



Boys and Girls Clubs of Wales

Clybiau Bechgyn a Merched Cymru

Welsh/American Youth Exchange

with **BGC of Skagit County**

Impact Report

03/07/24-11/07/24



Foreword



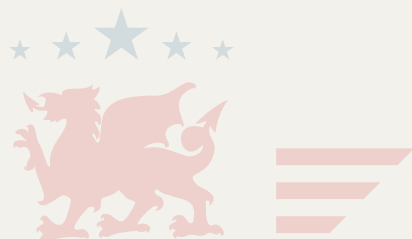
I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to our incredible partners at Skagit County Boys & Girls Clubs for their collaboration in making our youth exchange this past July a tremendous success. The week the young people spent was filled with unforgettable experiences, cultural exchange, and personal growth for our young people. This partnership has proven to be a testament to the power of shared values and goals in youth development. We are deeply grateful for your hospitality, commitment, and dedication, which helped make this exchange a life-changing opportunity for all involved. We look forward to building on this fantastic foundation for future collaborations.

Grant Poiner - Chief Executive
Boys and Girls Clubs of Wales



Being given the opportunity to share Skagit County Washington to the young people from BGC of Wales was an amazing experience for our staff and the youth we serve. We hope they learned a lot about the culture of the Pacific Northwest and were able to make a connection with some of the Skagit young people while they were here. The Boys & Girls Clubs of Skagit County look forward to future partnerships with the Boys and Girls Clubs of Wales.

Jeremy Hiatt - Senior Vice President
Boys and Girls Clubs of Skagit County



Meet the Group



Washington State Group '24



Not a random selection...



We had an overwhelming response to this opportunity, with over 45 young people eager to take part. However, with only 20 available spots, we had to make some difficult decisions. To secure a place, applicants were asked to write compelling statements explaining why they deserved to be selected and outlining the outcomes they hoped to achieve through the experience.

To manage the costs and maximise impact, we split the 20 spots into two separate trips. This allowed us to create smaller, more focused groups, providing a richer and more individualised experience for everyone.

- Washington State Group
- Montana Group

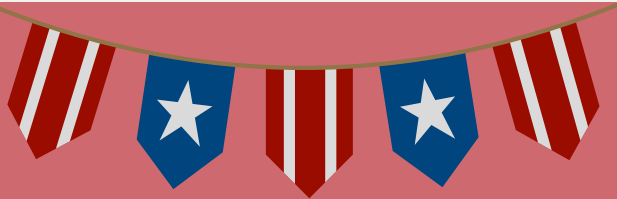
This structure enables us to provide more personalised guidance, enhance each participant's experience, and make the trips more memorable and impactful for everyone involved.



Chapter 1



Meetup and Travel



July
2nd &
3rd

To start our adventure both America groups met at our Lodge facility in Bettws on July 2nd for the evening. The Montana group left early in the morning for their flight, leaving our group, Washington State. We took a minibus to the airport and boarded in record speed.

After SOMETHING hours we landed in Seattle with Jeremy and the BGC America minibus ready to take us to Anacortes Inn, the motel where we'd be staying for the next several days. Jeremy surprised the young people with welcome gifts and we all enjoyed the peaceful drive and its stunning scenery after a tiring day.

We all got to go to the nearby supermarket to pick up some American snacks and then had some food at a local diner before hitting the hay.



Chapter 2



Fourth Festivities

Our second day in America was the favourite amongst the young people who unanimously agreed it was the most fun and thrilling of the exchange. We had the pleasure of watching the Sedro-Woolley parade and were very thankful our American friends had grabbed us chairs for us to sit down and enjoy. The parade was something none of the young people nor leaders had seen anything like before. From floats with local artisans to high school football teams, from monster trucks to the public bus of Skagit County, the parade certainly had it all.

