



Podcast: Tribal Boxes

Created by Rachel Friederich, DOC Communications

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Total Run Time: 2:15

Podcast Transcript: Text Version

(drumbeat under vocals of Lakota tribal song)

Narrator: *(under sounds of drumbeat):* A strong, powerful drumbeat.

(Native American singer vocals)

Narrator: The loud vocals of a Lakota tribal song.

These aren't the typical sounds you'd expect to hear inside a prison.

(fade in of drum beat)

But the sounds reverberated through the walls of the Washington Corrections Center in Shelton on a recent December afternoon. It was part of a ceremony held by members of "The Tribal Sons," a group of incarcerated men who are also Native Americans.

The group donated gifts of handmade wooden boxes to the Squaxin Island Tribe of the Olympic Peninsula. The boxes, 60 in all, were inspired by the boxes of prison issued-tennis shoes.

Inmates build the boxes in the prison's woodworking shop and then paint them. Often with colorful tribal symbols, animals and cartoon characters. The boxes are given to Native American children in the foster care system.

(fade out of drum beat)

It all started a year ago with an inmate named Jay, who is serving a 22-year-sentence for assault and burglary charges. Jay is also a Squaxin member. He saw

an ad for sponsoring a foster child in the tribe's newsletter and he wanted to help. Even if it was from behind bars.

Inmate Jay: *It means a lot to me because, you know, I understand what it's like to be away from loved ones. And when you're in foster care, you might not be with the people that you might love.*

Narrator: *(fade in of drumbeat)* The ceremony included a blessing in the Lummi Nation dialect

(a Native American speaking in the Lummi dialect)

Narrator: a special lunch of fry bread, and reflections from prison staff and inmates

(sound of Native American singing)

Narrator: Inmates say the boxes are a way to honor heritage while giving back.

Inmate 1: *It's a healing journey to us.*

Inmate 2: *To see the traditional work that's being done, that's pleasing to my heart. It takes me, it keeps me sane. It keeps me balanced. It keeps me on track of life. It makes me feel that I'm not forgotten.*

Inmate 3: *I'm honored to be able to do this and have these guys share our time and effort with the communities, because we've taken so much from these communities in the past.*

(More Native American vocals)

Narrator: Rachel Friederich, D-O-C Communications.