



# Seattle Clear Sky

## Newsletter

Thriving Through Education. Culture and Tradition

### August 2021 Issue

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#### Table of Contents

1. **UNEA Strategic Planning Retreat with Community**
2. **Retreat**
3. **Becoming a Coach**
4. **UNEA Corner**
5. **Volunteer of Month and New Coordinator**
6. **Wild Waves Fun!**

#### About Us! Seattle Clear Sky Native Youth Council (SCSNYC) provides:

- **Academic Support:** Instructional tutoring and mentoring.
- **Cultural Learning Activities:** Song and drum instruction, beading, talking circle, mural painting, storytelling, and art projects.
- **Individual Recognition:** Student of the month, monthly birthdays, and Native graduation acknowledgments.
- **Community Involvement:** Spirit Walk, social justice rallies, and field trips.
- **Leadership Opportunities:** Circle discussions, fund-raisers, community organizing, and leadership building projects.
- **Basketball Program.**
- **Student Service Learning.**

## UNEA STRATEGIC PLANNING WITH COMMUNITY

On Friday I arrived at the Tulalip Resort Casino which was so beautifully ornamented with Native art. When you first walk in, a grand totem pole greets you. Lots of artwork from local Natives decorated the resort, including a wall of art from a Native children's art contest. I was amazed at the talent. During this retreat I was accompanied by my family: my mother, father and little brother. We all were excited to help contribute to the goal of this retreat which was to help with strategic planning for the creation and transformation of UNEA's charter school.

### Day 1

On Saturday, the strategic planning began with a blessing from Matthew War Bonnet (Lakota) and a delicious buffet breakfast with fresh fruits galore, mounds and mounds of bacon and waffles with whipped cream and fresh strawberries.

We started our day in a circle with WhaaKaDup Monger and his partner, Lisa Monger (Tulalip), with a beautiful opening drumming song. It helped get our day started and energized! We then began our discussions facilitated by Roxanne and her co-facilitator Thy. Our first activity was Intertribal Social Circle where we brainstormed our thoughts, ideas, and questions on how to grow and develop UNEA's programs (NWA, Clear Sky, Clear Sky Academy, Leadership, and Community Outreach) by inscribing ideas, notes and doodles onto poster sized sheets within small groups. I joined the idea circles of Leadership, Clear Sky Academy, and Community Outreach. The main takeaways I gathered were: how can we communicate transparently to the community offering pathways to contributing to UNEA vision? How can we reach out to more



native students? How do we help and nurture youths' voices to help develop leadership? It was inspiring to see everyone's ideas come together.

After we had another amazing buffet lunch which included more bacon (yum), we built a vision tree with colored sticky notes with one or two words on it that showed Clear Sky Academy's future pathways from the past, present and future ideas. Next, we all gathered into a talking circle where Lalani (an intern at UNEA) shared her personal experience with Clear Sky Academy this past year which she articulated very well and brought great knowledge for each one of us that participated. I admired that she spoke about how CSA and UNEA have done a lot for her not just academically but mentally because I can relate to that as well. To complete and end our day Gia (another intern at UNEA) grounded us with a graceful meditation which included different types of bells that participants got to handle. I left the conference room with so many ideas flowing and excited for the next day. I ended the day the best way possible at the resorts pool and hot tub—very relaxing.

## Day 2

Sunday was another great day that started off with a prayer, breakfast and then WhaaKaDup and Lisa's water drumming and singing a children's song. It was so cool to see the water drum splashing as that was the first time I had seen it used in person. Their melody sounded great together, and how they color coordinated their outfits was so beautiful. After they were done the planning began again with a Clear Sky Academy Mission values (charter school) with a statement designed by CSA students and four values. We also had a professional doodler and note taker named Barry taking our notes/doodles for the day. We then watched two videos of successful Native Charter schools based here in the states. One of the charter schools, Effie Kokrine, was based in Fairbanks AK, which excited me because I will be visiting Fairbanks AK this summer and I hope to visit it while I'm there with my family.

Then, Michael Vendiola (Swinomish/Lummi/Visayan) lead the group with a statement "Have to wanna." Landy James followed with an icebreaker team-building activity where we all canoed together, coordinating our paddling skills. In another game, we learned native names for eagle (yexwela), cat (pispis) and dog (sqeybey) with a partner. We were given "Sovereignty in Education," an article created by the NIEA's Native Charter School Advisory Group filled with useful knowledge and information about what is needed to create a strong charter school. We then broke out into small groups to discuss a given question with an informational piece from the article. While these conversations were happening, a scribe was writing the main points and ideas.

