

# NISQUALLY ABSCH News



Nisqually Tribal News

4820 She-Nah-Num Dr. SE Olympia, WA 98513

Phone # 360-456-5221

Volume 16, Issue 1

[www.nisqually-nsn.gov](http://www.nisqually-nsn.gov)

January 2026

## A Look Back at 2025



*Continued on page 4-2025*



# Council's Corner

By Vice Chair Training Report – NCAI by Cheebo Frazier

I attended a big National Tribal Government meeting because it was close by in Seattle in November for a week. It was the same week our Granddaughter was born so I missed the first two days Sunday/Monday when labor started and delivery happened.

The topics were VERY interesting and covered all areas of Tribal businesses and community needs. I listened to many of the speakers and candidates talk about the priority issues for Tribes from all around the nation. I enjoyed getting focused in on talks and matters.

But then came the intensity of the doings – it was political with it being an election year. There was a lot of social events, meetings, greetings, and business sales happening. There was also controversy with some Tribes not agreeing with the direction of NCAI and several Tribes pulled out of the organization.

I printed the agenda and selected several key topics I wanted to attend. I attended several on **Education** of course because that's an area I want to continue to work in as a Tribal Leader. I attended seminars on: **Litigation, Economic and Community Development, Civic Engagement, Toolkit for Workforce Development, Building Stronger Nations, Native Power and Visibility, Tribal Budget, Healing Sovereignty, and Building the Tribal Economy.**

I attended a luncheon about encouraging Tribal youth leaders toward college and spoke at their lunch time college fair. I spent a lot of time speaking to sales people, firms and consultants. I brought back some business leads that I felt could help us with

*Continued on page 3-TC CORNER*

## Nisqually Tribal Office Holiday Closures

*Please mark them on your calendars!*

**Thursday, January 1, 2026**

*New Years Day*

**Monday, January 19, 2026**

*Martin Luther King Jr. Day*

**Thursday, January 29, 2026**

*Chief Leschi's Birthday*

**Monday, February 16, 2026**

*Presidents Day*

### How to Contact Us

Tribal Center 360-456-5221  
Health Clinic 360-459-5312  
Law Enforcement 360-413-3019  
Youth Center 360-455-5213  
Natural Resources 360-438-8687

### Nisqually Tribal News

4820 She-Nah-Num Dr. SE  
Olympia, WA 98513  
360-456-5221

Leslee Youckton  
youckton.leslee@nisqually-nsn.gov  
ext. 1252

The deadline for the newsletter is the second Monday of every month.

### Nisqually Tribal Council

Chair, Ken Choke  
Vice Chair, Cheebo Frazier  
Secretary, Jackie Whittington  
Treasurer, Norine Wells  
5<sup>th</sup> Council, Chris Olin  
6<sup>th</sup> Council, Guido Levy Jr.  
7<sup>th</sup> Council, Leighanna Scott

Where to Find Information:

**Squalli Absch Newsletter**

- Mailed, on website

**Street Buzz**

- Mailout, on She Nah Num

Facebook and website

**Nisqually Indian Tribe Facebook**

- geared toward educating the public

**She Nah Num**

- Private Facebook page

**Website - [www.nisqually-nsn.gov](http://www.nisqually-nsn.gov)**

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# Chum Filling the Smokers Indicator of a Decent Run

By Craig Smith

This year's Nisqually chum run, while not as abundant as last year, was still quite good and allowed ceremonial and subsistence fishing and a brief commercial fishing opportunity.

"Smokehouses were going and for the most part, you weren't out there fishing for one or two fish," said Craig Smith, Salmon Fisheries Program Manager. "High water meant many folks were not fishing when it might have been least successful."

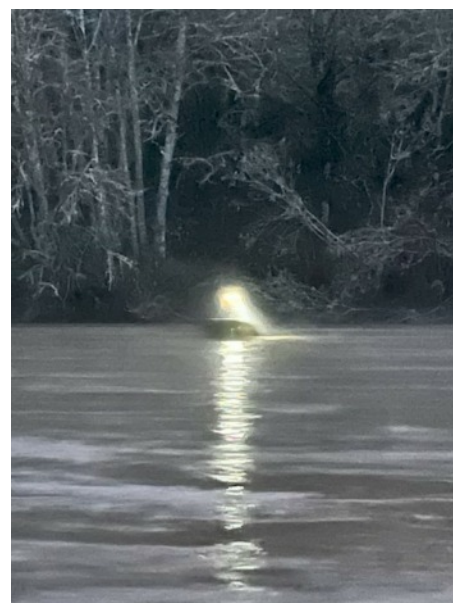
The tribe continues to use the Yelm Creek traditional indicator of run health for in-season management, following the required ground-truthing of the tribal fishermen traditional knowledge.

