

# Words of Wisdom

A Potlatch Fund Publication



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## Message from the Executive Director

Prior to Thanksgiving the Seattle School Board sent out a letter to schools and teachers which noted that many Native Americans had mixed feelings about this holiday. This very simple advice stirred up a national controversy. The School Board has received hundreds of complaints. The following is a copy of our letter of support to the School Board:

I am writing this letter as a way of expressing my support for the way in which Seattle Public Schools has sought to address the potential harm that ill-conceived Thanksgiving celebrations may cause to Native children's sense of cognitive, emotional, and social well-being. As the Executive Director for Potlatch Fund, a father of a child attending Seattle Public Schools, and a concerned resident of Seattle, I have been surprised and dismayed by the negative media coverage and resulting public outcry over the Thanksgiving letter that was sent to SPS teachers and staff.

The letter carried a simple message that has somehow been forgotten in the ensuing

controversy, which is a call for all to be sensitive to the potentially negative experiences that Native children may encounter during Thanksgiving and to acknowledge and respect the Native perspective about this holiday. All that Dr. Caprice Hollins and Mr. Willard Bill, Jr. have asked is for people to consider that for some Native Americans, Thanksgiving isn't a necessarily a time for celebration and instead may be a time of mourning for deceased ancestors, stolen land, and lost ways of life. As a non-Native working in Indian Country, I see the historical legacy of injustice that Native Americans have suffered and continue to struggle with.

Our organization Potlatch Fund was created out of a growing concern for the high rates of poverty, unemployment, and disease in Native communities that result from these injustices, as well as the disproportionately low rates of giving by foundations to support these social causes. Our mission is to inspire the Native tradition of giving in Northwest Indian Country to promote economic development, natural resource protection,

education, cultural preservation, civic participation, and the overall health of Native people and their communities.

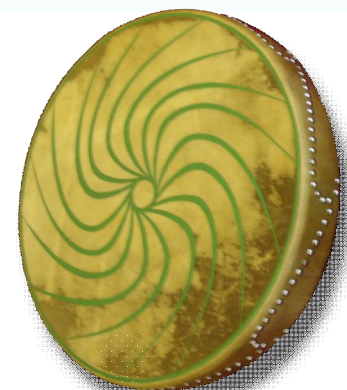
Potlatch Fund fully supports Dr. Caprice Hollins, Mr. Willard Bill, Jr., and the Seattle Public Schools Board in their decision to educate the community about this issue and ask for sensitivity and respect towards our Native children. In closing, I would like to share a story with you that I believe helps to clarify my position on this issue. I have a friend who had a loved one who died at Christmas. No one criticizes my friend for being sad at this time of year, because for him it is not a time of celebration. It is a time for contemplation, reflection and an acknowledgement of everything that has been lost. Why is it that we can give my friend space for this reflection, but we are offended by this request for people to reflect on alternate perspectives of Thanksgiving?

In the spirit of the potlatch.

Ken Gordon - Executive Director

## Calendar of Events

- December**
- 18/19 – *The Journey to Successful Fundraising*  
Puyallup, WA
- January**
- 17/18 – *The Journey to Successful Fundraising*  
Warm Springs, OR
- 22/25 – *Funding Workshops at ATNI*  
Yakama, WA
- March**
- 13/14 – *Financial Management for Non-profits*  
Boise, ID



**"Eelgrass" Drum**  
Joe Seymour's (Squaxin Island/Acoma)



*Did you know?*  
50% of Native American youth

*Potlatch Fund*

*We are a grantmaking foundation and leadership development organization serving Washington, Idaho and Oregon with the goal of giving to promote economic development, natural resource protection, education, cultural preservation and community development.*

## *Gala Huge Success*

400 people gathered on Saturday November the 17th to celebrate Potlatch Fund's fifth annual Gala.

The undisputable highlight of the evening was our MC Jim Thomas. Jim eloquently explained the importance of the Potlatch to his Tribe, the Tlingit.