The Summaries of each group were spoken after the conversations ended, which led to more questions about the development of a charter school. The environment of the conference room formed by the comforting, positive, and caring attitude everyone brought was something I was so grateful to be a part of. I'm so thankful for everyone who came and showed up to this retreat; it meant a lot to me. I can't wait to see our ideas put into action because what we're doing is quite incredible.



## UNEA'S STRATEGIC RETREAT IN TULALIP

By Asia Gellein

The UNEA' Strategic Planning retreat was created so the different members in our intertribal urban community could gather for the purpose of improving, growing and strengthening our organization. Attendees included: UNEA board members, youth, parents, and elders. All of us came together to plan for the future of UNEA.

During the retreat, we reflected on past and current events and programs, and discussed the future of a charter school. We participated in brainstorming activities, and held many in-depth discussions, from listening to the youth perspectives on their experience in UNEA, to discussing the benefits of expanding Clear Sky Academy into our own charter school. Our conversations were documented and incorporated into a visual artistic map of our plan for UNEA. We met both Saturday and Sunday at 10, and started each day together with a delicious breakfast and beautiful welcome songs and prayer by WhaaKadup (Tulalip) and Lisa Monger. After a good day of gathering, we'd end at 4, feeling uplifted and productive.

My favorite parts of the retreat include staying at the Tulalip resort, listening to the different voices of Clear Sky, and leaving feeling hopeful and positive. We were treated with amazing food, and a wonderful place to stay. So, when we met, our efforts towards strategic planning came easy. Everything felt cohesive and we were all motivated with the same purpose: to improve UNEA for the betterment of the Native community and the future of our Native youth.



## BECOMING A COACH

By Akichita Takenaliva

UNEA has provided a lot of unique opportunities like the project with Licton Springs, language classes, Native Warrior Athletics, and has always provided for the native community. My name is Akichita. I'm an intern for UNEA. It has been a wonderful experience, and with Native Warrior Athletics started, it's exciting being a coach.

I remember Sarah coaching me, Alex, James, Shay, and other kids not too long ago, and I remember how difficult and frustrating it was sometimes. I remember how hard she would make us work, and how strict she could be at times, but I soon learned to admire these characteristics. We only had practice once a week so these ones I would always look forward to because they were so intense, and I would always be learning something new each week.

I am by no means a great basketball player, but I am a good listener, and what Sarah was teaching was discipline, team work, and efficacy. If we didn't listen or run the drill right because we weren't paying attention, we would run suicides or laps until we did. I believe the most important aspect was we did it as a team. No one got special treatment or was exempt from running. It gave us all a feeling of responsibility for not just ourselves, but our teammates too.

I feel honored to finally be in that roll of being a coach. I know I can't be that strict with the younger kids, but I am still going to try my best. I am hoping more older kids show up so that I can learn from them and coach them to be the best they can be.

## NEWCOMERS INVITATION

By Lareina Redwoman

To any parent or child on the fence about joining Native Warriors Athletics, I encourage you to give it a try! My son and I are both shy and felt some initial reluctance to join the NWA Basketball night at North Seattle College on Thursdays, and being new to the program, weren't sure what to expect. Gus had never played any kind of ball and was apprehensive about going but committed to attending for at least three weeks. We agreed that this was a great way to connect to younger members of our community while trying something new in a low-risk environment. He was embarrassed at first that he didn't know what to do, or how to handle the ball, but was so excited to see so many other kids his age, especially after the seclusion from remote school and COVID restrictions, that he worked through it. By the end of the first practice, he was hooked! He said it felt good to move his body, see other kids like him, and to try hard. His favorite part was running drills with Coach Chandler. The coaches and this program are instilling confidence and healthy habits, and fostering teamwork, communication and listening skills in our youth. They're also having a lot of fun! So often youth sports are cost-prohibitive, which has been an issue for us in the past. I am grateful to NWA and coaches Sarah, Dupree, and Chandler for providing such a valuable opportunity to us for free. Thank you!

## SHOUT OUT FOR THE NWA!

By Cheyne Littlesun

Not everyone has passion. Not everyone is moved emotionally by what they do. And, that's extremely unfortunate. But fortunately, here in Seattle we are blessed to have the Native Warrior Athletics (NWA). A divine program that is filled with passionate, vocal, and active people. Even in the hardest times of running a program in a pandemic, I have been inspired by these individuals who work as a team to help the community of Seattle become a better place.