"The difference between the numbers in Yelm Creek this year and last was that when we got in there last year, there were so many fish and then it wasn't even the peak of the run, that was later," Smith said. "This year – we surveyed Yelm Creek and that was the peak of the run. Numbers dropped off after that."

Having the subsistence fisheries also helped keep the sea lions at bay and Natural Resources staff got good data from the surveys and fishery, Smith said.

Water levels were great for chum, with high water flooding all the streams such as Muck Creek where biologists estimate up to 5,000 chum returned. Water is also still flowing in Exeter Creek, which had been dry a number of years prior.

The fishery was managed conservatively because conditions did not allow as many surveys as usual, but it also meant many fish were not targeted and moved upstream. "We feel good about the management and making escapement," Smith



*Continued from page 2-TC CORNER*

our challenges and help us approach the work we do in good, positive ways. I took my niece with me and we paid her way on our own. Hopefully, she got good insights too.

In the end, I was able to vote and take part in the process of representing Nisqually Tribe. I also had a chance to go through the market and find some take home gifts too! I also caught up with some of our relatives from California and our surrounding sister Tribes and was happy to see them there. Overall, it was a great experience and learning opportunity.





Continued from cover-2025







# Training

By Chief of Police Jasper Bruner

As we wind down 2025, we continue our proactive approach to traffic safety with focused patrol emphasis on bus stop safety, speed enforcement, and stop sign enforcement on arterial roads throughout the community. These efforts support our ongoing commitment to public safety, especially for our youth who are on our roadways multiple times each day during the short daylight hours. We wish everyone a safe and wonderful holiday season.

Nisqually Public Safety has remained very busy in recent months with basic, advanced, and internal trainings for staff members. These efforts reflect our continued commitment to reinforcing core principles, techniques, and practices to better serve the Nisqually Tribe and Community.

Nisqually Fish and Wildlife Sgt. David Blanksma and Officer Jayson Dickerson recently attended the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC) Law

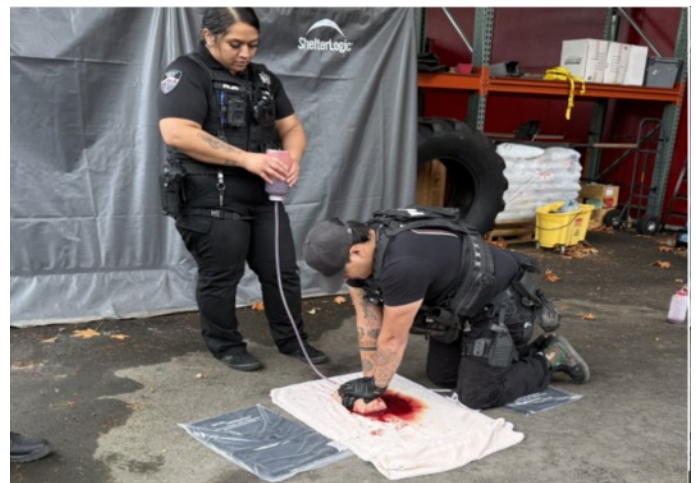
been made available to additional team members who are not currently in leadership roles but aspire to advance as opportunities arise. Nisqually Public Safety has additionally been selected as a training site for the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center to host Leadership Training in March 2026. This is an excellent opportunity not only for our department but also for neighboring tribes and local partners to attend FLETC training locally. The Nisqually Corrections Division recently hosted and attended leadership development training taught by Nisqually Human Resources' Ms. Elizabeth Morris. Police and Wildlife supervisors and employees have been participating in both FLETC and Washington State Criminal Justice Training Center (CJTC) first-line supervisor training as well.



*MLETP- Class 2601: Pictured- Officer Jayson Dickerson and Sgt. David Blanksma*

Enforcement Marine Operations Training Program. This three-week course certifies officers working in marine environments in federally approved techniques and practices. It is a strenuous, high-level program requiring exceptional competency and motivation. We are proud to report that both Sgt. Blanksma and Officer Dickerson not only completed the course but received high marks and commendation, representing Nisqually Public Safety, the Nisqually Tribe, and our sponsoring agency, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, with distinction.

