

Two cultural histories converge at Buffalo History Museum

By MIKE DESMOND • AUG 10, 2020



Mike Desmond / WBFO News

On land once part of the Seneca Buffalo Creek Reservation, dancers, drummers and singers from the Haudenosaunee confederacy showed some of their cultural traditions and values on Sunday at the Buffalo History Museum. They were there as part of the United Nations International Day of World Indigenous Peoples and NuclearFree Future Day.

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WBFO's Mike Desmond reports

The event marked the 75th anniversary of the nuclear bombing of the Japanese city of Nagasaki, one of two times the power of the atom was used in war. Museum Director Melissa Brown said the event is important to the cultural center.

"We've been doing this for 12 years, hosting, but really Agnes Williams has been spearheading this and acknowledging International Indigenous Peoples Day, also acknowledging the anniversary of the bombings at Nagasaki and Hiroshima, which this year is the 75th anniversary," Brown said.



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Williams is a Seneca and a prominent figure in this area's American Indian community. She said Native peoples are involved because the nuclear age begins and ends with them.

"The beginning of the Uranium mining in the Southwest. We have tailings and poisoning of a lot of the land there," Williams said. "On the end, the waste disposal and the issue we have here is **West Valley, New York**. In the next three months, without oversight, there's going to be huge emissions let loose, with the taking down the buildings."

Gaehnew Printup from the Tuscarora Beaver Clan explained why dance was used to commemorate the events.



Credit Mike Desmond / WBFO News

"I believe that song and dance was given to us by the Creator, so we do them for ceremonial purposes and also for entertainment purposes," Printup said. "So it's a big part of our culture, in a way that it's kind of intertwined with everything that we do in giving thanks in dancing."

The event concluded with prayers from an array of religious traditions at nearby Mirror Lake, with Japanese lanterns floating in the lake.