

ESA Headquarters Celebrates National American Indian Heritage Month

By Charlene Greer



On November 9, 2016, the Economic Services Administration (ESA) Headquarters hosted the 17th Annual National American Indian Heritage Month (NAIHM) celebration at the Capital View 1 building in Olympia.

The NAIHM is a time to celebrate rich and diverse cultures, traditions, and histories and to acknowledge the important contributions of Native people. Heritage Month is also an opportune time to educate staff about tribes, to raise a general awareness about the unique challenges Native people have faced both historically and in the present, and the ways in which tribal citizens have worked to conquer these challenges. Both [President Obama](#) and [Governor Inslee](#) issued Proclamations designating November as a month to celebrate the meaningful partnerships we have with tribal nations, and our commitment to strengthen our government-to-government relationships.

What a great celebration it was. Over 100 people from ESA and Indian tribes attended our celebration. Indian Tacos and fry bread were served for lunch, along with pumpkin pie and cookies for dessert. Members of the Chehalis Tribe and South Puget Sound Intertribal Planning Agency (SPIPA) prepared delicious fry bread, and ESA staff donated crockpots of their favorite chili and jars of their world-famous salsas.

The highlight of our celebration was the singing and drumming by members of the Chehalis Intertribal Canoe Family. They performed several songs. Shannon Comenout gave a detailed explanation about the meaning of each song before they began to sing. ESA staff greatly appreciates them sharing a little bit of their culture with us.

Vickie Era-Pankretz, an artist and member of the Alutiiq-Koniag Tribe, brought in wonderful array of arts and crafts for everyone to enjoy. The DCS Tribal Relations Team (TRT) provided a slide show featuring pictures taken during the recent Paddle to Nisqually along with photos taken over the years of previous Tribal Canoe Journeys and celebrations. TRT also provided a resource table featuring many excellent handouts and resource materials.

Even if you miss celebrating American Indian Heritage in the month of November, look for other opportunities throughout the year to learn about Indian tribes and tribal culture.

ESA Headquarters would like to thank everyone for celebrating with us. Thanks go out to all who helped by: planning, setting up, cleaning up, cooking, sharing their talents, giving their time, and donating money to help make this a great celebration.

We look forward to our celebration next year.