

# Press Release



## Battle Ground Public Schools

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### BG School District girls take 4<sup>th</sup> place at National History Day



**Mercedes McLeod, left, and Jessi Shelton at National History Day.**



**Jessi Shelton, left, and Mercedes McLeod at school in May.**

Amid end-of-the-year activities and good-byes, the staff and students at Pleasant Valley Middle School in the Battle Ground district have something else to cheer. On Thursday, June 16, eighth graders Jessi Shelton and Mercedes McLeod were named fourth-best in the country in their category at National History Day.

Their study of the U.S. government's 1855 whaling-rights treaty with the Makah Indians of the state's northwest coast was judged fourth best among 91 entries nationwide in the "Group Documentary" division for grades six through eight.

The Pleasant Valley Middle School girls' study, presented in a 10-minute video, was titled, "The Treaty of Neah Bay 1855: Created by Diplomacy, Destroyed by Debate." They were judged on the video, an initial interview with a panel of three judges and supporting written documentation. Theirs was one of 91 documentaries by two or more students in grade 6-8.

On May 7, Jessi and Mercedes had been judged best in the state in their category at Washington History Day. Other Pleasant Valley Middle School students of history teacher Rene Soohoo also won honors at the state level but did not qualify for nationals at the University of Maryland in College Park, near Washington, D.C.

As if the fourth-place national finish in their category weren't enough, the girls' project was separately judged the best among all 36 projects from Washington state at National History Day. In that judging, they were compared to junior (grades 6-8) and senior (grades 9-12) projects for groups and individuals in documentary and performance categories from Washington.

The girls and Soohoo hadn't left the ground yet when reached at the airport waiting for their flight home Thursday afternoon. But they were flying high emotionally about their finish and the entire week.

Jessi said they had been the last group to present their project to the judges before lunch in the preliminary round on Monday. Because they sat through the morning presentations by other teams they had a pretty good idea what some of the questions would be during the interview. They huddled to consider responses.

"We also brainstormed questions that might come up," Jessi said. "We prepared so that we would each have something to add in response to questions and not just one of us do all the talking. We practiced, practiced, practiced."

Mercedes said the anticipation of the interview was more nerve wracking than the interview itself. "When we got up there, the nervousness went away."

Mercedes, who termed the week "awesome and amazing," said, "It was really eye-opening how college students actually live." She had good things to say about the dorm food service but was surprised at the size of a typical dorm room. "They're much smaller than I thought they would be," she said. "It was smaller than my room at home, and at college you share it with someone."

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