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BACK

SEND TO A FRIEND

FEEDBACK

Climate change flows through North Kitsap

By Annie Tietje

Jan 05 2008

SUQUAMISH — People slowly trickling into Kiana Lodge Dec. 28 came from a variety of backgrounds, though they all hoped to hear a presentation on one topic — preserving the environment for the next generation. The evening's program, "Protecting Our Place of Clear Water," also served to showcase a new community group growing out of Suquamish, the Suquamish Environmental Stewardship Council, and discussion between the council and other North Kitsap groups and governments.

The subject of Friday night's gathering centered around Al Gore's climate change presentation, given by Beverly Duperly Boos, co-founder of the council. The event was infused with stories by Suquamish tribal elders about when they were children and how the world has changed since.

"Tonight is a very special night within all of the community," said Michael Pavel, who emceed the evening for the roughly 150 attendees. "Tonight, the elders who have lived all life, have seen the changes that have occurred, so many changes are taking place. We're learning, sharing, none of us can do what needs to get done alone."

The gathering, which included members from the Poulsbo City Council, Suquamish Tribe, Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe and other community and government organizations, began with Suquamish tribal elder Bob George reciting Chief Seattle's speech warning white settlers in 1855 to be mindful of the environment so there might be a healthy planet for the next generations. It seemed Chief Seattle was a prophet, George said, because he spoke of pollution and wondered how any one human could "buy and sell the land or sky."

"When I talk about the climate, I think about our legacy, how it ties in here to what we leave behind," Duperly Boos said. "Fortunately, we're living in a place, in a time, when people live close to their roots. We thought we would mix the climate presentation with some personal stories."

The stories told by elders and a younger member from the Suquamish Tribe provided examples of the changes over the last century, not only in climate but also growth and modernizations in Kitsap County. They warned children gathered at the event to listen to history and become stewards of the planet.

"We need to live in sustainability," said council member Lydia Sigo, who spoke during the climate presentation. "We are all connected, what befalls one befalls all."

Tribal elder Betty Pascal, another co-founder of the stewardship group and who coordinated the elders' stories, told of how she and her grandfather would gather food, sometimes just on a walk. They feasted on clams, salmon, duck, berries native to the area, anything available that was edible. Now, people clam digging have to be cognizant of red tide and other pollutants, and hunting and fishing are only allowed during certain seasons.

"I still remember the taste of duck, and I haven't had it since I was a child," Pascal said. "I just remember the food we had was so plentiful ... We had just everything you could think of ... We had food all winter long."

After the storytelling, the stewardship council opened up discussion with those in attendance, fostering its mission to build bridges to help preserve the environment. Kelly Gemmill, co-founder of the council, said it will be working in the future with myriad groups to promote sustainability and living healthfully and green. The group will also seek funding sources and space for an office in the first quarter of the year.

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