



NAYA NEWSLETTER

EMPOWERING THE LIVES OF NATIVE AMERICANS IN THE PORTLAND AREA

FALL 2019

Culture Protects Native Youth

Singing at a drum, visiting with an elder, learning a Native language, smudging, sweating, playing Indigenous games—these activities provide protection. Connecting Native youth with their culture bolsters self-confidence and their sense of security being part of a larger, interconnected community.

Western research is finally catching up to what Native organizations like NAYA have long known: connection to culture is a protective factor for Native youth. Youth exposed to their Native culture are better at avoiding risky and unhealthy behavior as adolescents. Knowing this, NAYA has always embedded culture throughout its youth programs.



Researchers say Native youth are at risk of experiencing “adverse childhood experiences,” or ACEs, and that these lead to health and behavioral problems later in life.

Intergenerational trauma caused by government policies that broke up Native families- subjecting them to abuse at residential schools or separating Native children from their culture permanently through child welfare practice- coupled with problems such as poverty and substance abuse has meant Native children experience high numbers of ACEs in general.

These children are more likely to struggle as teenagers with a host of mental and behavioral health issues, such as post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, smoking, substance abuse, anxiety, teen pregnancy, dropping out of school, and suicide. Therefore, intervening with Native youth can be an actual matter of life and death in some cases.

Fortunately, research confirms that cultural youth programs not only help them heal from past trauma, but also build resiliency to protect them from risky behavior in the future.

Youth who develop a positive cultural identity are proven to have better health and social outcomes than others. In other words, risky behavior associated with ACEs are significantly less likely for Native youth who have connected to their Indigenous culture.

This NAYA News showcases NAYA programming that connects youth to culture. From the summer Resurgence School and recreational sports to Culture Night and cultural exchanges, NAYA remains ever committed to strengthening the resiliency of Native youth and preparing them for a healthy future.



photos: 2019 NAYA Children's Powwow

Resurgence School puts culture at the heart of learning



NAYA's Resurgence School is turning the traditional classroom-only model of summer school learning upside down, encouraging students to take an active, hands-on role in their own learning. The program seeks to better align academic goals with Native American ways of learning and knowing. It centers around project-based learning, community service, and Native culture.

Many Nations Academy Principal Lisa Otero states, "Our program is often described as 'camp,' but actually it is project-based learning. That's a key component. Other elements include work-force readiness, college and career preparation, and connection with Native community such as working with elders."

Otero cites community-building as one reason for the program's success. She explains, "For me, the most important thing for students is building positive and healthy relationships with adults. This program allows for that next step because we go out, try new things, have these experiences together, and share our thoughts and feelings with one another. It becomes an intergenerational community more than it does when adults are standing and delivering curriculum and students just sit and passively receive it."

By the summer program's end, the culturally aligned model produced some significant outcomes. Not only was the average attendance rate over 90%, but the majority of the 16 participants earned the full two credits that they were eligible for, helping them to take one step closer to high school graduation. For Otero, following a culture-based curriculum is richly rewarding for both educator and student alike, "I love watching them see that they can do hard things," she says. "Giving them academic self-confidence is huge in the summer program. To me, that's what makes it worth it—when they say in their own words that they feel better about who they are and that they are loving the experience they are having."



One of the weekly field trips: this time to the Gorge



Students and teachers learn the art of boxing



Gardening project on NAYA campus



A NAYA-MAIC cultural exchange



NAYA-MAIC participants at Minehaha Falls in MN

Thanks to the Notah Begay III Foundation (NB3F), NAYA's Youth and Education Services (YES) Department completed a cultural exchange with the Minneapolis American Indian Center (MAIC).

We met to enhance mutual understanding and share best practices as staff at urban Native organizations.

Two representatives from MAIC visited NAYA at the height of NAYA's summer programming. Staff from each program did daily yoga, sight-seeing and cultural activities, designed to help us learn through experience.

For example, MAIC staff went on a plant identification walk led by NAYA staff in the Columbia Slough, affectionately nicknamed "NAYA's backyard." Community Health Worker Jennie Brixey, Choctaw, led youth and guests through a jam making workshop, focusing on berries traditionally used for health and wellness.

After lunch from the NAYA kitchen, participants played Native games, beginning with a Rock-in-Fist tournament—a guessing game of skill and intuition—followed by a more physical game of double ball.

When NAYA staff visited MAIC in Minneapolis later that very same week, they toured Minneapolis's cultural corridor. MAIC has more than 20 Native-serving organizations within walking distance from their center, including the MAIC Gatherings Café, where an amazing lunch of Indigenous cuisine was served. The day ended perfectly with a hike at Minnehaha Falls so NAYA staff could get a sense of how MAIC uses the outdoors in their urban Native community.

