually added their energy to it, and once it got back around to Thosh we all came together and put our hands together to release the good energy towards people we thought of.

Looking back on this experience, I realized how much joy and magic being a kid is. I enjoyed watching all the little kids focus on the energy ball and really add all their positive thoughts to it. Thosh and Chelsey explained how they did the same activity with adults and the adults were not as energetic or involved as these kids were. It is important to have these connections with kids, adults, and elders to keep the magic in their lives. I remember as a kid building fairy houses in the garden and wondering why adults do not use their creative imaginations their whole lives. Through the 'energy ball' activity we all formed a small community bond with our good thoughts and energy.

Events like Wichoni Waste Wellness Retreat inspire me to do more in my community. Especially connecting all generations together so we can learn and share stories with one another. Having a safe, healthy, supportive community is important and beneficial for everyone.



MY RIBBON SKIRT EXPERIENCE

BY: KAYLA HARSTAD (TURTLE MOUNTAIN CHIPPEWA)

This past Sunday on April 23rd, UNEA interns had the opportunity to make ribbon skirts with Roxanne White (Nez Perce), MMIWP families, and UNKITAWA. A few of us have made ribbon skirts and shirts before, but this time was different. This time, the ribbon skirts were a thank you from Roxanne for the work that us youth do in our community.

The importance of the ribbon skirt is it represents the resilience and strength of Indigenous women. Indigenous women have been consistent and supportive of their communities and have played an important role in upholding their culture and traditions. Wearing a ribbon skirt is a way for Indigenous women to honor their ancestors and carry on a legacy of strength and resilience. The ribbon skirt is also significant as it is a way for Indigenous peoples to regain cultural identity and claim sovereignty. By wearing ribbon skirts, shirts, and other traditional clothing, us Indigenous peoples can express our cultural identity and show that our traditions are still alive and thriving.

This time the ribbon skirts/shirts were chosen to be red so we could bring awareness and heighten the epidemic of MMIWP and families. We would wear these on the day of May 5th and May 6th for the National Day of Awareness for MMIW. We wear these in honoring and offering prayers for our Native people and families who have been impacted from the Missing Murdered Indigenous experience.

Sunday we had the opportunity to add more ribbon this time. In the past, I've had 4 or less ribbons, but now I had the opportunity to choose 8-9. While I was picking out my ribbons, I was resonating feelings of my own and prayers that I wanted to offer while making my ribbon skirt. I chose the medicine wheel colors while also adding green ribbons for my own tribe. Each individual youth got partnered up with experienced ribbon skirt makers who were from different Native organizations, and relatives sharing their knowledge of making skirts/shirts. The day was filled with love and good energy while we made our skirts and shirts in the span of 5 hours. I look forward to wearing this ribbon skirt in offering prayer and healing while also feeling empowered for being Indigenous and being here for my people.



MY FIRST SWEAT LODGE EXPERIENCE

BY: LANDYN ZYSKOWSKI (STILLAGUAMISH TRIBE OF INDIANS)



I was invited to take part in my first sweat lodge experience on April 2, 2023, with Lisa Monger (with the Fort Peck Tribes). It was explained to me that the sweat lodge experience is a significant part of the native way of life as it supports spiritual, cultural, and practical purposes. This long-standing tradition is like a ceremony unto itself and serves many cultural purposes from cleansing the body of toxins, to balancing one's spiritual, emotional and mental well-being, and includes healing a variety of medical conditions.

The sweat lodge tradition originated from the indigenous peoples of Mexico and the plains regions of what is now the United States of America. Some of the indigenous peoples of Mexico migrated to the plains regions and shared the traditions with the indigenous plains people, and the tradition just kept spreading from there. Different tribes have different ways/rules of running the sweat lodge. For instance, some tribes may have an age limit, gender separations, rules to what you wear in, and different doorway rules. There are different roles that each person supports while participating in sweat. The different roles may include the following: the person who builds the fire and carries the rocks, the person who opens and closes the door, the person who runs the sweat, and the person who cooks the food. Everyone's role has a significance tied to it, and therefore all the roles are culturally important.

A sweat lodge is built of all natural materials, typically including red or white willow and are dome shaped. It was explained to me that the significance of the dome represents the womb of the mother, that when you go inside the lodge, you are symbolically going in to be cleansed and reborn. This mythology grants indigenous peoples the personal opportunity to connect with the Creator and allows us to restore order and balance in life. The sweat lodge experience is a special opportunity to reconnect with oneself, the heritage and culture.

