On March 23rd, I had the opportunity to attend the Bishop Blanchet Diversity Leadership Summit along with my fellow interns. About a month prior, I was asked to work on a project for the summit. During our brainstorming session, Sarah Sense Wilson shared about how someone could dream and use the knowledge from those dreams to guide their lives. This idea resonated with me because it was what had inspired me to pursue my current career.

In October of 2022, I experienced the loss of my father. On the day he passed away, I acted as a death doula and guided him on his journey to the spirit world. That night, I had a dream where I cared for infants, helped various families, and assisted an elder in their transition.

The dream concluded with me seeing myself as an elder. Upon waking up, I understood that this dream was a sign, showing me my path and purpose in life. I knew I had to follow it.

During the summit, we presented in two workshops on the topic of indigenizing education. I co-led the presentations with Kayla Harstad and we began by explaining important definitions related to this. We emphasized that it involves a holistic approach, incorporates cultural protocols, and accurately represents indigenous cultures.

To engage the students, Kayla and I conducted a line challenge to get their minds and bodies moving. We asked a series of questions, and most of the students would move to the “no” side in response. Afterward, we discussed the implications of their answers and shared relevant information relating to the question asked. We shared book titles by indigenous authors and the names of some famous indigenous athletes. Many students expressed surprise and a desire to further research based on what they had learned.

During my portion of the presentation, I became quite emotional. However, I believe this was simply a reflection of my passion for the topic. After the workshop, several students approached me and expressed how much they had learned and their newfound interest in researching indigenous cultures. I am so thankful for this opportunity. I got to speak to high school students about what I had experienced in my childhood growing up, and how I indigenized my own education and ended up finding an amazing supportive community.
This month, I started helping to coach at one of Urban Native Education Alliance’s other programs, Native Warrior Athletics. Sunday, March 16th was my very first day helping out with the program. I had no idea what to expect, and I felt extremely nervous despite my experience in the sport. I’m a junior in high school, and I have been on a basketball team ever since the first grade. I initially started helping out because of this, but I learned just how much I am able to serve my community by helping to coach these kids. Helping out has made me think about what kind of coach I would want, and helps me strive to be a better model and figure out every way I can support the players.

I am disappointed that I have missed out on this opportunity to serve the youth community for as long as I have been a part of UNEA, and I have also realized that coaching at NWA benefits both me and the youth. I know that this will help me to hone my leadership and communication skills, while also helping me practice patience, empathy, and problem solving. I want to continue helping out with this program for a long time, I know it will be a rewarding experience. I am very thankful that UNEA offers this program that serves the health and wellness of our Native youth in Seattle.
The Edmonds school district’s Indian Education program recently held a gathering to make ribbon skirts, traditional regalia to many tribes all throughout Washington state. On February 10th & 24th the students gathered in the Mountlake Terrace highschool to sew the skirts. The class was led by Alice Oligario and was organized by Karen Elliot. In the class there was an abundance of fabric and ribbon to choose from and everyone got to make their own ribbon skirts, Alice helped everyone make their own custom skirt, including pockets.

Ribbon skirts are a form of regalia from tribes all throughout the plains. They are worn during ceremonies, powwows, or just everyday life. Alice’s career started when she was a child, her mother teaching her the craft. She was inspired to start teaching indigenous women when the first women’s marches started when Trump first got elected president. Many native women who attended the march didn’t own a ribbon skirt or didn’t know how to make one. One woman reached out asking how to make them and that inspired Alice to begin teaching how to make ribbon skirts. To Alice ribbon skirts are grounding and bring her closer to her culture. She believes that all indigenous women should be able to attend a powwow and feel like they belong there.

“When I put on my skirt I feel grounded,” said Alice during my interview with her. Without the help of Karen Elliot this event wouldn’t have been able to take place. She runs the American Indian Education for the Edmonds school district for years and this is just one of her many accomplishments. Karen decided to do a class on ribbon skirt making after getting a grant, she’d never made a ribbon skirt before but wanted something that, “Native Students would be able to wear.”
NATIVE CONNECTIONS
BY: BELLA HAAKANSON (SUGPIAQ)

Amelia Andress spoke at the DLS (diversity leadership summit) at Blanchet, she told her story about having a dream and realizing her path was to be a doula. Her story was moving, as she talked about her losing her dad and helping him pass onto the next life. It makes me think about Natives having this higher power and being connected to land and life. As I grew up hunting and fishing, we were taught to honor the lives that sustain us and to use everything we hunted for.

Amelia told the story of her dream where she saw herself helping to bring in new lives for families being a doula. She has this powerful gift of life and chose to help others with her amazing gift. She said, “I saw myself caring for many different generations, I saw myself caring for an elder then saw myself as an elder.” This shows the connection between Native people in the land and our people.

