

Hi Sandra & OYC Board,

We got some good photos at our last camp so it seemed like a good opportunity to share an update from our most recent outdoor adventure! You can view photos here: [WS Youth Ctr](#)

A group of 10 kids from the White Salmon Youth Center joined us at Atlan for a full day of outdoor adventure. We had a large range in ages (6-13) from a variety of ethnic backgrounds. Many of the kids had “first time” experiences which was very exciting and fun to experience with them. A brief recap of activities:

- **Team building and name game activities** started the day out. Many of the kids were shy and quiet but this quickly turned to giggles as we got to know each other and break the ice. The kids gained confidence as they explored their edges of playing within the group and having fun with Cultureseed staff.
- **Organic garden tour and seed planting project.** Kids learned about composting, worms, edible flowers, and medicinal herbs. The tour culminated in a hands on planting project of vegetable seeds in containers that they will take back to plant in their community garden.
- **Nature awareness** through hands on learning about the invasive plant Scotch Broom and hands “off” learning of Poison Oak. Kids also discovered how to identify the names of all the major trees and pinecones on the forest floor as well as the difference between deciduous and evergreens. One of the most rewarding activities was our silent woods walk. This was a 15 – 20 minute walk in complete silence up to forest camp. Kids were encouraged to examine nature through their senses of listening, seeing, touching and feeling. This was truly amazing! We all let out our favorite animal call to break the silence once we arrived at Forest Camp ☺.
- **Having fun and enjoying the natural environment** was a key goal for the day. The majority of kids said their favorite “fun” activity was our stream exploration time. Most of them have never walked in a stream before. Participating in this activity helped them gain new confidence as they learned skills to balance on slick rocks, overcome some fear of cold water and realize that they could walk to the other side of the stream all on their own. We looked for stream critters, tossed some rocks and had a “get wet” challenge that ultimately ended up with a lot of soaking wet kids and smiles all around!
- **Map reading skills** were introduced and while somewhat challenging for the youngest kids, the older ones latched on and were able to identify North, understand topographic lines and pick out the trails. We plan to build on this the next time they come out.
- **An opportunity to dive a bit deeper into their connection between nature, self and community** was offered in our final goodbye circle. Each of the kids received a Native American necklace that connected an artistic image of an animal with a focal word (for example – the eagle totem was tied to the word “focus”). Several of the older kids were able to weave together the connection of their animal/word to themselves and nature. The younger kids were simply fascinated with the images ☺.

- **A few of our favorite quotes:**

- 1) "I know who planted the forest.... MOTHER NATURE!"
- 2) "It's a pine tree because it has pine cones."
- 3) "Meditation is when your mind goes to sleep so you can find peace."

We queried the kids to see if they wanted to come back and help plan the "next adventure" at Atlan. We received a resounding "yes!" When asked what they wanted to do they came up with a lot of ideas...eating berries, camping, games, building shelters in the woods, camp fires, etc. As we have previously discussed some of the programs we are partnering with do not have any outdoor gear but the kids really want to camp. This is one of those groups. It's likely the kids could each get a hold of a sleeping bag but they don't have tents or sleeping pads. We are creating an outreach document to share with local folks to see if we can get some donations and will keep you posted on how that turns out.

The staff and kids had a fun, educational and adventurous day outdoors thanks to OYC!

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