New Elson S. Floyd Cultural Center Recognizes Nez Perce Tribe

On August 17, 2017, members of the WSU community gathered in the Elson S. Floyd Cultural Center (ESFCC) for a pre-opening ceremony of blessing led by Nez Perce Drum Waahp Qaqun and Mr. Nakia Williamson, Director of the Nez Perce Tribe Cultural Resource Department. Mr. Williamson also served as a cultural consultant to the architectural firm, GGLO, and a contributing artist for the ESFCC.

The Wípwip Wéecet - Wildcat Dance troupe from Lapwai, coordinated by Angel Sobotta, Nez Perce, graced the audience with their beautiful Welcome Dance and Swan Dance. President Kirk Schulz welcomed the guests and recognized the establishment of Washington State University on the ceded lands of the Nez Perce Tribe. Mr. Sam Penney, member of the Nez Perce Tribal Executive Committee and Nez Perce delegate to the WSU President’s Native American Advisory Board also addressed those present.

Located at the gateway to campus off of Main and Stadium Way, the ESFCC is a celebration of cultural diversity. With its main entrance facing east, the elongated building reflects the rolling hills of the Palouse in its roof design, honoring the land. A sculpture at the east entrance represents the historic homelands of the Nimiipuu and the land base diminishment through treaties. Artistic expressions throughout the building, in the meditation pavilion, and outside of the west entrance further reflect the cultures of the First Peoples of this region.

The building is a physical expression of a dream of our late President, Dr. Elson S. Floyd, a dream for “spaces that will help us develop programming that in turn will help students, faculty, staff, and community come together and learn about each other’s culture and share the uniqueness that everybody brings to the table.” I was honored to be a part of the steering committee charged with working with the design team to construct a space that recognized and celebrated the diversity of peoples and their cultures that are a part of WSU – past, present, and future. This building represents the first visual concrete, formal acknowledgement by WSU that the Pullman Campus was established on the ceded lands of the Nez Perce Tribe. It is my hope that each of our WSU Campuses will follow suit in a formal, structural recognition of those First Peoples whose traditional lands they have been established upon.

To learn more about the Elson S. Floyd Cultural Center and catch a glimpse of the pre-opening ceremony, visit https://culturalcenter.wsu.edu/.

I hope you enjoy the rest of the newsletter and welcome to the newest member of our team, Shana our student communications intern! Have a great fall!

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