At Lisa's sweat lodge, we gathered around, dressed comfortably and barefoot. We stood in a single file line, waiting to enter the sweat lodge. The first person who entered the sweat lodge walked clockwise around the open space and then took a seat and each person followed. As the process began, I initially felt hot and wasn't sure how long I could last. As the process continued, my body and mind adapted. At the end, after the final round (also referred to as the "Warrior Round"), I was drenched in sweat. I felt cleansed and experienced a truer sense of calmness that I hadn't experienced before. I look forward to being invited to participate in my next sweat lodge experience. Tigw'icid.

NATIONAL COMMISSION ON NATIVE CHILDREN TESTIMONY

PART 1

On April 20th the advisory committee member for the Northwest Region on behalf of the Native Commission on Native Children invited three youth from UNEA to give testimony for the White House to influence policy change. Speaking on topic related to the health, education, and well-being of American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian children. The goal of the session was to explore two issues. First, to provide an opportunity for youth from the region to provide a general overview of current issues faced by youth (both in rural and in urban communities), covering all topics to be studied by the Commission. Second, have a community session open to everyone and offer people with diverse backgrounds a chance to express their views. This was the testimony I gave to the commissioners.

My name is Jazell Angelina Jenkins, I'm Unangax, Indigenous to the Aleutian Islands of Alaska, specifically Sandpoint Island, to mother Lenelle Jenkins, and Grandfather Albert Miller, my great-grandmother Angelina whom my middle name honors, and to my ancestors Rosie Ludvik and Irene Chebetnoy.

My great-grandmother Angelina Miller died of lung cancer; she was afraid of receiving any kind of medical treatment. She avoided going to the doctor or seeking urgent care in hospitals, which led her to not get the help she needed to become healthy again, instead, she turned to untrustworthy drugs she'd find online. My grandmother gives me the Indigenous blood that runs through my veins. We're Unangax, the people of the sea lions from the Aleutian Islands off Alaska. The Western healthcare system is rooted in racism and a lot of negative stereotypes about Indigenous people, making us feel shameful and scared. The life expectancy of Native Americans in some states is 20 years shorter than the national average. There are many reasons why.

There seem to be never-ending stories of Natives experiencing discrimination when going to a doctor or health clinic. Healthcare systems outside the Indian Health Service generally see very few Native American patients because it's hard for American Indians to access care in the private sector. I want to speak to an experience personal to me but that many women are forced to deal with daily.

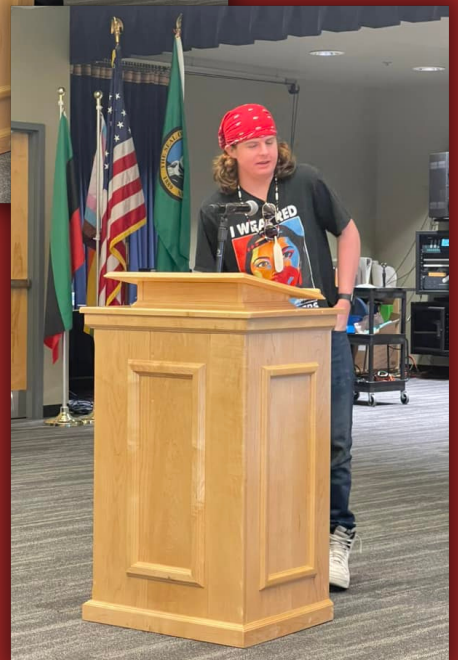
At the age 11, as a sixth grader, I was repeatedly and blatantly sexually assaulted and harassed almost daily during the school year. I still remember the dreadful feeling before going out into the hall during passing periods and the classrooms I'd avoid. This continued into my following years at a new school, ironically named to honor an Indigenous leader known for his care for Indigenous students. Throughout the onslaught of relentless antics, it was not until years later that I realized this was sexual assault and harassment. Like most Indigenous girls and women my voice was silenced by school authorities. Needless to say, nothing was done. I was being victimized by the students and the educational institution.