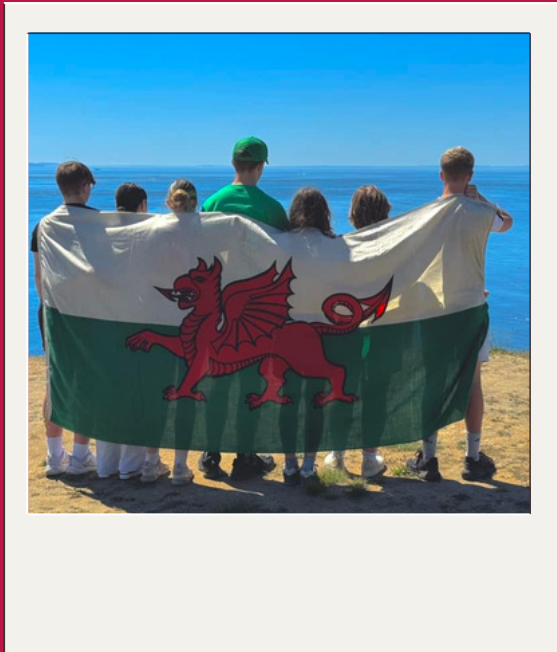
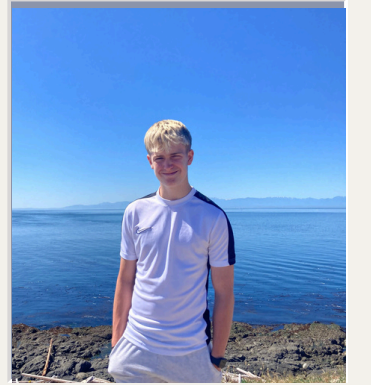


Our next stop was Sedro-Woolley Rodeo where we were lucky enough to be given a behind the scenes tour! The young people enjoyed learning about that side of American culture. We learnt how the horses and bulls are kept, and met a few cowboys and cowgirls along the way. The young people even got to pet a bull! The rodeo itself was brilliant and the Americans hosting the rodeo really made everyone feel welcome. We are so grateful to Jeremy and BGC Skagit County for sharing this side of their American culture with us.



In the evening we watched the Anacortes Fireworks display over Fidalgo Bay. It was a truly mesmerising show, watching the colourful fireworks bloom and bang above the calm water. It's safe to say that everyone slept well that night.





Chapter 3



Youth Clubs & Hiking

Jeremy took us to his favourite diner, 'Dad's Diner', for brunch which was just as delicious as expected! After many pancakes, eggs, and French toast, we piled back in the van and Jeremy drove us to Skagit County Youth Club. We were given a tour of the impressive youth club and the young people noted the differences and similarities between youth clubs in America and youth clubs in Britain. The equipment they had was extremely impressive and we all learnt so much from the kind and welcoming American youth workers that day. The young people all played together, some joining in with the water fight, and some playing football (or 'soccer' as we were in America, after all!) with the American young people. Whilst this was happening, some of our Welsh young people had conversations with the Skagit County youth workers about politics and how the country works, something extremely and relevant with the UK General Election just passed, and the US Presidential Election upcoming.



July 5th

After the brilliant afternoon with Skagit County Youth Club, we then all went to get self-serve fro-yo. Afterwards, Jeremy took us on a hike in SOMETHING where we saw some truly gorgeous views

In the evening we had food and the young people, of their own accord, all met downstairs in the motel as there was a firepit area for leisure and played card games until it was time for bed.



Chapter 4



Heights and Vancouver

July 6th was one of the most anticipated of the exchange as that's when we planned to go to Canada. Skagit County and Canada BC, whilst being in two separate countries, are two regions in a rather close proximity so it made sense to take the Welsh group out to Vancouver for the day. After stopping in Starbucks along the drive (a must-do in Washington as we were in the state where Starbucks was first invented!), it wasn't long until we were in Canada! Our first stop was Capilano Suspension Bridge Park. We walked across the iconic bridge hanging over the Capilano river- 230 feet up in the air! It was certainly a thrilling experience to say the very least. We then had time to explore the park and walk high up amongst the trees. The scenery was beautiful and the young people really enjoyed this unique experience.



Shortly after some lunch in Chipotle, we headed into the heart of Vancouver. After seeing the famous Vancouver steam clock, next stop was Granville Island where the young people had a few hours to explore. They were advised to stick together in groups of three or more but they all decided they'd rather go as a big group. It was lovely to see how they all got along with each other. When everyone was all shopped out, it was time to head back to The Evergreen State, our home for the rest of the exchange.





I think I went out of my comfort zone in some situations such as trying new things like the Thai food and talking to a lot of new people
-Corey

This was such a great opportunity for me and I'm really grateful for everybody who helped this exchange happen!
-Seren



My favourite food I ate in America was the corn dog!
-Lloyd

...allowed me to see a beautiful country, culture, and experience new things that I would have never been able to. I loved America, it'll be a memory I'll never forget
-Nika



Chapter 5



San Juan and Ice Cream

Today we met some new faces, some youth workers from Sedro-Woolley youth club who joined us on our adventure to San Juan Islands. Before boarding the ferry we had some time on the beach, applying sunscreen and attempting to skim stones. The weather was especially beautiful in San Juan, we went on a little walk together and then stopped for a picnic. After we were all charged up once again we visited the old American camp. There, we all learnt about the joint occupation of San Juan Island between Great Britain and the United States in 1859 and the Pig War. Afterwards we went to the opposite side of the island and visited the old British camp. We had some very interesting discussions with the lovely workers there and got to watch a video which told us even more about the Pig War.

