

JBLM community honors Native American culture

BY RUTH KINGSLAND
Northwest Guardian

Colorful dances and the dramatic tale told of a young Navajo woman who served as a nurse during World War II made for a meaningful ethnic celebration as Joint Base Lewis-McChord service members gathered for a ceremony at Carey Theater Nov. 22.

The event was JBLM's celebration of the 2016 National Native American Indian Heritage Month and was sponsored by I Corps, 7th Infantry Division

and the 2nd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division.

Sergeant First Class Brian R. Smith, 2nd Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Bde. 2nd Inf. Div., helped plan the event.

"I've been looking forward to (the event) because it's all about learning about other cultures," he said. "This is an educational experience to say the least."

The JBLM event featured several styles of pow wow dances performed by 1st Lt. Thomas



SCOTT HANSEN Northwest Guardian

1st Lt. Thomas Bluestone performs a traditional dance during a National Native American Indian Heritage Month event Nov. 22.

SEE CULTURE, 12A



SCOTT HANSEN Northwest Guardian / 2015

About 500 people are expected to attend the JBLM Brewfest.

FOR THE LOVE OF SUDS

The annual Joint Base Lewis-McChord Brewfest is fast approaching, and judges will be looking for the best handcrafted beer. **See story 6A**

FROM PAGE 1A

CULTURE

Bluestone, 2nd BSB, 2nd Bde., 2nd Inf. Div., his wife, Josette, the couple's 10-year-old son, Spirit, and 5-year-old daughter, Amari.

Perhaps it's not surprising the two children are skilled in the dance of their ancestors at such a young age. Bluestone and his wife both began dancing at pow wows across the country from the time they could walk. Their children have similar training and experience.

Bluestone and his wife grew up in North Dakota on the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation. They are members of the Three Affiliated Tribes, which consists of the Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara tribes.

The reservation consists of about 12 million acres and was designated for the tribes in the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1851.

Bluestone joined the Army in 2005 and has been at JBLM since 2014. He said he's proud of his family's heritage and glad to share aspects of his culture through JBLM events.

"We (Native Americans) are a very small minority in this country," he said. "But our culture is rich, and it's our responsibility to share and sustain it."

There's been a national Native American Indian Heritage Month since November 1990, when it was proclaimed by former President George H. W. Bush.

Earlier attempts to honor American Indians included a 1915 proclamation issued by Red Fox James, a Blackfoot Indian, after he rode horseback from state to state seeking approval for a date to honor Native Americans. James garnered the endorsement of 24 state governments, but no national recognition was proclaimed.

The first American Indian Day was observed in New York one year later, by proclamation of



SCOTT HANSEN Northwest Guardian

Guest speaker Rachae Thomas gives a Living Voices performance entitled "Native Vision" during the National Native American Indian Heritage Month observance at Carey Theater Nov. 22.

that state's governor, according to information provided on nativeamericanheritagemonth.gov.

At the JBLM event, actress Rachae Thomas, of Living Voices nonprofit theater troupe in

Seattle, provided a one-woman production of "Native Visions." She shared a brief story of a young Navajo woman, named Alice, who was taken from her home to grow up in a govern-

ment-run boarding school.

Thomas' depiction told of the young girl's struggles to retain her heritage and healing traditions and continue her relationship with her cousin, Carl, who joined the military while Alice was going through nursing school and serving as a nurse in World War II. Carl became one of the Navajo Code Talkers who were able to use their native language as an unbreakable code for the military.

"We could not have won the war in the Pacific without the Navajo Code Talkers," Thomas' character said.

Private First Class Ian Dickinson, 4th Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Bde., 2nd Inf. Div., watched the presentation with interest, as he sat among the few hundred service members in the auditorium.

"I really enjoyed it all," he said. "It was a cultural experience you don't get very often in the Army. It was very unique and educational."