NATIONAL COMMISSION ON NATIVE CHILDREN TESTIMONY

PART 2

My story is only one of many. American Indian and Alaskan Native women face the highest rate of sexual assault. Inequities, disenfranchisement, and marginalization continue to plague our women. Now, there are laws that criminalize abortion within 13 states in the U.S., meaning women no longer have that choice. And for every dollar earned by men, women only earn 83 cents; proof that women are hardly protected in our patriarchal society. For Indigenous women, there are fewer protections, and we often stand alone. We need more leadership and representation. Seattle, Washington is ranked the number one city for the highest rates of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women in the U.S. Our Indigenous communities face the most rampant health disparities including the lowest life expectancy, infant mortality, and highest suicide rates.

I want to say thank you to you all for this opportunity to create change with our collective stories and I hope to uplift and empower my brothers and sisters that have experienced anything similar. We hear you and see you.





MAKING A RIBBON SHIRT FOR MMIW AWARENESS DAY

BY: LANDON BREWER (SALISH-KOOTENAI-SHAWNEE-COLVILLE)

On Sunday morning April 23rd, I woke up around 9:00 and fell back asleep, sleeping through my second alarm. The event started at 11:00 and I was already 15 minutes late. I pulled myself together, got ready, and drove over to NSC Already pretty stressed out. When I got there I realized that I forgot to get a shirt. . At that point I was just thinking, I'm late enough, might be best if I hang around and help others because I knew from previous experience that it would take me a long time to finish. Kinda figured it I might just help others with theirs and hang around, but Roxanne White reminded me of the importance of why we are doing this, and offered to give me a ride to the store to go look for a shirt. As we were about to go, I realized I needed to go run to my truck and grab my wallet, which was kinda a little ways away due to the main parking lot being full, so I was about to run over there when Roxanne offered to take me to a store to get a shirt. On the way out I realized that I had left my wallet in my truck which was parked in a different parking lot. Roxanne generously offered to cover it for me, which, naturally, I didn't want to except but she reminded me, when someone helps you out, we just gotta except it and pass it on, as native people.

We drove to this store, picked out a shirt. There were limited options on red, burgundy would have to do. An employee took my measurements for the best fit, which made me feel all professional. When we got back I grabbed the 4 medicine wheel colors, in both 5/8 and 3/8 inch widths. We started to take measurements and cut the ribbons. After cutting them to the right lengths, I realized that we were out of 5/8 ribbon in red, so I ended up driving to Joanne fabrics and back which took me another 30+ minutes. When I got back, Roxanne and I pinned down the ribbons in their correct positions, which was a real struggle for me for some reason. I can't remember how this came up, I think I was running out of time so Nancy took it home and finished it for me. I just need to sew on a patch, but it looks great.

The most important take away is that we have a generous community here at Clear Sky and in the Native community in general. I also learned that Indian time is a real thing.

UNEA CORNER

BY: SARAH SENSE-WILSON (OGLALA)

UNEA has had a ton of youth and community programming and organizing over the past several weeks. We are pleased with the high level of youth participation along with Elders, families and community members. The Wichoni waste 'Good Life' Wellness Retreat was a spectacular event. We hosted this event in partnership with North Seattle College and Seattle Indian Health Board/Urban Indian Health Institute. Sponsorship support from BSK, Unkitawa, and Nahailee. Clear Sky Leadership students took center stage in greeting community, assisting with serving food, set-up, clean-up, door prize giveaways and attended and participated with Wellness workshops and our special activities. Many participants of varying ages shared about the event as being super fun, entertaining, educational and overall a fantastic retreat experience. Our goal is to keep this event as an annual program to support health, happiness, wellness for all our community members. My favorite part was the 'Wellness Hunt', youth teamed up in groups of three to complete a series of tasks within a short but reasonable timeframe. Students all took it serious and gave the competition their full effort. In the end one team finished with the win, but all participants received gifts for their efforts.





