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**Native American artist and Iraqi youth exchange culture and identity through custom shoes- World Affairs Council, Jones Soda, Vans in partnership.**

**SEATTLE, WA** – On July 27, Louie Gong will host a workshop titled Art and Identity for visiting Iraqi high school students at the Jones Soda Company headquarters in Seattle. Gong, a Nooksack tribal member known for launching a custom shoe line featuring Coast Salish art, has been featured in numerous media and even showcased during the 2010 Winter Olympics. Gong will share his experiences as someone who is “walking in two worlds” and teach the Iraqi youth to create a custom shoe that reflects their cultural identity.

“It must be a dynamic time for Iraqi youth,” Gong said. “I can’t wait to see their designs because a picture really is worth a thousand words.”

The Iraqi students are in the United States on the [Young Leader Exchange Program](#), which is funded by the U.S. Department of State/[S. Embassy in Baghdad](#) and organized by the nonprofit organization World Learning in collaboration with the [Affairs Council](#).

The World Affairs Council promotes a greater understanding of world affairs. Through their International Visitors Program, the organization coordinates cultural exchanges for guests of the U.S. State Department. Gong, who is also known for his work on issues of racial identity, has been a resource for the International Visitors Program and recently participated in cultural exchanges with groups from France and Germany.

Jones Soda, which is collaborating with Gong on a different project, enthusiastically offered its visually-rich space to host the workshop.

Vans, which has supported Louie’s work in the past, generously supplied brand new shoes for the Iraqi youth.

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**Louie Gong** (Eighth Generation) is a Seattle-based artist and activist. His art, which merges traditional Coast Salish art, pop culture icons and a strong urban aesthetic, makes the bold statement that you can embrace the dynamic realities of modern life while maintaining a strong cultural identity. His artwork and/or commentary on racial identity has been featured on MSNBC.com, NBC Nightly News, and during the 2010 Winter Olympics. [://www.eighthgeneration.com](http://www.eighthgeneration.com)

**The World Affairs Council** is a membership-based nonprofit dedicated to providing everyone opportunities to practice global citizenship. As a hub for all things international in Greater Seattle, the Council enriches local civic and cultural conversations with world insights and perspectives. [://www.world-affairs.org/](http://www.world-affairs.org/)

**Jones Soda** markets and distributes premium beverage under the Jones Soda, Jones Pure Cane Soda, Jones 24, Jones GABA, and Whoopass Energy Drink brands and sells through its distribution network in markets primarily across North America. A leader in the premium soda category, Jones is known for its variety of flavors and innovative labeling technique that incorporates always-changing photos sent in from its consumers. Jones Soda is sold through traditional beverage retailers. [://www.jonessoda.com](http://www.jonessoda.com)