In Sugpiaq culture, we hold elders very high because we can learn from them and they are sacred. My grandma who passed away about a year ago was one of the last fluent speakers of our language, Alutiiq. Her death was like burning a library, Amelia shows the deep power that circulates through our generations. This is a lesson that is very important, especially for Natives to recognize that our elders hold power and knowledge that we need to pass onto the next generations.

HEALING
BY: LANDYN ZYSKOWSKI, STILLAGUAMISH TRIBE

Sweatlodge is a ceremony for personal and community emotional and spiritual healing.

I recently participated in a sweat that was hosted by Kyle and held in Des Moines, WA on a beach. The setting was beautiful and the house overlooked the water, behind a rock fence wall. Depending on the sweatlodge, it’s divided by women and men, with different dress codes for men and women. In this sweat, the women wore ribbons skirts and the men were in shorts (without a shirt). As Kyle prepared the firepit with rocks, we waited as the fire continued to burn and warm the rocks. To personally prepare for the sweat I cleared my mind of negative and unproductive energy. Once the wood burned to charcoal, then Kyle spoke and ‘called forth’ the women to bless the rocks offered for use in our sweat with sprinkling cedar and tobacco in the fire. They started off with bringing in seven rocks for the first round and they would continue to add to if every round. I learned more meaning behind each of the four rounds. The first round is calling our ancestors. The second round is songs. The third round is prayers. The fourth round is sending the prayers out.
DIVERSITY LEADERSHIP SUMMIT
BY: KAYLA HARSTAD (TURTLE MOUNTAIN CHIPPEWA)

On Saturday, March 23rd Bishop Blanchet high school held their annual Diversity Leadership Summit (DLS). This year’s theme was “Lights, Camera, Action.” A theme for transformative activism and self growth. UNEA had the opportunity to hold a workshop where we presented “Indigenizing Education,” a time where students, staff, and educators could learn our Native worldview and perspective. This year’s theme we wanted to share with Blanchet the importance of Indigenous education especially in private schools and the historical ties to boarding schools. Amelia and I were able to be the workshop presenters where Ameila shared her story on how her career came to life. We were able to share ideas on the western framework of education, Indigenous authors, athletes, and activists that students can learn from. We then shared what Indigenous worldview is: the representation of our perspective, a holistic way of life, cultural thinking, multi-generational knowledge sharing, and a land based understanding that form our Indigenous education.

After holding this presentation, I felt extremely empowered that this knowledge was being shared. I wish when I was in high school I had the experience of learning from this workshop that I believe should be MANDATORY for all schools. Indigenous peoples need to be represented in an accurate way, where our stories and lived experiences are valued: stories that show triumph, strength, and resilience, while also acknowledging our past as a form of our present. When we ended our workshop, I had the opportunity to be a part of the panel where all presenters got to be a part of a Q&A for the students. This was my first time being a part of a panel, and I thought I wasn’t qualified because I was one of the youngest people, so I thought I had the least “experience.” However, I proved myself wrong because I was able to answer confidently and share the same truth: my truth. I was just as qualified as the rest of these amazing panelists and I am glad I was able to be a part of this Diversity Leadership Summit.

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On March 5th, 2024, UNEA hosted their Billy Frank Junior Event at North Seattle College. This event was held to honor everything he has done for the Indigenous community: he was a fishing rights advocate; he was arrested over fifty times due to him continuously fighting for our Indigenous rights, and we all gathered as a community to remember and rekindle Billy Frank Junior and his legacy. I was personally asked by Sarah Sense-Wilson to be a co-facilitator at Kayla Harstad’s side during this event. I was initially nervous when she offered this opportunity, but then I was reassured that all I really had to do was ask questions, so I eventually warmed up to the idea. We were instructed to ask Matt and Chayton Remley, along with Nancy Shippentower, some questions having to do with Billy Frank Junior and his various accomplishments. We also wanted to know how we can learn from Billy’s footsteps to further encourage others to keep fighting for our Indigenous rights. When I was in front of the audience, it felt empowering to know I was trusted to lead this event, even if I was a little rusty and had to be reminded by Kayla to “sit up straight” plenty of times. Still, I feel like I have come a long way when it comes to me getting out of my shell. I went from not even considering talking in front of anyone to public speaking with zero problem, and I am grateful to have had the opportunity to lead this event.
UNEA’S CORNER

Indigenous Wellness Retreat

April 12th & 13th
11am sign in/ registration
12:00-5:00pm

Free
Free
Free

North Seattle College
9600 College Way N
Seattle 98103

MC Randy Vendiola

Attend one session, 1/2 day or as many sessions as you want.

Making Medicine
Yoga/Reiki/Message therapy
Tess’Tea & Chocolate Factory
Empowerment workshops
Guided art workshops
Photo Booth /Healing Meditation
Giveaways/ Games fun activities for all ages
Resource tables/Poster & autographs w/special guests

Stella Standingbear

Vina Brown

Alyssa London

NAN
UIHL/SIH
Mother Nation
North Seattle College
Nahahilee

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INDIGENOUS WELLNESS RETREAT
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