All division supervisors have also been undergoing formalized leadership training. These trainings have



*NPD Tac-Med Training: Pictured Officer Alyssa Manu and Officer Rondey Thomas*

Recent personnel transitions temporarily impacted our ability to conduct in-house training and offer instruction to the other Public Safety divisions. We have been fortunate, however, to secure placement in various instructor courses to rebuild that capacity. Officer Isaiah Thomas recently attended Taser Instructor training on short notice. Officer Rodney Thomas earned his FLETC Firearms Instructor Certification, and Officer Michael Ellis completed his CJTC Firearms Instructor Certification. Officers Scott Benson and Ignacio Saldana attended the FLETC Tactical Medicine Instructor Course and have been providing monthly internal Tac-Med training sessions for staff over the past two months. We are currently planning additional basic and advanced training opportunities for 2025 and throughout the 2026 calendar year, including programs designed for community presentation and engagement.

Mvto,  
Chief of Police Jasper Bruner





# Veterans Day Honoring

By Aztec Sovereign and Jack George photos, Nisqually Communications and Media Services

The rescheduled Veterans Day Luncheon was well-attended at the Elders Center with a delicious meal served, gifts for veterans and Quilts of Valor for those who had not yet received a quilt.

The effort was started as a way to welcome Vietnam Veterans home and has expanded to all veterans. Thank you to Julie Palm and Lori Lund and all those who helped bring this event together.







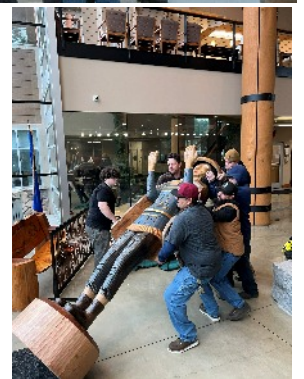
# Welcome Pole

By Debbie Preston, Nisqually Indian Tribe Communications and Media Services Director

Taylor Krise, a Squaxin tribal artist who also has Nisqually relatives, finished a Chief Leschi Welcome Pole as part of the Nisqually State Park art that is to be installed there. It may also be part of Canoe Journey, which is under discussion.

For now, everyone can see it in the Nisqually Administration Building. Krise was assisted by John Zinser, who is especially good with helping bridge the gaps in logs with plugs so the work holds together in an increasingly difficult time to find cedar logs that are big enough.

The pole was brought to Nisqually on Dec. 1. The Nisqually Parks Commission commissioned the work. Krise was overcome with emotion when talking about the project, saying there were days where the history was heavy and other days where the survival of the people brought joy to his work. A crack that appears as a tear down the face manifested itself late in the project and astonished Krise when he saw it.



# Tailgate Parties

By Debbie Preston, Nisqually Indian Tribe Communications and Media Services Director

There was the festive Nisqually Adult Wellness- sponsored Tailgate Party where the drama of Thursday Night Football unfolded. Much thanks to all those who helped make that a fun family event. The beautiful woven ornaments were given to elders and the kids got gifts.

Best gift of all - the number 1 seed and first in the division!

Keep an eye out for future tailgate dates!



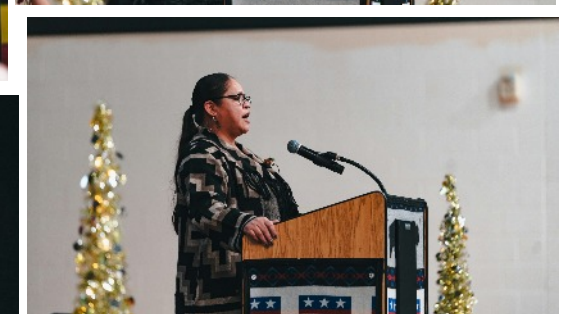




# Charitables Dinner

By Debbie Preston, Nisqually Indian Tribe Communications and Media Services Director  
Photos Aztec Sovereign, Nisqually Tribe Communications and Media Services

The Nisqually Tribe hosted the Charitables announcement dinner of 165 charitable or emergency services organizations in a multi-county area that received funds from the tribe, totaling an estimated \$1.1 million.



