

Moccasins

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WSU Students Try Their Hand at Moccasin Making

by Faith Price

On January 26, WSU Native students had the opportunity to make moccasins under the instruction of Jessica Allen (Nez Perce/Coeur d'Alene). The Native American Student Center is hosting a series of workshops over the spring semester for students to bead and complete their moccasins.

Allen taught the group how to make a pattern for their moccasins, carefully tracing their feet onto construction paper. Next they checked the grain of the buckskin, and carefully cut their moccasins out to make sure they stretched in the right places.

"I was taught the old way by watching and doing," said Allen. "When I asked for something I was given the tools to make it and told there you go. Then they would correct me as I went. My teachers were both my grandmothers, Audrey Pinkham Redheart and Tillie Falcon Nomee."



Jessica Allen (l) helps freshman Kyra Antone cut out her moccasins.

Allen made her first pair of moccasins around age 15. She told the group she remembered proudly showing her grandma her first pair of moccasins, only to hear a rip as Grandma took out her stitches, and said, "Now do it right."

Well, she learned how to do it right, and is now teaching others!

"I tell everyone 'Well, I can teach you how to make it if you want it so bad. Then you will always know,'" said Allen. "I was taught to pass on my knowledge whenever I can so it doesn't die out."



Emma Johnson making her first ever set of moccasins.

WSU student Emma Johnson, 19, expressed her appreciation of learning to make what will be her first pair of moccasins. Johnson is Cowlitz from Winlock, Washington.

"I've never been able to make a pair of moccasins, so I was really excited to have some and say I made them," said Johnson. "Going in I had no idea of how you make moccasins, so I took in a lot of info."

Since the workshop, Johnson has been dedicated to beading her moccasins. The students will have regular beading sessions over the next couple months in the Native Center until Allen returns in April to teach them how to sew the moccasins together.

"This last workshop up in WSU made my heart happy so many people willing to learn and the energy was amazing," said Allen. "I'm thankful I am able to pass on my knowledge."

The WSU students are looking forward to Allen's final workshop, and are hoping to get their stitches right the first time!