

## North Thurston School District

*Environmental Literacy Funds Support Memorable Field Experience for North Thurston Public Schools Students*

Of all the outdoor education experiences Dixie Reimer can recall over a 40-year teaching career, this was one of the most memorable. As part of the STEM field study 'Salmon, Cedar & Canoe - Stewards of the Ecosystem, fourth-grade students from three schools in the North Thurston district visited the Nisqually Tribal Cultural Center and longhouse in April.

ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY



# ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY PROJECT

“It was a very PEI STEM field trip,” says Reimer, Secondary Science Instruction Specialist at North Thurston Public Schools. “It integrated social studies, writing, a service project, science and a whole series of pre-lessons that the teachers did. With our community partners Nisqually River Education Project and the family of Hanford McCloud, we developed a beautiful field journal that was completely translated into the Lushootseed language, and we included Social and Emotional Learning plant cards at each station.”

Environmental Literacy funding covered part of the cost, and the district intends to expand the experience to include all 13 elementary schools next year. The Environmental Literacy grant also covered materials for the ‘Watershed Explorers’ program for 5th graders, a collaboration with community partners Nisqually River Education Project, South Sound Green and Billy Frank Jr. National Wildlife Refuge. Representatives from those community partners will visit each school this spring. Students from one middle school and two high schools will also take trips to local parks in June for nearshore field experiences led by community partners, with the goal of including students from the district’s five middle schools and three high schools in the next years.

The trip to the Nisqually Cultural Center was already scheduled, but the funding lowered the stress on teachers and made activities like cedar bark weaving possible, according to Reimer. “We wanted to support the Tribe with the cost of cedar bark, which was around \$2,000,” she explains. “There are so many stories that go with weaving and that station was run by Joyce and Daydisha McCloud of the Nisqually Tribe’s Cultural Series Department.”

Because of the pandemic, students hadn’t been on a field trip in two years. There is so much preparation that goes into a successful experience and teachers were understandably apprehensive about behavior. However, any concerns quickly disappeared Reimer notes, and students are still talking about what they learned. “You cannot believe the notes and cards the kids wrote about this experience,” she says. In the words of one student, ‘Thank you for letting us come to your special place and property. I loved all the stations. If I had to rate this field trip I would give it a 10 out of 10 for the best field trip out of all others I have been on.’”