*Leighanna Scott, 7th Council, greets attendees.*

*Chay Squally welcomes guests before offering a prayer.*

*John, Reuben, Huey and Lawrenz cooked the fish behind the Youth Center in the chill of the evening.*

*Jillian McCloud welcomes attendees.*





# Celebrating Ellen Wells - STEP Program Graduate!

We are thrilled to announce that Ellen Wells has successfully graduated from the STEP program at Nisqually Red Wind Casino!

Over the past three years as our Slot Apprentice, Ellen has shown incredible dedication and drive. She mastered not one, not two, but **THREE** positions - Slot Attendant, Lead Slot Attendant, and Slot Station Supervisor. Her commitment to growth and excellence has been truly inspiring.

Ellen's achievements extend far beyond the casino floor:

- Earned her GED while in the program
- Currently pursuing her bachelor's degree

- Earned her Tribal Gaming and Hospitality Management Certification (TGHM) through the University of Washington

- Purchased her first house



- Bought a new car
- Created stability and security for her family

Ellen's journey is a testament to what determination, hard work, and the right support can achieve. She has excelled in every aspect of her life - career, education, and personal growth.

We are incredibly proud of Ellen's accomplishments and excited to announce that she has accepted the Slot Station Supervisor position at our casino! We can't wait to watch her continue to grow as a leader. This is just the beginning of what we know will be an amazing career!

Congratulations, Ellen!

#STEPProgram #EmployeeSuccess  
#NisquallyRedWind #ProudMoment  
#Leadership #CareerGrowth



# CONGRATULATIONS, ANTHONY CHOKE!

The STEP Board is thrilled to announce that Anthony Choke has officially graduated from the STEP Program!

Anthony served as the Nisqually Red Wind Casino's HR Apprentice for over 5 years, demonstrating exceptional dedication and growth. During his time in the program, he mastered multiple roles, including HR Administrative Assistant, HR Coordinator, HR Employment Specialist, Service and Training Assistant, Service and Training Coordinator, HR Trainer, and HR Generalist.

## His Impressive Achievements:

- Entered the program with a master's degree in HR

- Inspired at an HR Conference to pursue his doctoral degree—on track to complete in April 2026!

- Took classes for his Professional in Human Resources (PHR) certification

- Achieved his Tribal Human Resources Professional (THRP) certification



Anthony has now graduated from the STEP Program and stepped into his new role as **Senior HR Generalist for the Nisqually Tribe**. We are incredibly proud of his accomplishments and his commitment to excellence.

Anthony is truly a rising leader in the Nisqually Community, and we can't wait to see all that he will achieve in the future.

**Congratulations, Anthony! Keep pursuing your dreams and goals!**

#STEPProgram #NisquallyTribe #Leadership #Congratulations

#HRExcellence #TribalLeadership

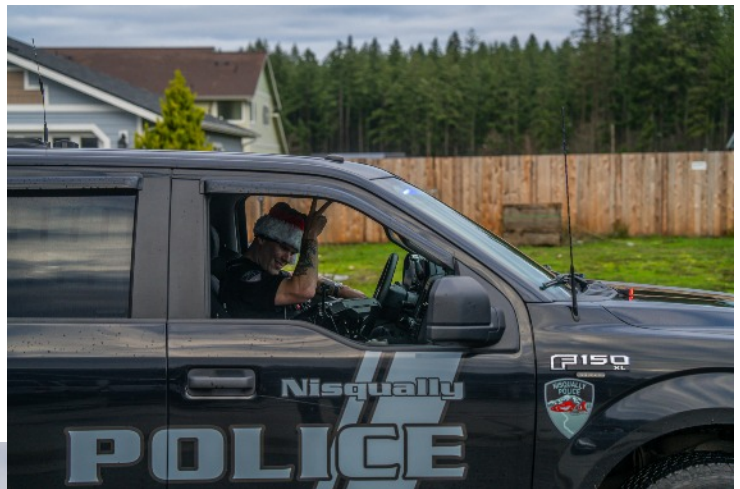




# Christmas Parade

By Jack George, Nisqually Tribe Communications and Media Services and Leighanna Scott, 7th Council

The storm agreed to not appear and it was a lovely afternoon for a Christmas parade on Dec. 24. A big thank you to all those who pulled it together at the last minute, including Santa, who was convinced to fit this into his schedule.











# Open the Pod Bay Doors – AI Safety Tips for Kids

Tips from the IT-WebDev Department

“I’m sorry Dave, I’m afraid I can’t do that”, the infamous quip from Hal 9000 foretold the issues faced with artificial intelligence today. Is artificial intelligence a helpful bot or a danger to society? In the film, *2001: A Space Odyssey*, Stanley Kubrick argues for the side of the latter, but is that our fate?



