

Whidbey Native Connections Newsletter

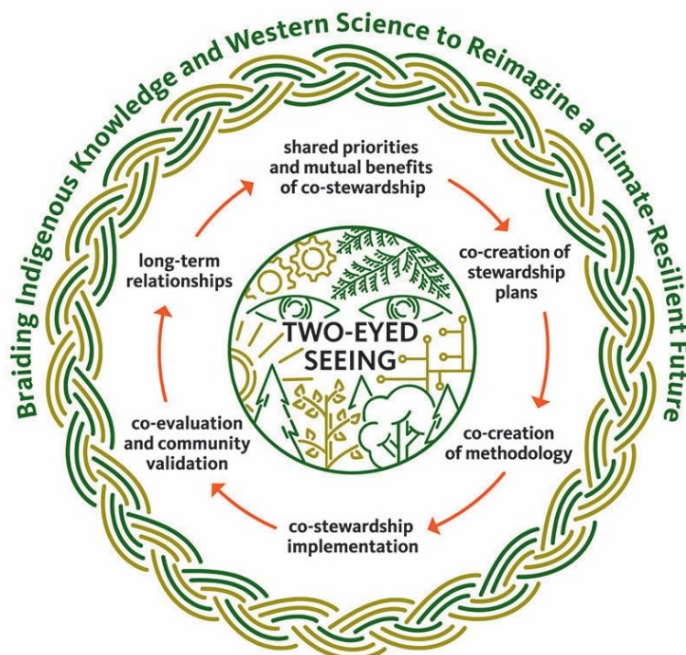
December 07, 2024

WEDNESDAY, December 11, 6:30 PM: NEXT NCI MEETING on Zoom

This month we will highlight *Traditional Ecological Knowledge* (TEK) by showing two short videos and holding a discussion about the value and local relevance of TEK. Watch for our email on December 9th that will include a link to the Zoom meeting.

“Traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) is a practice that promotes environmental stewardship and sustainability through relationships between humans and environmental systems that have evolved over millennia, continue to evolve, and have been passed from generation to generation, often in oral traditions in which elders transmit important traditional knowledge — including ecological knowledge — reflecting discovery, practical application and best practices for sustainability.”

~ Kirk Francis, Sr. (Penobscot Indian Nation), as published in Indian Country Today, Dec 13, 2021, and [republished](#) by United South and Eastern Tribes, Inc.



Graphic from Oregon State University's Traditional Ecological Knowledge Lab, <https://tek.forestry.oregonstate.edu/what-tek>

‘Two-Eyed Seeing’ is an Indigenous framework that moves beyond the all-too-common narrative about integrating or incorporating (too often used as euphemisms for assimilating) other knowledge systems into Western Science.

Instead, Two-Eyed-Seeing (*Etuaptmumk* in Mi’kmaw) embraces “learning to see from one eye with the strengths of Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing, and from the other eye with the strengths of mainstream knowledges and ways of knowing, and to use both these eyes together, for the benefit of all,” as envisaged by Mi’kmaw Elder Dr. Albert Marshall. ([see article](#))

In our December NCI meeting, we will offer examples of some successful, evolving practices of using Two-Eyed-Seeing and TEK in the Pacific NW, in service to reimagining a climate-resilient future.

ARTICLES, VIDEOS, AND OTHER RESOURCES TO LEARN ABOUT TEK:

In researching information about Traditional Ecological Knowledge, we have found a plethora of online articles and videos that have inspired and encouraged us in these otherwise discouraging (some might say devastating) days since the November election.

From the White House:

We learned that President [Biden issued a memorandum](#) on November 15, 2021, recognizing “Indigenous Traditional Ecological Knowledge (ITEK) as one of the many important bodies of knowledge that contributes to the scientific, technical, social, and economic advancements of the United States and to our collective understanding of the natural world.”

The memorandum continues: “The Administration recognizes that the Federal Government should engage with ITEK only through relationships with Tribal Nations and Native communities and in a manner that respects the rights of knowledge holders to control access to their knowledge, to grant or withhold permission, and to dictate the terms of its application.”

