



NAYA NEWSLETTER

EMPOWERING THE LIVES OF NATIVE AMERICANS IN THE PORTLAND AREA

SUMMER 2019

SPRINGING INTO SUMMER

1. "We will, we will rock you!" What do you get when you cross a classic Queen stadium anthem with the haunting sounds of the bagpipes? Why, **NAYA's Got Talent**, of course! On February 6th, organizers and audience members were amazed by the performances of Early College Academy students, elders, toddlers, and community members alike. Quickly becoming a highlight of the year, NAYA's Got Talent celebrates youth empowerment and the confidence that results when the community embraces their strengths.

2. Always a great way to spend a Saturday, **NAYA Spring Marketplace**, May 11th, hosted 45 Native artisans vending beautiful jewelry, botanicals and remedies, prints, apparel, beadwork, and much more! Live music performances showcased the variety of talent our Native community has to offer, while Sister's Fry Bread provided the sustenance for sustained shopping energy. It was a beautiful day!

3. NAYA's May 1st Culture Night was all about raising awareness for the alarming rate of missing and murdered Indigenous women in Canada and the U.S. The important event was sponsored by the City of Portland, Multnomah County, Metro Regional Government, Native Wellness Institute, NAYA Family Center, PSU Institute for Tribal Governance, and The Old Church Concert Hall. A weeklong awareness campaign included proclamations made by the City of Portland, Metro and Multnomah County. On May 16th, Governor Kate Brown signed HB 2625, directing the Oregon State police to study how to increase criminal justice resources and coordinate information sharing with Tribes on **Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women** throughout Oregon.

5. NAYA's annual **Youth and Elders Honoring**, May 22nd, was a night of celebration, as we recognized the accomplishments of our youth and thanked our elders for sharing their wisdom and guidance. Another favorite NAYA event, our next generation of indigenous leaders had the opportunity to shine, build their leadership skills and pay homage to those who laid the foundation for our community.

6. On a beautiful, sun-drenched evening, our annual **Children's Powwow**, May 29th, brought out the community and a large gathering of families and friends, encouraging our young dancers to get out and strut their stuff! As an empowerment through cultural identity and awareness, it was a wonderful herald of summer and a celebration for all. Thanks to M.C. Ian Twiss, Host Drum group Rocky Point, and Native Veterans for leading the Grand Entry.





COMMUNITY GATHERS FOR ECA STUDENTS

"IT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF ALL OF US TO TAKE CARE OF THESE YOUNG PEOPLE."—DAVIS WASHINES

These opening remarks from Chairman of the Yakama Nation General Council Davis Washines set the tone for NAYA's 10th Annual Early College Academy (ECA) Luncheon on Wednesday, April 24, 2019. By raising over \$91,000 for the ECA, the 250 luncheon attendees played an integral role in sustaining NAYA's high school and the critical services it provides.

NAYA Executive Director Paul Lumley shared, "Being able to celebrate with the community the amazing stories, dreams, and resiliency of our ECA youth is a highlight of our year here at NAYA."

Not only is the annual luncheon the largest fundraising event for the school, it also provides the community an opportunity to meet with students and learn more about what makes the ECA special.

"The ECA Luncheon is a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the accomplishments and tenacity of our students," said ECA Principal Lisa Otero. "Each student brings their unique stories and talents here to create our ECA community. For these young people to see a community coming together to celebrate their perseverance sends a very powerful message. We certainly feel the overwhelming support from a community who cares."

This year's keynote speaker, Aaron Lilly, *Navajo Nation*, spoke of growing up on the Navajo Reservation. Lilly shared how inclusion of Native culture has impacted his experience as a student stating, "NAYA is different because of what they teach. We have Native classes, cultural arts, and hands-on activities. I feel comfortable being myself and sharing my culture."

For many incoming ECA students, the public school experience has not been positive. Socio-economic challenges and difficulty navigating through systems unfamiliar with, and unsympathetic to, the unique cultural needs of Native students often hinder students' ability to stay on track.

For these students, NAYA's Early College Academy, is well-equipped to meet their educational and cultural needs, and wrap their families with NAYA's myriad other services to provide the stability and support that students need to succeed.

NAYA extends its deepest and sincere gratitude to event sponsors, individual attendees, donors, volunteers, guests, and all of those who contributed to this year's event.