NAYA YES Director Tamara Henderson, *Laguna Pueblo*, felt the exchange was an inspiring success, "Overall, both organizations benefited greatly from learning and sharing with one another, collaborating on what works, and discussing ways in which we can build on one another's successes as Native people have done for generations."

Culture Night is back!



Learning to bead at Culture Night

With the new school year comes the return of NAYA Culture Night! Throughout the academic year, NAYA hosts Culture Night on the first and third Wednesdays of each month. Culture Nights bring families together to share dinner and be introduced to a diverse variety of cultural and traditional activities. These events are perfect for youth of all ages, and also for those families who are not yet familiar with their cultural background or are new to the area and want a place to start. It's a welcoming environment for everyone.

Two Spirit Safe Space Alliance Gathering

Two Spirit



Safe Space Alliance

Rose notes that while swimming seems typical summer fare, they held special significance for some youth. She explains, “We had a number of trans youth who felt comfortable for the first time to be in water, which was healing for them. They learned that they didn’t have to worry, were free to be themselves, and could drop their concerns about their bodies and allow their spirit to enjoy being free in the water.”

While in Montana, participants also toured the sprawling Salish Kootenai College campus in Pablo, Montana. The tour was the first time many had been to a tribal college. These colleges provide students with a higher education rooted in Indigenous worldviews and cultural curriculum, just as NAYA’s Many Nations Academy does.

For Two Spirit youth, being immersed in Indigenous culture alongside a community of peers happens rarely, but is vital, nonetheless. Rose explains, “It is always important to connect youth to culture, ceremony, and elders. That cultural connection builds a strong sense of self in our youth. These types of community- and confidence-building connections are the key to strong, healthy Native youth. This is especially important for our most vulnerable and marginalized trans and Two Spirit youth.”

This summer, youth from NAYA’s Two Spirit (LGBTQ) Safe Space Alliance traveled to Montana to participate in the International Two Spirit Society Gathering. According to NAYA’s Culture, Education, and Wellness Manager Mick Rose, *Dine, Omaha, and Pawnee Nations*, the annual gathering “is a space for Two Spirit folks to meet, find solidarity, and connect in ceremony and culture.”

Daily activities included an optional opening pipe ceremony followed by various workshops on Indigenous games, suicide prevention, crafts, and more. Evenings were filled with a talent show and pageant, stick game tournaments, and a pow wow. Youth also enjoyed time for swimming, canoeing, and relaxing in the sun next to beautiful Flathead Lake.



Talent show and lodge pole raising



NAYA Safe Space participants in Montana



New affordable housing coming to Cully



Cully neighborhood partners at City Hall for press conference

At the September 17, 2019 press conference announcing the newest affordable housing projects approved by the Portland City Council, NAYA's forthcoming NE Prescott project was included among the nine newly funded sites.

NAYA Executive Director Paul Lumley, Yakama, stated, "We are proud to be a part of the solution to Portland's housing crisis and help the city exceed its affordable housing

bond goals. NE Prescott represents our third affordable housing development in the Cully Neighborhood and will create 50 new units of housing. Thank you, City of Portland!"

Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler noted that, with completion of the nine projects, the City will exceed its 2016 promise to voters to create 1,300 units of permanently affordable housing.

Wheeler said, "Meeting these goals and delivering on our promise to voters reflects our collective resolve and commitment to addressing the needs of Portlanders most impacted by the housing affordability crisis."

As with our recent Nesika Illahee affordable housing project, NAYA will once again partner with Community Development Partners and the Native American Rehabilitation Association on NE Prescott.

A national convening for the Native vote

NAYA hosted the National Urban Indian Family Coalition (NUIFC) in September for a 3-day national convening of urban Native American organizations from throughout the nation. In the pivotal 2018 midterm election, the NUIFC undertook the National Urban Indian Voter Engagement Initiative, an unprecedented civic outreach project. Nearly half a million dollars



Representatives from 17 urban Indian organizations gathered for the convening

was allocated to 17 Urban Indian organizations across 15 states to increase voter turnout and amplify those communities political voice. The NUIFC is renewing its commitment to amplifying Native voices, convening all organizations selected to participate in national integrated voter engagement through the 2020 Presidential election and 2020 Census work. NAYA was honored to welcome these amazing organizations: *Phoenix Indian Center, American Indian OIC, One Rapid City, Americans for Indian Opportunity, Las Vegas Indian Center, American Indians in Texas, American Indian Center of Indiana, Sacred Pipe Resource Center, Kansas City Indian Center, Chief Seattle Club, First Alaskans Institute, Denver Indian Center Inc., Chicago American Indian Center, Oklahoma Rock the Native Vote, Little Earth of United Tribes, and Center for Native American Youth.*

Johnson teaches life skills through sports



Micah Johnson

Traditional Native communities enjoyed a host of recreational activities, including sports and games that reinforced the skills needed to do village work. NAYA continues this tradition by offering youth Indigenous games during summer camp and Culture Night. And youth can also join sports leagues throughout the year as well.