July 7th



After a day of learning and thinking, it only made sense for the group to go get ice cream afterwards! Overall, it was a very productive day and got the young people to consider and value history more- it really sparked an interest with the young people.



Chapter 6

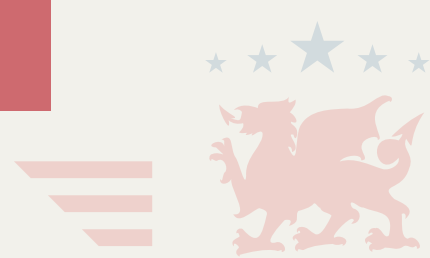


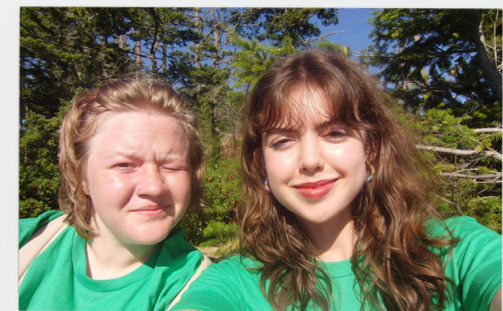
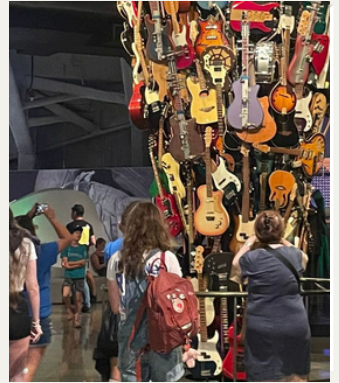
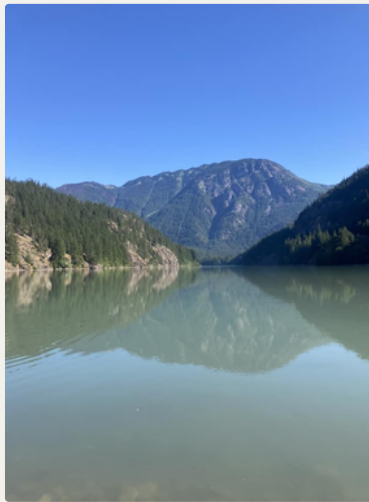
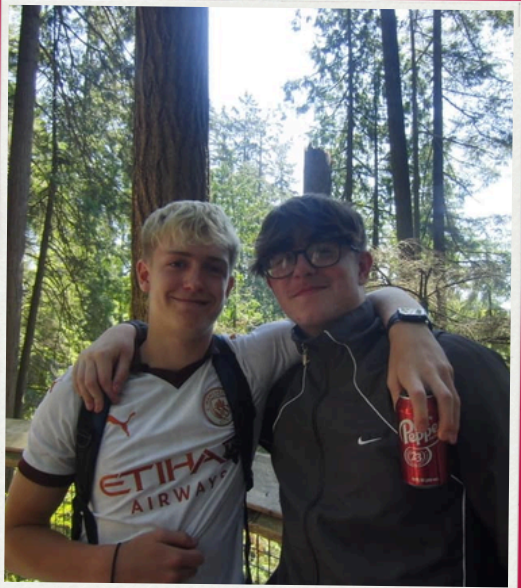
North Cascades

We had a rather early start as we were headed to North Cascades National Park, bright and early. However, the doughnuts for breakfast softened the blow of the teens waking up so early! We saw so many beautiful scenes as we drove around the National Park. We learnt lots of its history from Jeremy and took loads of pictures. After our amazing morning we drove to Sedro-Woolley Youth Club where we were welcomed with open arms. We got to see the lovely youth workers who accompanied us to San Juan Islands again which was lovely. The club at Sedro-Woolley had written 'Welcome to Sedro-Woolley Clubhouse!' on the ground with chalk- they had even drawn the Welsh flag for us! The leaders surprised us with sweet treats and the Welsh and American teens all played pool and video games together.



Next, we spent the rest of the day at the lake, playing ball games in the water and soaking up the sun.





Chapter 7



Hello Seattle!