MMIWP PROCLAMATION VICTORY

BY: SARAH SENSE-WILSON (OGLALA)

On May 3rd Seattle Public Schools Board of Directors and Superintendent Dr. Brent Jones adopted our co-authored MMIWP Proclamation. The MMIWP Proclamation is a step towards elevating the voices of our youth within a system that has historically contributed to the MMIWP crisis. Converging systemic racism influence Indigenous student vulnerabilities and risk for becoming victim to MMIWP. Racist school environments, policies and practices coupled with high rates of poverty, homelessness, foster care and disconnect from culture, or culture based resources, supports and historical trauma factor in to MMIWP. As a society our understanding of these risk factors, vulnerabilities and contributing factors is vitally important. Education can positively impact behavior, attitudes and thinking about issues and the people most affected by these issues. We raise our hands in praise and appreciation to Seattle Public Schools Board of Directors and staff for their cooperation and leadership with moving this critically important MMIWP Proclamation to a reality for our youth, families, community and the whole of Seattle Public Schools. Wopila to Chandra, Lisa, and Huchoosedah staff for responding to the need and the purpose with materials, curriculum, and resources for educators, families and students. UNEA Internship Leaders include; Landyn, Landon, Izzy, Jazell, Savanna, Kayla, Sajali, and Clear Sky youth Ava, and Aiden

EVENTS & ACTIVITIES:

**Rite of Passage
Graduation
Planning meeting**

**THURSDAY MAY 11TH
2023
6:00-8PM**

**Mindfulness
meditation/
Tutoring
and
Dinner**

**Free
NSC rm CC1161**

**(206)
941-0338**



UW Native Youth Mentorship Day



**July 14th
10am-3:00pm**

UNEACHAIR@GMAIL.COM



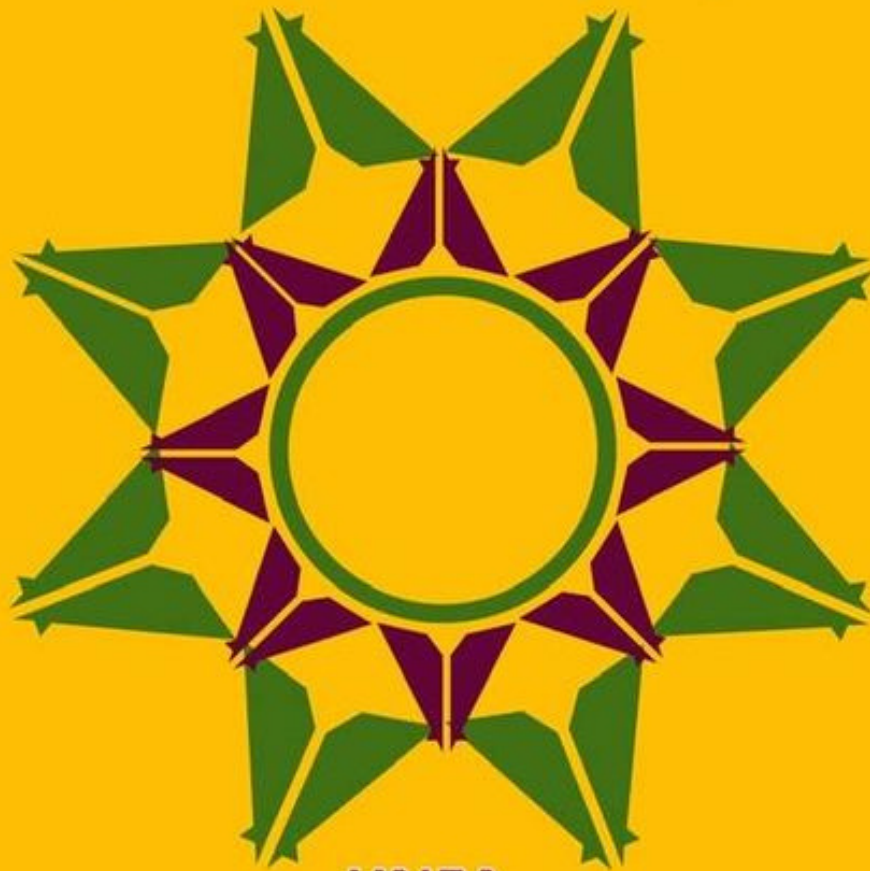
**NATIVE MIDDLE SCHOOL/HS STUDENTS EARN \$300.00.
EXPERIENTIAL ACTIVITIES AND MENTORING WITH UW STUDENTS, EDUCATORS AND STAFF.
TOURS, FOOD, CLASS LEARNING, RESOURCES AND SUPPORT SERVICES**

EVENTS & ACTIVITIES:

Save the Date

Sunday June 25th 5:00pm

at North Seattle College



UNEA

Rite of Passage Graduation Ceremony

STANDING IN OUR POWER

UNEACHAIR@GMAIL.COM