Long-time Recreation Coordinator Micah Johnson, Umatilla, oversees all the many teams, tournaments, and events for kids. It's a job near and dear to his heart. "I've always wanted to work in sports and I've always wanted to serve the Native community. This job is very much what I wanted to do in some way, shape, or form."

Just as Native people used sports and games to convey life lessons, so do NAYA's programs provide a sense of discipline, physical health, personal responsibility, and connection to community and culture. For Johnson, mentoring youth through sports means he gets to witness positive outcomes firsthand. Self-confidence grows, and stronger self-discipline and personal responsibility can positively impact kids' academics.

"I like using sports to connect them to the whole education system. It's great to see kids staying at NAYA after practice to visit the Learning Center, instead of going and doing something else. I enjoy seeing how one positive choice leads to others."

Finally, NAYA's teams provide a stepping stone for youth to connect with the Native community and their culture. Johnson elaborates, "We have a lot of kids who could participate in their schools' sports right there after school but ask their families to take them across town to be with us. It's because they want to be around their Native friends and a Native coach that they feel comfortable with."

NAYA sports programming provides youth with a camaraderie based in shared interests and a sense of family based in a shared culture. According to Johnson, these bonds can grow strong.

He states, "It always makes me feel proud when I see one of our teams finish up their game and then head across town to go cheer on another. Because they're all NAYA kids, they want to go support them."



Basketball practice in NAYA gym



Volleyball team



Volleyball team



Powwow provides wonderful end to summer

The weather cooperated on Saturday, September 14, 2019, providing attendees of the NAYA Neerchokikoo Powwow with yet another reason to celebrate. This year marked the 10th anniversary of the powwow, which not only brings community together in cultural celebration, but also provides NAYA the opportunity to thank its supporters and donors.

Cool vendor artwork, Indian tacos, and the sounds of jingle dresses bouncing in the arena helped us say farewell to summer and welcome autumn. NAYA thanks all who made the event such a wonderful day. From the head staff and volunteers, to the tiny tots, partners and supporters, we hope you enjoyed your time at the powwow!



L - R: Local Native Veterans present the colors during Grand Entry, Head Lady and Head Man lead the dancers in, Tiny Tot enjoys the powwow



L - R: Intertribals give opportunities for everyone to dance in their own styles

A huge thank you to our Head Staff for their participation: M.C.: Bob Tom, *Siletz/Grand Ronde*, Arena Director: Gary Villa, Jr., *Warm Springs*; Head Man: Saul Jurado, *Siletz*; Head Woman: Denelle Stanley, *Ute/Navajo/Shawnee/Creek*; Color Guard: Local Native Veterans; Host Drum: Rocky Point. **Thank you also to Concordia University students** for volunteering their time and energy to help set up for the Neerchokikoo Powwow. **And, thank you to our sponsors:** Regional Arts and Culture Council, Pacific Office Automation, Umpqua Bank, and Multnomah County Drainage District.





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NAYA
GALA
NOV. 15



NAYA Gala changes venue this year

This year's NAYA Gala is already proving to be an exciting event! In early September, the traditional location of the NAYA Gala, the Portland Art Museum, suffered some damage to the ceiling façade. Luckily, we found a great location - the Gala has been moved to Custom Blocks in Southeast Portland!

Of course, the evening's program including revelry, Live and Silent Auctions, and delicious food and drink, will remain the same. The northwest's largest celebration of Native American Heritage Month will be as resilient as ever!

Thank you to everyone in advance for understanding and we will see you on Friday, November 15, 2019, Custom Blocks, 998 SE Main St, Portland, OR 97214!

NAYA selected for Give!Guide in 2019

NAYA will be included in the Willamette Week Give!Guide again this year. We are honored to be selected along with many amazing nonprofits doing wonderful things for the Portland community.

A minimum donation of \$10 offers fun incentives, and if you donate on Big Give Days you'll be entered to win great prizes. NAYA has high hopes to be a repeat winner in the Under 30 contest for our category this year. The Give!Guide begins November 1st and continues through December 31, 2019.