Thank you to our Sponsors

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ECA Scholarship Fund



It Does Good Things™



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ECA LUNCHEON A HUGE SUCCESS

CELEBRATING OUR STUDENTS, RECLAIMING THEIR EDUCATIONS AND THEIR FUTURES



ECA students and NAYA staff welcome silent auction shoppers



MC Dani Ledezma, NAYA Executive Director, Paul Lumley and Board Member Tia Begay



Cheryl Myers, Steffeni Mendoza-Gray, Pam Knowles, and Commissioner Susheela Jayapal



Yakama Nation General Council member Davis Washines provides welcoming remarks



Aaron Lilly shares his story

HELP SEND A STUDENT TO COLLEGE

DONATE TODAY TO THE ECA SCHOLARSHIP FUND TO MAKE AN INVESTMENT IN A BETTER FUTURE



2018 ECA Graduation Procession

Education changes lives. Studies show that children whose parents attended college are much more likely to attend university and graduate themselves. For Native communities who still languish behind other groups in educational attainment rates, one scholar's ability to graduate from college can change their entire family's educational and socio-economic trajectory for generations to come.

At NAYA, we nourish our Early College Academy students' academic ambition and success. Without the culturally resonant curricula and one-on-one supports, many of our students would have never considered the possibility of going to college. We offer scholarships to

our ECA graduates because NAYA is committed to supporting whole Native families throughout their lives.

Financial hardship is often cited as the reason why Native students do not enter college even when they are accepted. Also, financial hardship can cause students to drop out once they have enrolled. The Early College Academy Scholarship Fund allows students to concentrate on their education, free of financial worries.

Help our youth achieve their dreams of going to college and give to our ECA Scholarship Fund today!

Donate online at <https://bit.ly/2wBg7uP> or send in the attached envelope. Thank you for your support!

A WHIRLWIND OF RECREATION

NAYA'S FREE CAMP IN SPRING IS A WELCOME BREAK FOR YOUTH AND PARENTS

For Portland youth, spring break represents a welcome break from the classroom. For many working parents, however, the week-long break can be cause for stress.

Thankfully, in March NAYA once again held its Spring Break Camp for local students. Through generous support from the Gray Family Foundation, Portland Children's Levy, and Metro, NAYA offers spring break at no charge to families.

Dozens of youth convened at NAYA for five days of recreation. From canoeing and basketball to hide preparation and beading, NAYAs camp provided youth with a variety of recreational and cultural activities. While many of the younger participants filled their days with activities at NAYA, older students visited the Oregon Coast for an overnight trip.



Canoeing in the slough

HIGH SCHOOL TRANSITION MADE EASIER

NINTH GRADE COUNTS GIVES YOUTH A GLIMPSE OF LIFE IN HIGH SCHOOL

Every student has their own learning style. From visual learners to physical learners, students collect and retain information differently. NAYA's Ninth Grade Counts Summer Program teaches participants through a variety of activities both inside and outside the classroom.

The NAYA Ninth Grade Counts Summer Program is just one of a number of summer programs NAYA offers to local youth. It's a free opportunity for rising ninth-grade students to get a jump start on their journey into high school.

Often times, the transition into high schools proves challenging for students. Navigating larger schools, choosing the right academic track to help them achieve their goals, and entering with a strong skillset to help them succeed can feel daunting to new freshmen. Many ninth graders struggle early on, some falling behind with credits or dropping out in their first year.

Because ninth grade is a critical milestone in every student's academic journey, NAYA's Ninth Grade Counts program is specifically geared toward demystifying the transition into high school, improving students' ability to acclimate and succeed in secondary education.

This summer, program participants will learn about high school graduation requirements, gain knowledge of college and career opportunities, and work on academic skills all while also learning about Indigenous games, storytelling through the use of media, environmentalism, and more. They will explore self-identity and the impacts identity has on their future. Youth will also go on field trips, college campus visits, and an overnight road trip.

Moreover, students can receive 0.5 high school elective credit and may complete one Career Related Learning Experience—a graduation requirement for many students—during the summer program. With Ninth Grade Counts, participants will gain the valuable skills they need to start high school confident, prepared, and ready to achieve their goals.



2018 9th Grade Counts students visit Western Oregon U.