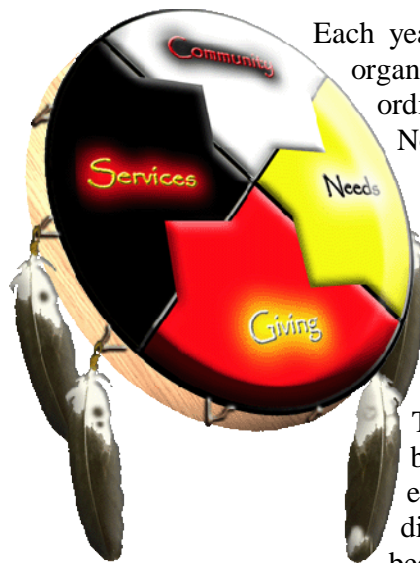


Cecile Hansen the chairperson of the Duwamish Tribe then opened the event with a formal invocation.

Following the Salmon dinner, Jim announced the awards for Philanthropists of the Year and the five Emerging Leaders. Jim also introduced Potlatch Funds new ED Ken Gordon, explaining that the Board nearly always agreed with him, as his New Zealand accent was so compelling (or something like that).

A performance by Jana capped off the evening, and a happy crowd left. We heard many people say "that was the best Gala yet."

## *Philanthropists of the Year*



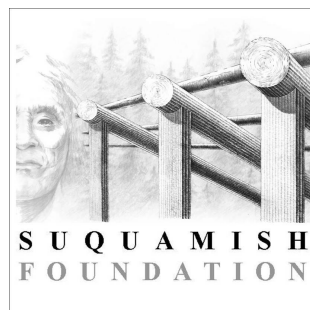
Each year Potlatch Fund recognizes individuals or organizations who have done something extraordinary to support philanthropy within the Northwest and within Indian Country.

This year the award is being presented jointly to:

- ◆ The Suquamish Foundation.
- ◆ The Spirit Mountain Community Fund.

These two foundations are being recognized because of the way that they have worked to establish clear giving structures, the strategic directions that they have established and because they have both reached out to ensure

that that their communities are being made stronger.



The Suquamish Foundation is a 501(c)(3) non-profit chartered by the Suquamish Tribe. The Foundation's mission is to build on the Tribe's ancestral vision to enhance culture, education, environment and physical wellbeing of the Tribe and the greater Suquamish community.



The Spirit Mountain Community Fund's focus is to improve the quality of life in Northwest Oregon through community investments that provide lasting benefits consistent with the Tribes culture and values.



## Emerging Leader Awards

This year we have the pleasure of announcing five emerging leaders in the following categories:

- ◆ The 2007 Antone Minthorn Economic Development Award is presented to **John Halliday**.



- ◆ The 2007 Pearl Capoeiman-Baller Civic Participation Award is presented to **Claudia Kauffman**.



- ◆ The 2007 Billy Frank Jr. Natural Resource Protection Award is presented to **Bob Kelly**.



- ◆ The 2007 Patricia Whitefoot Education Award is presented to **Ryan Wilson**.



- ◆ The 2007 Fran James Cultural Preservation Award is presented to **Janeen Comenote**.



Profiles of each of these Emerging Leaders together with a short video, produced by **Native Lens**, are now available on our website: [www.potlatchfund.org](http://www.potlatchfund.org).

## Fundraising

The annual Potlatch Fund Gala is our major fundraising event of the year. This year, with some pledges still to be counted and after all costs, we are pleased to announce that we made a \$60,000 surplus on the Gala. This is our best year by far.

With the generous challenge grant that we received from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation this \$60,000 surplus will become at least \$110,000 to help our grant programs and operations in 2008.

## Departures

RedWolf Pope has been in charge of IT and PR at Potlatch Fund for the last year. He has recently received a huge promotion to become the Director of Communications at the United Indians of All Tribes. We wish him all the best in his new role, however you will still see RedWolf around. He will continue to volunteer on our PR Committee and also help with Nonprofit Startup Trainings.



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### POTLATCH FUND STAFF

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Ken Gordon

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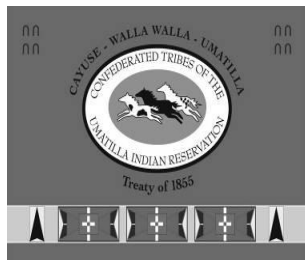
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# 2007 Potlatch Fund Gala Sponsors



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- Morisset, Schlosser, Jozwiak & McGaw
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