

NAYA Family Center NEWS

Empowering the Lives of Native Americans in the Portland area



July/Aug/Sept 2010

Summer Newsletter, Volume 14, Issue 3 of 4

Congrats to our 2010 NAYA Early College Academy Graduates!

Graduating Class and Community Celebrates Milestone

NAYA Family Center would like to congratulate the 14 students who make up the 2010 graduating class of the Early College Academy. These bright and amazing students worked hard all year; on June 11, they took a monumental step in their journey towards becoming the next generation of Native leaders.

Thirteen of the 14 graduates are signed up to continue on into higher education and training programs—many with full and partial scholarships! Several of the students were able to complete coursework at Portland Community College, providing them with a pathway to their future goals and aspirations.

One of our students, Michael Marteeny, came to NAYA Family Center after his high school counselors told him repeatedly that he was not college material and probably would not graduate. We are proud to share that he earned over 18 college credits prior to graduating and had multiple acceptance letters and scholarship offers to four-year universities. He is just one of our success stories.

On June 11, the seniors started graduation exercises by introducing themselves to the elders, who then presented each student with a simulated eagle feather and explained the tradition and symbolism of the American eagle. Later that evening, Dr. Cornel Pewewardy, Director and Professor of Native American Studies at PSU, delivered the keynote address in front of parents, graduates and honored guests at the official ceremony.

All the activities and ceremonies would not have been possible without the commitment of our seniors who demonstrate responsibility to community, an unyielding ability to stay on track and appreciation for dedicated staff who taught and cared about them.



NAYA Early College Academy Graduates,
photo by Rebecca Cheney, Chit-Chat Images



Michael Marteeny receives his diploma
from Nichole Maher and Jocelyn Bigay,
photo by Rebecca Cheney, Chit-Chat Images



Graduate Carly Matthews speaks to her
fellow students, *photo by Rebecca Cheney,*
Chit-Chat Images

NAYA Family Center Celebrates its 70th Homeowner!

By Sara Libby and Jen Matheson, NAYA Family Center Homeownership Program

After four long years of advocacy and hard work on the part of our staff and community, we are proud to announce our 70th new homeowner. We have a long way to go to reach housing equality—but we are inspired by the commitment of our community and partners to create opportunity for our people!

NAYA's 70th homeowners are Robert Van Pelt (*Umatilla*) and Candace Iron Hawk (*Ojibway*). After careful preparation, home buyer education and seven months of searching, they found a house that met their needs: plenty of room for their children and grandchildren, a spacious front and back yard and a fire-place.

Candace speaks highly of her home buying team, saying "All of my questions were answered...my team has always been there when I needed them and still are today."

While we celebrate our new owners, we also continue our work to achieve housing equality for our community. In the Portland Metro area, a significant homeownership gap exists for urban Native Americans: only 25 percent of Native Americans own their own home, compared to 65 percent of the rest of the population. While the evidence of need is great, resources have not been equitably distributed to or made accessible to the Native American community.

NAYA Family Center's response to this need has been developing housing policy advocacy and programming and resources to help end this disparity. NAYA Family Center is a HUD-Approved Housing Counseling agency, providing culturally specific homebuyer education classes, financial wellness, credit

repair and one-on-one homeownership coaching to assist our community members who have a goal of homeownership.

On July 31, NAYA Family Center held our 5th Annual Native American Housing to Homeownership Fair with 400 guests in attendance. This annual event is a cornerstone of our housing services, providing housing stability resources for renters, future buyers and current owners.

Homebuyer education classes are coming up on August 7 and 21—see www.nayapdx.org for details on how to enroll and get involved in the Homeownership Program.

NAYA Seeks Foster Families from Native Community



Did you know that Native children are 11 percent of the children in foster care in the State of Oregon and 24 percent in the Portland metro area? Many of these children and youth are far away from their tribes and communities and may have lost their connection to their culture. We are working hard to find caring community members to become respite care providers and foster care parents. There is a great need for safe and loving homes for our children. NAYA is here to help every step of the way through the application process, foster care certification and connection with resources needed to be successful. You can make a difference in a young person's life.

If you are interested or would like more information, please contact Rita Olson, Foster Family Recruitment Coordinator, at 503-288-8177 ext. 314, or visit her in room 207 of NAYA's main building.



(L to R) Candace, Zoey, Ouray, Precious, Morgan and Robert
Photo by Frank Dineyazhe



Morgan & Zoey celebrate their new home!
Photo by Frank Dineyazhe

Our children and youth need you!

Neerchokikoo Powwow a Great Success!