PREPARING NATIVE CHANGEMAKERS

LEAD PROGRAM GRADUATES THE CLASS OF 2018-2019 INDIGENOUS LEADERS



2018-2019 LEAD Graduates

On Saturday, April 27, 2019, members of NAYA's Oregon LEAD Program gathered at NAYA to celebrate their graduation from the program with friends and family.

This transformative program builds leadership capacity across Native communities throughout Oregon. With

a curriculum based on the Relational Worldview Model, LEAD affirms cultural identity through supportive peer-to-peer relationships. The graduation marked the end of seven months of work on interdisciplinary leadership, skill building, professional trainings, and networking opportunities. For many LEAD participants, the cohort model creates a strong sense of connection and camaraderie that they intend to maintain as they strive to make positive change in the community.

This year's LEAD graduates join our Oregon LEAD Alumni network, which consists of ten previous cohort classes of Native leaders. Outgoing NAYA Civic Engagement Coordinator JR Lilly commended the graduates on their accomplishment, stating, "Congratulations Oregon LEAD Cohort 2018-19! You made it! We are excited to see the next steps you will take in helping our community thrive."

MAGNIFYING COMMUNITY VOICES

NAYA POLICY AND ADVOCACY WORK YIELDS POSITIVE OUTCOMES

NAYA strives to not only promote community civic engagement, but also to communicate the Native community's priorities and goals during its continued interactions with policymakers. This spring, NAYA had several opportunities to advocate on our community's behalf.

On April 3rd, Multnomah County Commissioner Susheela Jayapal and her staff visited NAYA to learn more about our programs, touring the campus with NAYA Executive Director Paul Lumley. Later in April, Lumley advocated for continued support in underserved communities before the entire board of county commissioners, providing comments on the 2020 Multnomah County budget.

NAYA welcomed U.S. Representative Earl Blumenauer and many other community leaders and elected officials to our May 6th roundtable discussion addressing housing and livability for low-income residents of Portland and throughout the state.

Finally, Health Equity Program Coordinator William Miller reports that NAYA's legislative priorities continue to advance in Salem, either passing in part or continuing through the legislative process. This includes the unanimous passage of HB 2625, a bill requiring greater attention be given to the problem of missing and murdered Indigenous women, which was signed into law by Governor Kate Brown. The bill was authored by State Rep. Tawna Sanchez, who is also NAYA's director of family services.



Multnomah Co. Commissioner Susheela Jayapal and NAYA ED Paul Lumley



Governor Brown signs HB 2625



OUR FOSTER PROGRAMS MAKE AN IMPACT

NAYA PROGRAMS SERVE 85% OF ALL DISTRICT NATIVE FOSTER YOUTH

NAYA's three foster care programs—Foster Care Support, Pathways to Adulthood, and Sibling and Family Visit Nights—reach local foster youth from birth to age 24, and birth and foster parents. In fact, despite a very small staff and limited resources, NAYA currently works with 85% of the 141 Native American foster youth in care in NAYA's district.

"Our goals are threefold," says Elisha Big Back, NAYA foster care manager. "One, strengthen youth cultural identity. Two, increase their cultural knowledge. Three, let them know there is hope for a good future."

For families, working toward reunification requires navigating through a vast network of programs and requirements. NAYA's Foster Care Support Program connects them with community resources and supports families in navigating the system. The programs also recruit and assist new foster families from the Native American community.

Unfortunately, many Native foster youth age out of care without ever finding a permanent home.

NAYA's Pathways to Adulthood Independent Living Program (ILP) delivers critical services for older foster youth, teaching life skills and information that foster youth will need as they transition into an independent, adult life. These include goal setting, money management, and employment supports. As with the Foster Care Support Program, ILP participants must be referred by their DHS caseworker to be eligible to participate. However, youth and families can contact NAYA staff to ask for assistance in getting a referral.

Growing up in the foster care system can make it difficult to stay connected with family and community. Once a month, NAYA holds Sibling and Family Visit Night to provide a positive environment for youth in foster care to visit with siblings, and other family members, share a free meal and participate in cultural activities and traditions.

Through these three programs, NAYA serves as a consistent and stable resource for children and families who are often in greatest need for support. As Big Back states, "We are here to make sure they have some place stable and supportive to come to while they are in care."



