

## Whidbey Native Connections Initiative Newsletter

### February 10, 2024

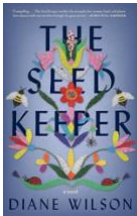
#### NCI MONTHLY MEETING: WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 6:30--8:00 pm

This month Cheryl Lawrence (Whidbey) and Deb Cruz (Bellingham) will join us to talk about one way we move beyond land acknowledgments – taking political action. How do we learn about legislation and other issues that affect the lives of Indigenous people? How do we learn about priorities set by Tribal people and what we can do to support them? Cheryl, who prepared last month's informative legislation document and contributed to that section on page 3 of this newsletter – will share her story of how she came to her current involvement.

#### WINTER AND SPRING BOOK DISCUSSIONS:

Once again, we are thrilled to have Frances Wood offer three online discussion sessions of books by Native authors. Copies of each book are available in the Sno-Isle Library system and soon in the UUCWI library as well.

#### Wednesday, March 20, 6:30pm on Zoom: The Seed Keeper by Diane Wilson (novel)



Diane Wilson's debut novel *The Seed Keeper* (2021) interweaves the stories of modern Dakhóta women and their ancestors in Minnesota. The narrative centers on the life and memories of Rosalie Iron Wing, a Dakhóta woman who comes of age divorced from her culture after being fostered out to non-native families following the death of her father. The story beautifully describes the intricate processes through which Dakhóta women for generations kept their corn seeds, even during the most difficult of times. Wilson's eloquent and moving writing shares her Dakhóta culture with her reader with grace, reverence, and honesty. I encourage any lover of growing things, anyone who appreciates indigenous narratives and histories, and/or any fan of historical fiction, particularly those set in the American Midwest, to spend time with Wilson's *The Seed Keeper*.

#### Wednesday, April 17: Red Paint by Sasha taqwsablu LaPointe (memoir)

Wednesday, May 22: Jesintel: Living Wisdom from Coast Salish Elders (essays and photographs), published by Children of the Setting Sun

#### RETURNING TO THE LAND: 4 WEBINARS:

**In January and February 2024: Returning to the Land.** A series of four webinars offered by Nia To Go There, PhD (Cree), co-sponsored by [Friends Peace Teams' Toward Right Relationship with Native Peoples](#) and [Decolonizing Quakers](#). You can still register for all four, and receive the first three modules as recordings. Each module stands on its own, and all have been deeply moving and informative. Nia recommends short readings for each program.

**February 10, 12:30-2 pm PST, Module 3: "Returning to the Land: Colonization."** [REGISTER HERE](#).

“**COLONIZATION**:..... cultural dominance has led to “power over” other cultures. It perpetuates direct violence, structural violence, and attitudinal violence creating an Ecological Divide, a Social Divide, and a Spiritual Divide. We will discuss colonization and the breadth of its separation story.”

**February 24, 12:30-2 pm PST, Module 4: “Returning to the Land: Decolonization.”**  
[REGISTER HERE.](#)

“**DECOLONIZATION** is a transformational journey that requires a shift in consciousness—a shift back to our collective human story..... This module focuses on healing and honoring our collective story of pain and grief and understanding the necessity of integrating our fractured past into a future of trusting relationships that support the emergence of new paradigms and possibilities. It requires us to work together to create an ecological culture, a culture with a deep and profound sense of connection to all aspects of the natural world.”

**LAND BACK MOVEMENT:**

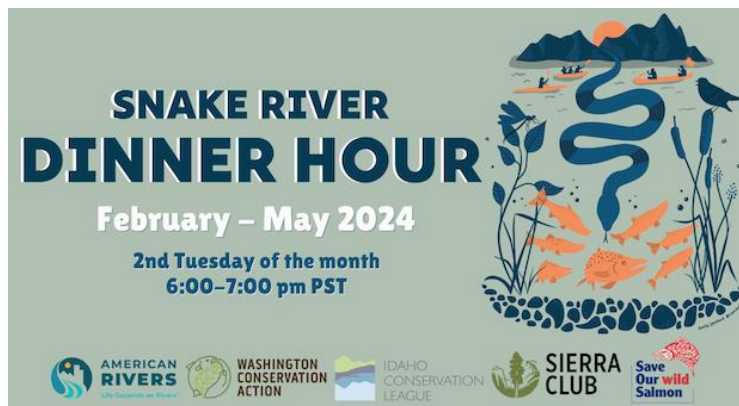
[This article](#) in the Sierra Magazine, *How the Land Back Movement is Unraveling Manifest Destiny*, comprehensively describes the history of land theft and current obstacles and progress in the Land Back movement.