By Lai-Lani Ovalles, Indigenous Community Engagement Coordinator

On May 14 & 15, NAYA Family Center hosted the first annual Neerchokikoo Powwow. Over 3,500 people attended the event over the two beautiful spring days. This powwow helped to honor our youth, elders and the sacred land. It was a celebration of the purchase of the NAYA building from Portland Public Schools on historic Native land.

The Neerchokikoo Powwow was open to the public and was well-received by the Native community and the extended community. It was a time to come together to share and practice our Native culture and traditions. We were fortunate to have a member from the Confederated Tribes of Grande Ronde to kick off the celebration with a traditional ground blessing ceremony for this momentous occasion in our community's history. Both days were filled with amazing drumming, dancing and hours of laughter and entertainment by Arnold Little Head, the master of ceremonies. There were over 25 Native vendors showcasing and selling their art, as well as Native nonprofit organizations sharing information. The powwow also included a dinner for the community to honor the youth, elders and veterans, as well as the Northwest Area Foundation, who helped to make the purchase of the building possible. This was truly an inspirational time for our community; the dream of having a permanent home for Native people to gather and practice cultural traditions has been realized.

The success of this event was possible because of the support from all community members and the commitment from NAYA staff. Many thanks to ALL of you for putting on an amazing powwow! Our deepest gratitude to Arnold Little Head, Ed Goodall, Bobby Mercier, Dr. Cornel Pewewardy, Four Directions drum, Harold Paul, Buzz Nelson, Leroy Big Boy, NIVA and all the veterans, our youth and elders, Northwest Area Foundation, Bow and Arrow, AIM and the PSU capstone students.



*Special thanks to our major sponsor the
Portland Development Commission*

NAYA Summer Camp

By Oscar Arana, Youth Activities Manager

More than 60 grade & middle school students will began their Summer Camp experience Monday, July 12, at the NAYA Family Center. Youth services staff members have been busy organizing activities that will improve students' academic, cultural and recreational sports abilities.

This summer, students will use work samples from their classes to create a portfolio of their camp experience. Their portfolio will be presented to their peers, family members, NAYA staff and the community during the Summer Camp Showcase on Thursday, August 12. There will also be student performances from the Cultural Arts classes taking place this summer, such as drumming and dancing.

Students will attend fun and educational fieldtrips twice a week. Some of the trips include the zoo, Blue Lake Park, the Discovery Center, the Portland Art Museum and even Oaks Park. Students will document these trips in their portfolios using a disposable camera and by writing about their trip. Incoming 9th grade students will visit local businesses, colleges and universities every Wednesday. Ninth grade students who successfully complete the program are eligible to receive high school credit.

Summer Camp is a five-week program for incoming 5th through 9th grade students. Classes go from 9 am to 4 pm Monday through Friday, July 12 through August 13. **Classes will be cancelled Thursday, August 12, in order to prepare for Summer Camp Showcase, which will begin at 5:30 pm that evening.**



Summer camp youth enjoy time at amusement park.

NAYA Mom Shares Son's Success Story

I am exercising my bragging rights as a mother and want to take a second to tell you about Shea, my youngest.

First, as you may know, Shea graduated from the NAYA Academy in 2009. He also was a Summer Institute success story.

Shea recently completed his first year at Evergreen State University, where he studied everything from Nietzsche to arc welding and—what is more—passed every class! Through NAYA, Shea was able to take many college credit courses as a high school student; he will enter his sophomore year this fall nearly at junior class standing.

Probably the most exciting thing to share about Shea is what he is up to this very moment. He is attending an Art and Architecture immersion through Evergreen State...in Florence, Italy! So far, so fantastic. He has seen Botticelli's Venus and also many beautiful churches, fountains and Italian women.

Much love,

Chris Dupres



Shea is an enrolled member of the Cowlitz nation

NAYA Early College Academy - Now Recruiting For 2010-2011 School Year

NAYA Family Center's Early College Academy will begin its fourth year this fall and is **always accepting students!** Early College Academy students have the opportunity to **earn college credit** through a partnership with Portland Community College. If you would like more information, please contact us at 503-972-2461.

We will be offering all core subject area classes, as well as Native & world languages and a comprehensive physical education program that will include health as part of the curriculum. We will also offer teen parent, Native art, and Native dance classes. We look forward to this new school year at NAYA, working with so many caring individuals and being a part of our young people's journey toward graduation.



NAYA Family Center Dinner and Auction 2010

By Krissy Alexander, Development Assistant

We hope you will join NAYA Family Center in celebrating Native American Heritage Month. Our theme for the evening is "Hope." The event will be held on **Friday, November 12, 2010** at **The Governor Hotel Heritage Ballroom** in Portland, Oregon, from **5:30-9:00 pm**. We are proud to announce that this year, in place of a keynote speaker, four community members will share their personal journeys of hope.