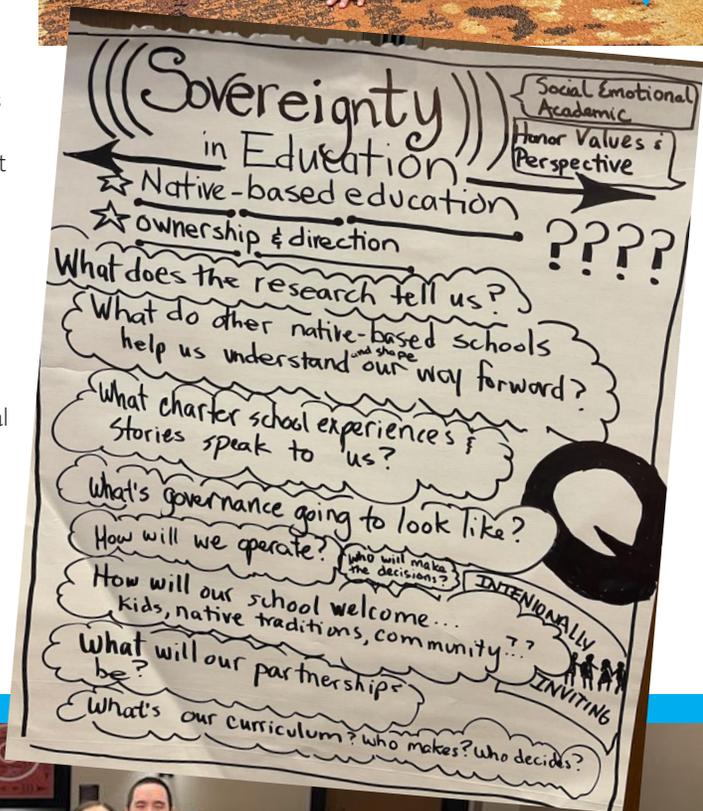
My three children have been attending this program and they enjoy it very much. Not only is NWA teaching my kids to stay active, they are teaching them about motivation, teamwork, inspiration, and how to be a warrior. I am grateful for this program, it has definitely helped my kids mentally, emotionally and spiritually. It's good to see a group of Indigenous leaders working together to create something incredible, inspiring and useful – all for free, and all due to pure internal motivation and desire to help the Seattle community. Thank you NWA for all you do! *Cheyne Littlesun, Ryder, Ryelle and Ryonnie Bigback*



# UNEA STRATEGIC PLANNING RETREAT

By Sarah Sense-Wilson

UNEA planned and delivered on one of the most exciting, engaging and fun filled productive yearly Board of Directors strategic planning retreats in recent times. The retreat was held at Tulalip Tribes resort July 17th and 18th. The purpose was to recap the past year, summarize our outcomes and to brainstorm in collaboration with our families and youth a plan for the future. The two day event was facilitated by Roxanne Lyons and her two assistants Lhay and Barry. Day 1 consisted of early morning prayer followed by a welcome blessing from Whaakadup Monger (Tulalip) and a wonderful buffet breakfast. We had over 40 guests on day one consisting of; parents, youth leaders, children, elders, educators, leaders, UNEA helpers, and board members. We worked in various groups to review and examine our projects and programs (CSA, CS, NWA, Elders Care, and Community Outreach), using infographs designed by volunteer Keets Hoonan. Day two of the retreat was focused on Clear Sky Academy and learning how Charter School will best meet the needs of our Native HS students. We had the privilege to be led in activities by NIEA leader Michael Vendiola while both fun, interactive and creative the day was capped off by delving deeper into the importance of having our parents and youth co-design key elements of our educational model for our Clear Sky Academy. Drawing on parent, educator and youth collaboration we could all envision an academic institution with tremendous potential for becoming a beacon of scholarly success for our urban Intertribal students. Our notes and voice were captured in a live art documentation of the two day experience, we hope to share the image and notes soon. I want to thank everyone for supporting this effort and I really appreciate all the parents and youth whom contributed and shared innovative and creative ideas for us to learn from and be guided by. My sincerest gratitude and WOPIA to the dynamic members of our urban Indian community.