Sadly, it was our last morning at Anacortes so we all packed up our things and got on the minibus once again. We stopped at the office in Skagit County and met all the wonderful people who work there with Jeremy. We were lucky enough to get some Skagit County merchandise before getting back on the bus- en route to Seattle! A group of American young people and leaders accompanied us on our day trip around the city. The venture up the Space Needle was a really cool experience- we had a lot of experience with heights on this exchange! After lunch we went to the Museum of Pop Culture, also known as 'MoPOP'. There were exhibitions and displays of Nirvana, Barbie, Batman, Coraline, to name a few. There was something for everyone there. We saw props from Harry Potter, Star Wars, The Wizard of Oz, Lord of the Rings, and more. As well as all of this, there was a 'sound lab' which gave the young people the opportunity to create their own music which they really enjoyed. Afterwards we said goodbye to the America group and ventured into downtown Seattle. It was boiling that day so after looking around Pike Place we had to go into Starbucks for a cool drink, before going to leave our mark on the famous gum wall!

July 9th



We went back to the new hotel we were staying at, had food, and our young people decided to utilise the pool that came with the hotel. They stayed out there, all seven of them, having fun and perfecting their dives, until closing time.



I enjoyed trying new foods like from Chipotle, but Jack in the Box was my favourite!

-Lara



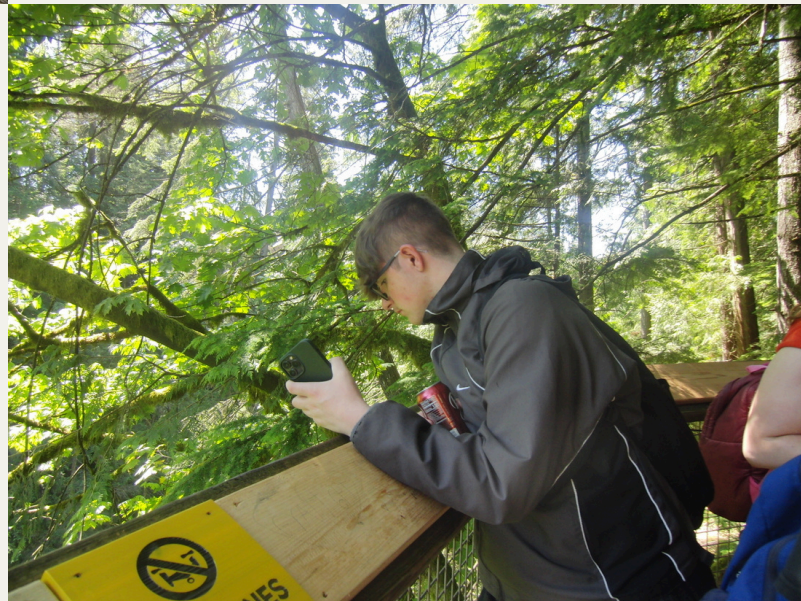
I LOVED the minibus Jeremy took us around on- I thought was really cute and we had so many fun adventures in that quirky vehicle.

-Lily



I found the trip amazing as it also gave us all an insight on how different their youth clubs are

-Corey



I found the exchange really educational and interesting. the camps we went to really helped me understand a lot more about Britain and America.

-Seren



Chapter 8



Homeward Bound

On our final day in America we spent the time before our flight in a mall where the young people enjoyed shopping and having American fast food for lunch one last time. Soon enough we had to wave goodbye to Jeremy which was really sad but we are so grateful for him and the American team for making us all feel so welcome during our stay and for making the exchange so enjoyable!

July
10th-
11th



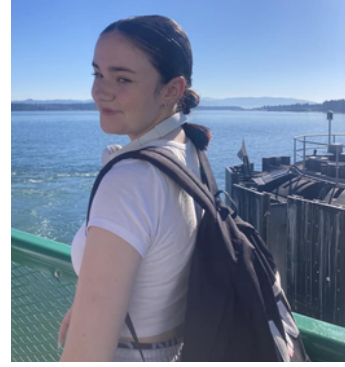
We arrived in Heathrow the next day, July 11th, and travelled back up to the Lodge where we said our farewells. We are all so grateful and thankful for such a brilliant and new exchange!



Final Thoughts



My favourite activity was one hundred percent the 4th of July rodeo. That day didn't feel real. I saw things I never thought I'd see. Men flying off the back of horses. Unreal.
-Elliott



My favourite memories of the exchange were meeting the young people in the youth clubs, and the ferry.
-Lara



My favourite memory was the last night in Seattle where we all played in the pool and could see the Space Needle illuminated in the night sky- it was truly unforgettable.
-Lily



The exchange was amazing and one of the best, if not the best, opportunity thing I've ever had the pleasure of experiencing.
-Nika

