

Speech–Language Pathology Students Support Salish Language School Efforts

By Ella Inglebret and Jennifer Owens

What do university students see modeled at the Salish School of Spokane? Passion for learning! Passion for life! The teachers and staff are driven by passion to keep the Interior Salish languages and cultures alive!

For the past two years, over 40 students training to become speech–language pathologists have supported efforts of the Salish School of Spokane to revitalize Interior Salish languages. These efforts have been led by the Multicultural Club, comprised of students from the Washington State University's Department of Speech and Hearing Sciences and Eastern Washington University's Department of Communication Disorders.

The mission of the Multicultural Club is to promote cultural awareness, support underserved populations, and encourage inclusion of all people. Faculty Advisor for the club, Amy Meredith, highlights that the club originated as a student idea and continues to be grounded in the desire of students to make a positive difference in the world.

The Salish School of Spokane has embraced university student involvement in its program. Last year the club organized a Thanksgiving food drive, as well as a clothing drive for 10 families served by the School. This year the club continued the tradition of providing Thanksgiving dinners and added donation of children's books. The reward came in seeing the children light up as they were handed the books to take home!

During school hours, the Salish School provides Salish language instruction for young children from one to nine years of age. They also provide before and after–school care and offer Salish language classes for family members on Wednesday and Thursday evenings. This is where the contributions of Multicultural Club members become a real asset. They assist with the after–school program and provide child care while adults attend the language classes.

Multicultural Club member, Sheena Carrigan, has been assisting with the after school program for the past year. She interacts with children during snacks, story time, and play. Sheena describes her experience as "extremely enriching." She has "learned how a classroom can be set up to promote learning, teaching techniques used by teachers and aides, and also much about the Salish language and culture surrounding it."

Working with the Salish School of Spokane has provided a unique opportunity for university students to see how a dream becomes reality! What started as a vision of young children being immersed in Salish language and culture has grown from 12 students three years ago to over 60 students currently. With this tremendous growth comes a need for additional resources. The Salish School of Spokane, as a non–profit organization, will gladly accept contributions via its website www.salishschoolofspokane.org. For additional information about the School, contact Principal Christopher Parkin at chris@salishschoolofspokane.org.



Multicultural Club members display some of the donations received during their Thanksgiving food drive benefitting Salish School of Spokane families.