When you attend, plan on watching a beautiful Native dance performance, enjoy a sumptuous Native dinner and bid in a friendly competition for unusual antique and contemporary art. Contact Krissy Alexander at 503-288-8177 ext. 277 or write krystalskyea@nayapdx.org.

Great thanks go out to our major sponsors:

* **Ilahee** ("sustaining land"): Portland Development Commission, San Manuel Band of Mission Indians and Bank of the West.

There are still sponsorship opportunities available for the 2010 gala!

To Purchase Tickets:

Tickets are \$150 each, or \$1500 for a table of 10. To purchase by mail, send payment to the following address:

**NAYA Family Center
5135 NE Columbia Blvd
Portland, OR 97218**

To purchase online with a credit or debit card, please visit our secure online donation page by visiting www.nayapdx.org and clicking on the "2010 Dinner and Auction Tickets Now Available" link.

Be sure to note that the payment is for an auction ticket(s) on your check or money order.

Request for Auction Item Donations:

Do you have jewelry in your jewelry box that hasn't been worn in years? Or maybe that amazing piece of art that no longer goes with your décor? All donations are welcome! Items currently needed for the auction include Native artwork, instruments, jewelry and crafts; guided hikes and tours; health and wellness products; romantic packages and other dining and travel amenities. Items can be dropped off or sent directly to:

**NAYA Family Center
Attn: Krissy Alexander
5135 NE Columbia Blvd
Portland, OR 97218**

Please let us know how to get a hold of you so we can thank you for your generosity. To donate larger items, one-of-a-kind experiences, or other items that cannot be mailed easily, contact **Krissy Alexander at 503-288-8177 ext. 277** to make arrangements.

Earned Income Tax Site Returns Nearly \$600,000

By Irena Solomon, Tax Advocate

The NAYA Family Center tax site returned just under \$600,000 in federal income tax refunds to the community this year, nearly doubling last year's number. This includes almost \$200,000 in Earned Income Tax Credits going directly to low-income families. For many, this is the largest chunk of money that they received in the year, particularly in a year where the number of people reporting unemployment income increased by 50 percent. We filed a total of 423 tax returns, up from only 195 last year.

This year, we worked closely with our community partners, IRCO and El Programa Hispano, to expand access to tax services in under-served communities. Between the three sites, more than \$1.2 million in federal tax refunds was returned to the 864 taxpayers that filed, including more than \$400,000 in Earned Income Credit!

If these 800+ clients had chosen to use paid preparers for their taxes, almost \$100,000 of their refunds would have been lost to tax prep fees alone. That doesn't include costs for predatory "refund anticipation" loans that are targeted at low-income families. We were also able to refer families and individuals to other programs and benefits, such as food and energy assistance, our IDA program, etc. By providing this resource, people were empowered to use their refunds in ways that align with their values and support their community.

None of this would have been possible without our wonderful volunteer preparers, who donated over 400 hours of their time preparing taxes at the NAYA Family Center site, and an additional 40+ hours of certification training. Thank you for making this the best year yet!



Volunteer Maggie Reilly helps Dorota Huber prepare tax forms



Kateri Eagle Staff and Deanne Grant at tax site

Native Community Members Complete Raptor Program

By Gabe Walker, Employment Life Skills Coach

Congratulations are in order for the Native community members who completed the Roofer's Training Project, nicknamed the "Raptor Program." The program was initiated by the United States Bureau of the Interior and the Greater Portland Roofers and Waterproofers Union, local 49. During the month of June, community partners NAYA Family Center and Grande Ronde employment program coached and encouraged enrolled tribal members through a rigorous application and interview process. The collective efforts from employment coaches and training specialists Chris Garcia (*Grande Ronde*), Ellen Goss, and Gabe Walker (NAYA Family Center) allowed for the recruitment of outstanding enrolled tribal members in our community.

Local Union 49 provided the training at their facility in SE Portland. Dedicated instructors Clint Mapes and Howard Nave fully prepared the candidates to be successful in the physically demanding roofing trade. With training dollars and a stipend allocated by the BIA and the wrap-around services provided by NAYA and Grande Ronde, the applicants were given a golden opportunity to convert their already considerable skills into lifelong education and careers.

Participants attended an intensive three-week training that started at 7 am and went well into the evening, testing physical and mental stamina. They worked as individuals and teams, forming lasting bonds with their classmates and instructors. Union roofing contractors were invited to stop in and observe the trainees in action and decide if they would like to extend an employment offer to any of the candidates at the end of the training. Concluding the three-week training program at an Indian taco dinner, graduation and award ceremony, 100 percent of the participants were offered union employment with local roofing contractors.