Although our world is now 25 years past the titular setting of the sci-fi film, the future of AI still rests in the hands of the upcoming generations, and it is important to lay the groundwork now to help decide what that future will look like.

As the new year begins, a constant and rapidly evolving world of AI technology is drastically changing approaches for cybersecurity — something important to discuss with youth. According to an April 2025 Gallup survey, nearly half (47%) of Gen Z is using generative AI on a weekly basis but 41% still feel anxious about the technology. And there is good reason to feel anxious; deep fakes, fraud, and personal information scraping are all threats posed by this technology. But there are ways to be prepared! First, speak with kids about how they use AI, what they believe it is useful for, and what reservations

they have about the technology. Develop strategies for best practices around AI — avoid clicking unknown links or downloading anything without consent from a guardian; ask for help if a website or game asks personal information such as name, address, phone number and school name; check the source of information found online — AI can fabricate sources that appear real but do not exist. When in doubt, do a gut check! If something seems suspicious it usually is and inform an adult.

For guardians, AI can also provide helpful tools to keep their children safe. Content filters can be used to scan text, image, and video to block harmful material; fraud detectors can notice patterns of suspicious messages and links; chat moderators can flag bullying, inappropriate language, and strangers attempting to trick kids; parental control tools can become adaptive to find best use for families. AI can also be used to identify scams, fake accounts and AI generated images.

Tools are only as good or bad as the people who use them, make sure to use this technology for good! Hal 9000 is already here and cannot be ignored, better to have him sing lullabies than be shot into space.

## Billy Frank Jr. Statues

By Debbie Preston, Nisqually Indian Tribe Communications and Media Services Director



The two bronze Billy Frank Jr. statues, one for the state Capitol and one for Statuary Hall in Washington, D.C. are now being created by Classic Foundry in south Seattle. The process requires many pieces to be poured and then assembled and welded together and smoothed in a cooperative way with the artist, Haiying Wu. This copy of the current design, which had one fish removed due to the possibility of sticking out and possibly catching people, is the final design. It will be used in the educational displays and events.

The two statues are slated to be finished in May of 2026 with possible installation in late 2026 or early 2027.





# Routine Medications

As we start a new year, here is a friendly reminder to be consistent when taking your routine medications. If you aren't taking your medications regularly, it will affect your lab work and your vital signs. If your doctor or nurse practitioner thinks that you are taking your medications regularly, but your lab results are still abnormal, they may change your dose or even change the medication not realizing that you have been skipping doses. This may result in adverse effects. For example, a patient is prescribed a blood pressure medication at 10mg but has not been taking it consistently. On the next visit, the patient's blood pressure is still not under control. The prescriber may raise the dose to 20mg thinking that the 10mg has not been effective, when the 10mg dose may have been just fine if the patient had taken it consistently.

Always communicate with your prescriber. The pharmacy can work with your provider to come up with a helpful solution. Pharmacy may be able to help by bubble packing your medications. In some cases, they can be packaged so that you can take all your medications at one time, once a day. This may help some people who forget to take medications

multiple times during the day. Bubble packing also helps patients not run out of routine medications during holiday closures. The pharmacy technicians plan by preparing bubble packs in advance of the holiday closure. Please call and order any medications that you may be taking as needed or that you have asked us to hold until you request them.

Another service that the pharmacy provides is the Med Sync Program. Instead of bubble packs, the medications are prepared in pill vials so that patients can receive their routine medications all at one time when possible.

**We are here to help, so give us a call at  
360-491-9770.**

**We are here Monday through Friday 8 a.m. to 5  
p.m. And are closed between noon and  
1 p.m. for lunch.**

**Happy New Year** from all of us in the Pharmacy,  
Amy, Richelle, John, Bona, Victor, Tamara, and  
Shelly

# Nisqually Tribe Relay for Life annual bake sale

The Nisqually Relay for Life Team annual bake sale was held just before the holiday break, raising more than \$1,000 for cancer research.

Thank you to all who baked and donated!







# NISQUALLY TRIBE Diaper Distribution *At the Nisqually Warehouse.*





## Jan 16, 10AM-1PM

Need diapers? Households on or near Tribal lands and enrolled in programs like WIC, SNAP, or TANF may be eligible.

