

Hello again! This is not Derek Firenze with your local news and commentary for Thursday, July 27, 2023 on KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington.

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The beach at Fort Worden was decorated with canoes and song yesterday to welcome the return of canoe journeys at the Qatay Landing during the 2023 Paddle to Muckleshoot. [sounds of drumming and singing]

It's been three years since the full force of canoes paddled what many Indigenous people refer to as the Salish Sea highway. Founded in 1989 with just seven canoes, this event has been held annually to bring together members of Indigenous nations from the coasts of Alaska, British Columbia, Oregon, and Washington. This year, an estimated 120 canoes are planning to land at Muckleshoot's traditional territory of Alki Beach on July 30, followed by a week of each tribe sharing songs, dances, and gifts.

Along the way, the canoes make many stops including yesterday's at Fort Worden. What is now called the Qatay Landing is a new addition to the route and has been officially added to become a new tradition. The Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe, whose traditional lands the beach stands on, continued its own miniature canoe journey during the three years of Covid when the full trip was on hold. Though many more canoes will join the journey later on to land at Alki, an estimated 40 canoes arrived on our beach and I was lucky enough to witness the landings of several. A contingent of the Jamestown S'Klallam waited on the beach greeting the canoes with song as they approached.

I spoke with Jamestown S'Klallam Tribal Council Vice-Chair Loni Greninger and Tribal Councilwoman Dana Ward about the meaning and significance of the event. Vice-Chair Greninger began saying, "People are learning their traditions, learning their languages, learning their knowledge, learning their songs and dances again, learning arts, learning how to make regalia again. When we talk about this significance – yes, historical because it was a part of our traditional teachings – but talk about the spiritual significance, there's an emotional significance, there's a mental significance." She then went on to describe an aspect of the journey I had been previously unaware of. Let's let Vice-Chair Greninger speak in her own words this time.

"One major theme of the canoe journey is recovery from substance abuse. So we have folks here who are probably on day zero and that can be from any of the tribes. And we can have folks who have been sober for 50 years or more. You know, getting in the canoe is about treating your body as sacred because you have to be well to be able to pull. and you have to be well in your mind to work unitedly with your people in the canoe. There's a common saying: if you're not pulling together then you're going in a circle and you're not going anywhere."

Tribal Councilwoman Ward called this kind of health "well-briety," and said the journey's program helps people along their recovery journey by offering support groups and other resources. More basic resources like food and beverage, as well as many helping hands, were offered by an estimated 100 local volunteers who arrived early to set up tents for shade and tables of snacks which included traditional items like venison jerkey. And at a dinner later Wednesday night at the Jefferson County Fairgrounds, there was even a Douglas Fir cake served for dessert. [sounds of drumming]

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Another healing arrival is on its way to Port Townsend with the return of the Smile Mobile, a mobile dental van. The Smile Mobile is set to arrive next week on July 31 and will be located at the high school until August 4. The dental team will see individuals and families with Apple Health or no dental insurance. Need a dental exam and/or have a tooth concern? Please call 888-286-9105 to schedule.

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KPTZ 91.9 FM brings you local news at noon and 5pm Monday through Friday and at noon on Saturday. You can contact us through [news@kptz.org](mailto:news@kptz.org). This is Derek Firenze. Thanks for listening.