The newly employed union roofers are: Harold Blackwolf, Philcina (*Xena*) Kince, Mike Benner, Richard SoHappy, Albert Scott and David Holmes.

The "Raptor Program" plans to build on it's success and again prove it's motto, "Intelligence and speed are a deadly combination," with the recruitment of a second and final roofing apprenticeship class this month.

Deep appreciation goes to the dedicated trainers and staff at the Roofers Union training center!



Native Professionals Night attendees welcome AIO program participants, photo by Jeff Liu

LEAD Fellowship Program

By Lai-Lani Ovalles, Indigenous Community Engagement Coordinator

NAYA Family Center is the host organization for the 3rd cohort of the Oregon LEAD Fellowship program. The Leadership and Entrepreneurial Apprenticeship Development (LEAD) Program is a unique American Indian nonprofit leadership development opportunity for motivated individuals seeking to create a stronger future for Native nonprofit organizations—institutional assets in Indian Country.

The purpose and intent of LEAD is to build a strong base of skilled, Native professionals who are actively engaged in nonprofit leadership. At the start of the year, the cohort participated in the LEAD Institute National Conference held in Santa Ana Pueblo in January. The three days of workshops introduced the Fellows to the training topics that will be covered in the program. Throughout the year, the LEAD cohort receives intensive training in financial management, fundraising, program management and evaluation and service leadership.

In June, the LEAD cohort successfully organized the Native Professionals Night event at Orrick Law Office and welcomed the Americans for Indian Opportunity (AIO) Program during their visit to Portland. AIO was started by LaDonna Harris (*Comanche*) as a leadership initiative that encourages their AIO Ambassadors to weave their traditional tribal values into a contemporary reality.

For more information about the LEAD Fellows program, please contact Lai-Lani Ovalles at NAYA Family Center. lailanio@nayapdx.org

Native-Specific Report Profiles Disparities and Advocates for Change

By Julia Meier, Coalition of Communities of Color Coordinator

As an active and participating member of the Coalition of Communities of Color (CCC), NAYA has worked hard to advocate and fight for public policy that will enhance the lives of our community. The recent completion and distribution of the CCC Report *Communities of Color in Multnomah County: An Unsettling Profile* has yielded much needed discussion around decreasing disparities by making the invisible visible, empowering communities and advocating for policy change.

With assistance from the Northwest Health Foundation, Multnomah County and the City of Portland, the Coalition of Communities of Color and Portland State University have provided data that reflects the lived experiences of communities of color in Multnomah County. People of color experience overwhelming hardship and face severe social and economic exclusion in many shapes and forms. The profile is the first in a series of seven reports. The next six reports will highlight the communities represented in the CCC, including a Native-specific report.

The journey contained within the Native-specific report will trouble most readers because it profiles the disparities and experiences of our community. It consolidates data on our status today; it is a distressing profile of the experiences of our people. Know—still—that we are resilient people, working hard to command voice, visibility and power in mainstream society. Our voice is growing more powerful, day by day.

You can read the entire report at www.coalitioncommunities-color.org. The Native-specific report will be available in the coming months and is currently under review by members of the Portland Indian Leaders Roundtable. For more information, please contact Julia Meier at 503-288-8177 ext. 295 or juliam@nayapdx.org.



Youth provides testimony on behalf of community

Native American Youth and Family Center

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NAYA needs your help!

Things on the economic front are not looking quite as difficult as they were at this time last year; however, our youth and families continue to be among those hit hardest and face continued economic challenges in 2010. NAYA programming continues to expand its reach and scope, but demand continues to grow while our individual donor support—a source of significant unrestricted revenue to support our most vulnerable adults and children—remains a challenge. We have a lot of work to do together to make sure our children and families who need it most can benefit from the support and community of the NAYA Family Center.

We couldn't do this work without your support—thank you for keeping it going and believing in community and systemic solutions. While we are all stretched tightly, it only takes a little from all of us to make great things happen. The NAYA Family Center is blessed with thousands of donors; each dollar makes a difference! With your generous contributions, we would be able to support our families this year.

We know you believe, as we do, that we work as an organization with great effectiveness to serve and change the lives of thousands of Native people in the Portland area. We ask you to make a commitment to a center that is dedicated to solving the issues and circumstances that impact Native people.

How can you help? Please make a financial gift and help us to continue our good work. We could not do the work we do without you; we thank you for your commitment to our community.

Thank you for your generous support of NAYA Family Center.