

Whidbey Native Connections Initiative Newsletter

Updated on February 28, 2024

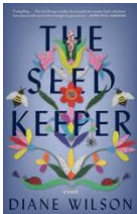
NCI MONTHLY MEETING: WEDNESDAY, MARCH 13, 6:30--8:00 pm

Stay tuned for the theme for our March meeting.

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. [Register here](#) to receive the Zoom link, and Frances' study questions that you can keep close as you read or review.

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 (a memoir)

Wednesday, May 22: Jesintel: Living Wisdom from Coast Salish Elders

(essays and photographs), published by Children of the Setting Sun

RESULTS OF STATE LEGISLATION

At our February NCI meeting, we heard from two people, Cheryl Lawrence and Deb Cruz, knowledgeable about the legislative process, and viewed a short film of Gabe Galanda, a Native attorney who shared both his personal story and his professional work as an attorney fighting for Native rights. Laws regarding incarceration disproportionately impact Native people.

We recommended that people support two criminal justice bills, neither of which made it through the legislative process:

HB 2065, which would have allowed state court judges **to retroactively** do away with the use of juvenile points in sentencing. As one constituent wrote to Sen. Ron Muzzall, who is on the Ways and Means Committee, "*Juvenile points were outlawed last year in Washington state — but an estimated 800 to 1,500 people are still incarcerated under the juvenile points system. And about 422 of those still serving sentences under the juvenile points system are Indigenous.*"

Sen. Muzzall voted against the bill, and the bill died in that committee. It likely will be brought back again next year.

HB 2001: This bill would have provided judicial discretion to modify sentences in the interests of justice. This bill died in the Law and Justice Committee. Like HB 2065, it would have benefited Indigenous people with unfair sentences.

To continue our personal education about the issues that these bills address, Cheryl Lawrence recommended three recent publications about HB 2065. Though the bill is dead for this year, the articles are excellent background.

The first is an article discussing the background and impact of 2065; the second is an op-ed co-authored by a current and a former trial court judge, and the third is an op-ed by a Native American man who is both a crime victim and a formerly incarcerated person.

[WA adults serving extra prison time for juvenile offenses may see sentences reduced](#)

[Comment: Let state judges correct past wrongs on sentences](#)

[My child's mother was murdered. And I've been to prison. I know what justice is.](#)

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

This bill also did not pass during this legislative session. It would have required 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 made it through a Senate education committee to the Ways and Means Committee, where it died because the committee did not discuss it.

[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, off-reservation Natives, and the Urban Native population.]

LAND BACK MOVEMENT:

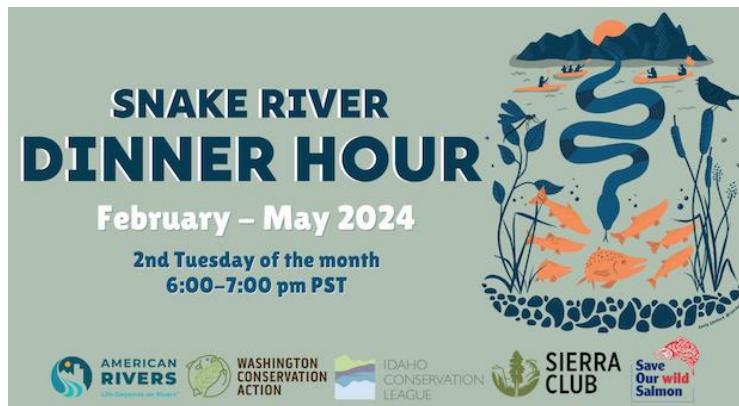
[This article](#) in the Sierra Magazine, *How the Land Back Movement is Unraveling Manifest Destiny*, comprehensively describes the history of land theft and current obstacles and progress in the Land Back movement.



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 2nd Tuesdays of the month, February—May, at 6-7 pm.



The second installment of this webinar series is **Tuesday, March 12th at 6:00 pm PST** and will focus on “How to Restore a River.”

We will learn more about the concrete actions and commitments and how we can support them.

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](https://www.theartnewspaper.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.

INDIGENOUS NEWS SOURCES: If you'd like to stay current on the news from Indigenous people and their communities, here are some excellent sources:

[Native News Online](#)

[Indian Country Today](#)

[High Country News, Indigenous Affairs](#)

[Seattle Crosscut, Indigenous Affairs](#)

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