



Courtesy photo by John Harrington Photography

Bud Lane and his granddaughter, Halli Skauge (above), sing *The Counting Song* in Athabaskan.



Courtesy photo by Tiffany Stuart

The Siletz Tribal display covers multiple tables in the central rotunda area of the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C. Several entrances to the museum lead people to this area.



Courtesy photo by Bonnie Crawford

Siletz dancers Loraine Butler, Tiffany Stokes, Clarinda Black, Morgan Crawford, Tim Stuart, Tiffany Stuart, Halli Skauge, Ashliegh Ramirez, Rose Pigsley and Hunter Noble share a Feather Dance at the Smithsonian Folk Festival.

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Colombian Elders, an expert basket maker, admired a particular type of ornamental bead made from a seed that the Siletz people use in their regalia. Cheryl Lane gave the Elder about a hundred of these beautiful beads, each one of them baked, sized and drilled by hand.

At this moment, Mr. José Montaña, an NMAI cultural interpreter and educator, appeared and warmly greeted the guests in Spanish, a language that all the Colombian indigenous visitors could understand. Mr. Montaña is himself an indigenous South American from the Aymara community and his commentary on the NMAI exhibitions was, according to the Colombian guests, a highlight of their visit to the United States.

Later that day, Mr. Uldarico Matapí Yucuna from the Colombian group reflected on his visit to the NMAI: "That place opened my eyes. I saw things and understood things there that I have not seen before. I learned more there in 45 minutes than at any other time during my visit here. You see this hotel lobby where we are now sitting? It has no spirit ("alma"). But that museum, it has spirit."

When it was time for the Colombian visitors to leave the NMAI so that they could be on time for the 11 a.m. opening of the Festival, they expressed their thanks and their regret that they could not stay to watch the Siletz dance program that afternoon. After a few minutes of discussions, Emi Ireland arranged with

Mr. Lane and Dr. Olivia Cadaval, Curator of the Colombia program at the Festival, to have the Siletz dancers perform on the Festival grounds.

As the Siletz dancers left the Festival grounds for another commitment, the Colombians expressed their wish to meet again with their North American Native relatives, whether in Colombia or the United States. They also stated a strong desire to further explore the collections of the NMAI.

After hearing about how well the Siletz have preserved their culture and language, Mr. Uldarico Matapí Yucuna, an Elder and ritual authority, expressed his desire to have a filmmaker assist his people with a cultural preservation project that he envisions: documenting the shamanic

language of his people – a special, arcane language that only shamans know. Perhaps that will be another concrete manifestation of the bonds that were created on a memorable day on the Festival grounds.

Emilienne Ireland is a research collaborator at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History. For more than 30 years, she has studied the language and history of the Wauja, an Amazonian people in Central Brasil.

Visit Mr Matapi's Facebook page to see a little of what their world is like in the Amazonian part of Colombia – [facebook.com/home.php#!/profile.php?id=100001922671182](https://facebook.com/home.php#!/profile.php?id=100001922671182)