[spipa.org](http://spipa.org)

360.426.3990




### Nisqually WIC

SPIPA Warehouse at Nisqually.  
WIC (Women, Infants, and Children) provides healthy foods & nutrition information for you and your child up to age 5.

For appointments and questions, contact:  
**Debbie Gardipee**  
360.463.4439  
[dgardipee@spipa.org](mailto:dgardipee@spipa.org)  
SPIPA: 360.426.3990

Next WIC date:  
**January 15, 2026**  
SPIPA Warehouse at Nisqually

*We will offer both phone and in person appointments.  
Date subject to change.*



**This institution is an equal opportunity provider.**  
Washington WIC doesn't discriminate.

## Nisqually USDA Foods Delivery Date 1-16-2026 At the Nisqually Warehouse.

**10am-1pm**  
[spipa.org](http://spipa.org)  
360.426.3990

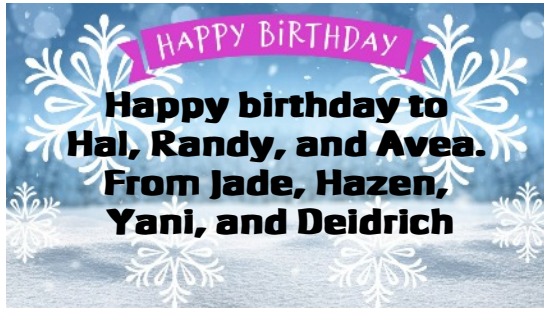
Unable to make the date? Call us to schedule an appointment.







## Announcements



### Tribal Estate and Will Planning

Tribal Estate Planning Services provided by Emily Penoyar-Rambo

Services offered:

- Last will and testament
- Durable power of attorney
- Healthcare directive
- Tangible personal property bequest
- Funeral/burial instructions

Appointments will be set up for the first and third Thursday of each month. Available appointment times are 8:30 a.m., 9:30 a.m., 10:30 a.m. and 11:30 a.m.

Please call Lori Lehman at 360-456-5221 to set up an appointment.



**FREE Rides**

**Monday through Friday**

**Transit available**

**6:00 a.m. to 6 :00 p.m.**

**Open to all tribal, community  
and tribal employees. We offer  
rides from 6:15 a.m. to last off  
rez ride at 5:00 p.m.**

**Contact Cecile Hemphill,  
Motor Pool Coordinator/Dispatch**

**At 360-456-5236**





Nisqually Youth Program




# January

1937 Lashi St. SE, Olympia, WA 98513

(360) 455-5213

youthservices@nisqually-nsn.gov



Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Youth Program Hours 10:00AM to 7:00PM Monday-Friday 9:00AM- 12:00PM Saturday			1 <b>Closed</b> <b>New Years Day</b>	2	3	4 
5 Language 4:30PM Elementary 5:00PM Middle	6 Arts and Crafts 4:00PM Elementary 5:00PM Middle	7 PE 4:00PM Elementary 5:00PM Middle	8 Cultural Crafts 4:00PM Elementary 5:00PM Middle School	9 <b>Drum Circle 5:00</b>  NTPS No School	10 Volleyball 9:30-10:30AM Elementary 10:30-11:30AM Middle & High School	11
12 Language 4:30PM Elementary 5:00PM Middle	13 Arts and Crafts 4:00PM Elementary 5:00PM Middle	14 PE 4:00PM Elementary 5:00PM Middle	15 Cultural Crafts 4:00PM Elementary 5:00PM Middle School	16 <b>Drum Circle 5:00</b>	17 Basketball 9:30-10:30AM Elementary 10:30-11:30AM Middle & High School	18
19 <b>Closed</b> <b>MLK Day</b>	20 Arts and Crafts 4:00PM Elementary 5:00PM Middle	21 PE 4:00PM Elementary 5:00PM Middle	22 Cultural Crafts 4:00PM Elementary 5:00PM Middle School	23 <b>Drum Circle 5:00</b>	24 Volleyball 9:30-10:30AM Elementary 10:30-11:30AM Middle & High School	25
26 	27 Arts and Crafts 4:00PM Elementary 5:00PM Middle	28 PE 4:00PM Elementary 5:00PM Middle	29 <b>Closed</b> <b>Chief Leschi Birthday</b>	30 <b>Drum Circle 5:00</b>  NTPS Early Release	31 Basketball 9:30-10:30AM Elementary 10:30-11:30AM Middle & High School	

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