ROYALTY AT PSU POWWOW

ECA'S PIRTLE-BOISE TO SERVE AS AMBASSADOR

On Saturday, May 4, 2019, NAYA Early College Academy freshman Ei-Shah Pirtle-Boise was crowned Miss Naimuma Royalty at Portland State University's (PSU) annual powwow. The position will entail Ei-Shah to represent the Portland Native community and PSU in events and gatherings around the country for 2019-2020. As ambassador, she will represent Native youth, higher education, and serve as a liaison between PSU, NAYA, and our urban Native community. Ei-Shah is the second ECA student to have earned this title. Congratulations, Ei-Shah!



Ei-Shah Pirtle-Boise, Miss Naimuma



“EVERY DAY IS A SUCCESS”

THE REWARDS OF WORKING WITH FOSTER YOUTH



Foster Care Manager Elisha Big Back

Working in the child welfare system can be difficult for service providers. The emotionally charged nature of the work coupled with limited time resources to help all who need it can take their toll on those in the field. NAYA Foster Care Manager Elisha Big Back, *Northern Cheyenne*, shares how she approaches the challenges and rewards of her job helping Native foster youth.

How is this work important?

I believe that Native American foster youth are our most vulnerable population. They're in constant movement. They lack stability and consistency and those are very fundamental things that are going to help them grow and be productive adults. I'm a member of this Portland Native community and I grew up here. I want to be a stable, consistent resource to Native foster youth.

The turnover with DHS case workers is mindboggling. Some of our youth have had so many different service providers that they are very distrusting. They become numb to it. We are here to make sure they have a stable and supportive place to come to while they are in care. NAYA is here for them and we're not going anywhere.

How long does it take to win over their trust?

When I'm here, the youth are my priority and I make sure that they understand that. Youth all come with varying levels of trauma. A lot of them really, really dislike the foster care system, but are afraid of life without it. We help them recognize their own skills, their own power, their own strengths, and that they're the ones moving forward every day.

What is the best part of your job?

Every day is a success! Every day that they show up here is a success! Keeping these relationships and trust going is a success! We have some youth that have transitioned out of foster care and are in college. It's an ongoing journey.

COMMUNITY INVESTMENT NEEDED

LACK OF NATIVE FOSTER HOMES EXISTS FOR VULNERABLE NATIVE YOUTH

Today, there are 440,000 youth in the U.S. foster care system. Statistics show that, nationwide, states place American Indian and Alaska Native children into foster care at a rate 2.7 times greater than the general population.

Children already experience significant trauma when removed from their homes. Studies show that further disconnecting foster youth from their culture and cultural community only compounds this trauma. As a result, there is a tremendous need for more Native foster homes to meet the unique cultural needs of Native American children.

NAYA provides support and information to potential foster families considering helping a vulnerable child experience a safe and supportive home. As a NAYA Foster Care Support Specialist explains, "Foster youth need stability and people they can look to in their lives. Anyone who is considering being a foster parent, there are resources out there for them. They do exist. Places like NAYA are here to help them."





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SAVE THE DATE FOR THE NAYA GALA



10TH ANNUAL NEERCHOKIKOO POWWOW

POWWOW WITH US SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 2019, 1:00 PM GRAND ENTRY

Please join us as we gather in honor of Native culture through dance, music, art and food at the NAYA 10th Annual Neerchokikoo Powwow. Traditional drumming and dance for women and men of all ages is performed throughout the day, as well as exhibitions from our tiny tots, youth and multi-generational groups.

In addition to the dance exhibitions, Native artists supported by NAYA's microenterprise services offer beautiful prints, jewelry and other items for sale. And of course, tasty fry bread and Indian tacos are available for purchase. The powwow is free to the public.

nayapdx.org/powwow/main/



2018 Neerchokikoo Powwow

NAYA
GALA
NOV. 15



SAVE THE DATE!

**16TH ANNUAL NAYA GALA AND AUCTION
FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 2019, 5:30 - 9:00 PM, PORTLAND ART MUSEUM**

Tickets are already selling for our premiere event of 2019! Don't wait to reserve your place at the largest celebration of Native American Heritage Month in the Pacific Northwest. For more information, visit: gala.nayapdx.org.