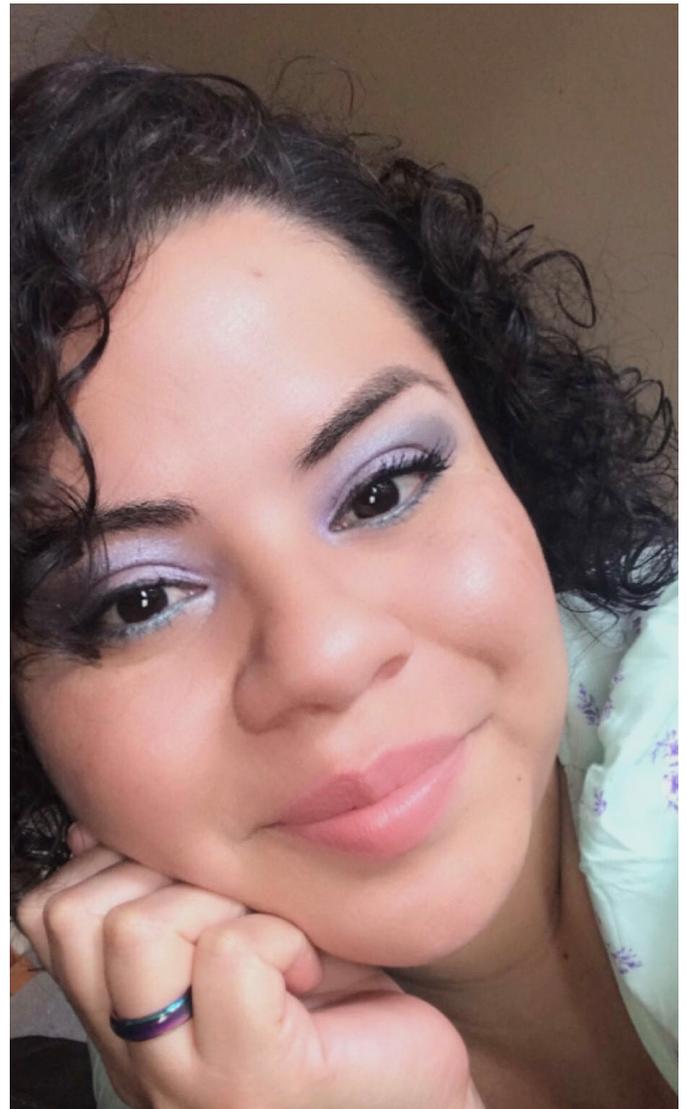


## VOLUNTEER OF THE MONTH

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We have the honor of awarding August's Volunteer of the Month to Dayslow Mendoza. He has been a valuable help to UNEA, especially during our Elders Care Celebration in June, where he livestreamed the festivities to our Facebook, welcomed guests, and helped clean up after the event. When asked how he came to volunteer for UNEA he had this to say:

When I was younger I was in Clear Sky. When the opportunity arose to help out with UNEA I was excited to say the least! Although I arrived late into the year I really enjoyed the sense of pride everyone had in their volunteer work and I could tell it'd been a constant with them for quite a while. The graduation ceremony was especially vibrant with pride from families, youth and volunteers and it was joyous to revel in everyone's successful year! My experience has been fun and uplifting! I chose UNEA because of the sense of community it provides, and I love being reminded that we all are a part of that community no matter how much time spent away.



## WELCOME OUR NEW PROGRAM DIRECTOR

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We are thrilled to announce our brand new Program Coordinator, Yesenia Ortega! She has worked as a volunteer for UNEA in the past and is now taking on this more involved roll. You may have seen or worked with her at the Rite of Passage Graduation Ceremony, where she led volunteers in decoration and clean up. Please congratulate and welcome Yesenia!

My name is Yesenia Ortega. I have two girls, Yolanda and Genesis, and I am married. My family ancestors are from Guanajuato in Mexico. There's a small village where I was raised by my grandmother. She is chichimeca. I grew up with her teachings and learning about plants and herbs and the process of spiritual healing. With that being said, I love this community not only because it aligns with the way I was raised but also because I am free to be my true indigenous self with pride and my head held high. I am extremely excited to work together with UNEA to support Clear Sky Academy. This school will give so many scholars a home were they can be themself and thrive fearlessly for a future they want.

## WILD WAVES FUN!

By Gia Tran

Native Warrior Athletics has turned up the summer fun with not only weekly basketball and Greenlake Walks, but a trip to Wild Waves theme park. Getting together as a community has been a great way to stay active and enjoy the sunshine. Everyone from staff, interns to families joined in on this day. For some, it was their first ever time visiting the theme park as well as the first time since childhood. Families came very prepared with wagons for their kids and belongings. As well as blankets and towels. Everyone got together and split off to explore the park.

During my time at Wild Waves, I stayed in a group with Joseph Aleck (Clear Sky Academy Student), JJ Jenkins (Clear Sky Intern), and Dupree Kness (NWA Coach). We were able to see some more UNEA folks in places such as the wave pool and lazy river as well as food lines. The wave pool was super fun, and one of the best things about it- no line! It felt like being in the ocean with all of those big waves crashing down.

Our group was able to go on one water ride. It was a big orange slide that could fit 4 people. Joseph, JJ, Dupree and I waited in a hefty line (perhaps the biggest line in the theme park) but it was all worth it to go down that water slide together! The ride itself was fast and our splash at the end had us all laughing when Dupree and Joseph fell off our floaty. It was a great opportunity to bond and experience the theme park as a UNEA collective.

Afterwards, we all said goodbye to Wild Waves and hopped into the UNEA van. Dinner was next on our agenda, and we ended the day with some amazing Thai food. Much gratitude to Native Warrior Athletics for this absolutely fun day that was a highlight of everyone's weekend!