**PROTECTING ORCA BY RESTORING SALMON**

We can continue to put pressure on our legislators to follow the Biden Administration’s [ten-year plan](#) to restore salmon, tackle the climate challenge, and modernize the Columbia River Treaties. Priorities are to remove the 4 Lower Snake River Dams while modernizing transportation of agricultural products in the region, in collaboration with the treaty Tribes of the region. Follow the news at [Save Our Wild Salmon](#):

Join their virtual “[Snake River Dinner Hour](#)” webinar series on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesdays of the month, February—May, at 6-7 pm.



The first installment of this webinar series is **Tuesday, February 13th at 6:00 pm PST** and will feature folks responsible for reaching the historic agreement with the Biden Administration that sets the pathway for lower Snake River dam removal. We will learn more about the concrete actions and commitments and how we can support them.

## STATE LEGISLATION TO SUPPORT

**HB 2065:** Recalculating sentencing ranges for currently incarcerated individuals whose offender score was increased by juvenile convictions.

Please read the [opinion piece in the Seattle Times](#) by Jarred-Michael Erickson, Chairman of the Colville Confederated Tribes. He eloquently urges us to help bring healing to our state by passing **HB 2065**.

“Passage of **HB 2065** is necessary to help break the cycle of multigenerational trauma in tribal communities, especially because Indigenous people are the most disproportionately impacted by juvenile sentencing points of any people in Washington. That is why last month the Colville Tribes joined a coalition of 21 tribes and Indigenous reentry organizations that urged the Legislature to pass the bill.” --Jarred-Michel Erickson (Colville Confederated Tribes)

As of February 8, **HB 2065** has passed the Rules Committee and is on the floor of the House for consideration. It’s now more important than ever to write your Congressperson to support this bill.

Click on the legislative page for HB 2065 [here](#)

Then click on the dark green button “Send a Comment.” Be sure to verify your legislative district, and press the “Support” button. Your comment can be succinct, or long.

**HB 2001.** Providing judicial discretion to modify sentences in the interests of justice.

This bill would give judges the ability to change sentencing when the sentences no longer serve their purpose. The bill was drafted by indigenous people, Charles Longshore and Travis Comes Last. As of February 9, it has been moved to the floor. **We need to put pressure on our Representatives so they are aware now that there is a lot of support for this bill.**

Click on the legislative page for **HB 2001** [here](#).

Then click on the dark green button “Send a Comment.” Write your comment and also press the “Support” button.

**HB 1332.** Supporting public school instruction in tribal sovereignty and federally recognized Indian tribes.

This bill requires all school districts to incorporate materials about the history, culture and government of federally recognized tribes through the Since Time Immemorial Curriculum, created by Washington State Tribes. One difference this year is that it authorizes the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction to administer grants to school districts for meeting the social studies curricula update requirements.

The bill passed the House in 2023 and also again in early 2024, and is now sitting in committee in the Senate. Pressure your State Senator (Ron Muzzall for most of us on Whidbey) to move this forward by commenting and pressing the “Support” button on the legislative page [here](#).

The text of the bill is [here](#).

Also, send an email to Lisa Wellman, Chair of the Early Learning & K-12 Committee at [lisa.wellman@leg.wa.gov](mailto:lisa.wellman@leg.wa.gov) or call (360) 786-7641

**February 14, 10:30 am:** Scheduled for public hearing in the Senate Committee on Early Learning & K-12 Education at 10:30 AM

**We need to continue to contact legislators ASAP as the deadline for bills moving on is February 21st.**

[Though the “Since Time Immemorial Curriculum” is important to support and is a wonderful collection of resources for educators, we note that the curriculum only includes instruction about federally recognized tribes. This leaves out at least 3 Washington State Tribes (Snohomish, Duwamish, and Chinook) who continue to exist and thrive, and who have made continual efforts to obtain federal recognition status. This is just one more example of how the lack of that recognition continues to harm Native People. Support this bill. Then there is more work to do to include all Tribes and the Urban Native population.]

## REVISIONS TO NAGPRA

In late January 2024, new Federal regulations took effect that updated the 1990 **Native American Graves Protections and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA)**. According to an [NPR article](#), the new regulations basically say, “if human remains or ceremonial objects or funeral objects were taken from tribal lands or federal lands, they need to be returned..... This update is extensive, but the key points are **first, these objects can’t be on display or used for research unless there is consultation and explicit permission from the tribe they belong to. And second, the burden is now on the museums to reach out to tribes for that permission. It used to be the other way around.**”

Though NAGPRA has been in effect for 30-plus years, museums and universities still have an immense number of human remains and cultural artifacts and many institutions have not been moving quickly to return them. In an article in [The Art Newspaper.com](#), “More than 96,000 Native American human remains are still in museum collections, and 90,803 of those are unaffiliated with a present-day tribe.”

In the same article we read the distressing facts that “While 574 federally recognized tribes are eligible to make claims over the remains of their ancestors and sacred artifacts under NAGPRA, the law excludes more than 400 unrecognized tribes

nationwide that do not have a government-to-government relationship with the US and are not listed by the US Bureau of Indian Affairs.” The new mandate states that museums are not required to consult with unrecognized tribes.

**This is one more example of the perpetuation of unjust oppression and harm that continues to affect the Snohomish Tribe on whose lands many of us live and work.**

As a result of these new regulations, many prominent museums, including the American Museum of Natural History in New York, closed exhibits in late January. Sean Decatur, president of the AMNH also acknowledged [in a CNN article](#) that the Halls and exhibits “are vestiges of an era when museums such as ours did not respect the values, perspectives, and indeed shared humanity of Indigenous peoples.....While the actions we are taking this week may seem sudden, they reflect a growing urgency among all museums to change their relationships to, and representation of, Indigenous cultures.”

[A February 2 article in the Seattle Times](#) describes how Seattle-area Museums are working with the new regulations.

#### **EXHIBIT AT WHATCOM MUSEUM (BELLINGHAM)**

The Whatcom Museum, in the Lightcatcher Building, has reopened [People of the Sea and Cedar](#), a permanent exhibition centering the voices and experiences of the Lummi Nation and Nooksack Indian Tribe. Wednesday – Sunday, Noon to 5:00 pm.

We spoke with the Director of Collections at the Whatcom Museum. They have been committed to reaching out to the Lummi and Nooksack Tribes to make ongoing relationships of trust for years before the new NAGPRA regulations took effect. As part of that, they have repatriated artifacts in their collections and worked with the tribes to make sure that the exhibit, *People of the Sea and Cedar*, represented the perspective of the tribes, and only contained items the tribes approved.

#### **MFC BOOK CLUB**

Invisible No More: Voices from Native America – February 21, Noon PT. The Marguerite Casey Foundation Book Club. [Register here](#).

*The UUCWI and WIFM convene on the traditional lands of the sduhubs (Snohomish People), the Lower Skagit People, Swinomish, and Samish. Many other people of Coast Salish Nations utilized the coast and nearby waters, and we acknowledge the significant ways the Indigenous People are still here, continuing to steward this island that is known in Lushootseed as Ts'a-kol-chey in ways physical, spiritual, political, and social. We honor the elders of the past, present, and future, with profound gratitude.*

#### **Whidbey Native Connections Initiative**

is a justice initiative of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Whidbey Island, (UUCWI) and is supported by UU infrastructure, visionary foundations, and regional and national social-justice sister organizations, such as JUJusticeWA.

We are also supported by Whidbey Island Friends Meeting (WIFM) in ways too numerous to count. Contact us at [nciwhidbey@gmail.com](mailto:nciwhidbey@gmail.com)