More from the (current) White House, in 2022: [Integrating Ancestral Wisdom and Approaches into Federal Decision-Making](#)

*(We noted that Biden did not only include the Tribal Nations with federal recognition, **but included all Native communities and holders of ITEK.** There will be many actions to take to support the leadership of all Native communities with the next administration.)*

From the Karuk Tribe Department of Natural Resources: [kúkuum yáv nukyáati peethívthaaneen](#)



[We Make the World Good Again](#), a storymap of the Karuk Tribe’s efforts to restore lands with fire.

“Within the Karuk Aboriginal Territory on the mid Klamath River, the effects of climate change are occurring now. This includes changes in precipitation patterns, decreased snowpack, increasing droughts, increasing frequency and severity of wildfire, disease and pest outbreaks. it is perhaps most productively viewed as an opportunity to assert and expand Karuk traditional practices, tribal management authority, sovereignty and culture.”

From the National Park Service (NPS):

[An overview of Traditional Ecological Knowledge](#), and many links to examples of how it has been applied in various regions. [In the Pacific Northwest](#), in undamning rivers such as the Klamath and the Elwha, Tribes have been leaders in restoring the land, bringing back the salmon runs, and revitalizing their cultures. Indigenous traditions using fire to manage forests has led to methods of fighting fire with fire, managing grasslands and camas fields, and managing forests in sustainable ways.

From NPR: [Pacific Northwest Tribes Face Climate Change with Ancient Agricultural Practice:](#)

On an island across from North Whidbey, the Swinomish are building **clam gardens**. This ancient practice has been around for 3000 years. In addition to providing a habitat for clams to grow, the low rock walls of the clam gardens also cut down on beach erosion and will reduce wave energy as sea levels rise. “So these clam gardens would help hold the Swinomish Reservation in place as climate change advances.”

[Se’Si’Le: Local Indigenous-led non-profit organization using TEK](#)

“Se’Si’Le (saw-see’-law) is the Lummi Indian word for “our grandmother.” Our Mission is to utilize Indigenous ancestral knowledge for the benefit of our Mother Earth, Indigenous lifeways, and for future generations. We provide protective management strategies and plans for Indigenous sacred sites, areas, resources, and landscapes, and invoke, preserve, and promote understanding of Indigenous ways of knowing the nature of Nature.” [Read More.](#) (Check out their projects!)



[ALL OUR RELATIONS: TRIBUTE TO THE ORCA:](#)

This is a moving 7-minute film drawing from an Orca Action Month Indigenous-centered event hosted by Se’Si’Le, in collaboration with Salish Sea and Northern Straits Native Nations and NGOs.



[Orcas return in Historic Visit to Penn Cove](#)

In early November, the L-Pod of the Southern Resident Killer Whales (known to the Coast Salish Tribes as Blackfish) returned to Penn Cove for the first time in 53 years. The last time they were seen in Penn Cove was during the infamous capture of whales in 1970 and 1971, when Tokitae (known to the Lummi as Sk’aliCh’elh-tenaut) was taken. [Read a moving account here.](#)

photo by Jill Hein, of matriarch L-53 entering Penn Cove

From Cascades PBS: [Reef net fishing.](#)

Samuel Wolfe, Indigenous filmmaker, recently received a grant from the Cascades PBS Origins program to film a 5-part docuseries about reef net fishing, featuring the Lummi Nation. He will be documenting a TEK project in action! Watch for the release in March, 2025. Plus, Wolfe grew up in Coupeville. He has invited Rena Priest (Lhaq’temish, former WA State Poet Laureate) to read her poetry on the documentary. [Listen to interview with Wolfe](#) on Northwest Reports on Cascade PBS.

FINDING COMMON GROUND: [New Documentary now airing](#)

The University of Washington Puget Sound Institute and TVW are proud to have partnered with more than 20 diverse organizations, including multiple tribes, to produce the film *Finding Common Ground: Collaborative Leadership in Washington State*. The new documentary explores the inspiring history of collaborative governance in the Yakima basin of salmon, farming, forestry, water conservation, Indigenous rights, and numerous other natural resources. You can stream it now on YouTube.

More on Biden’s Apology:

During our November NCI meeting, Carly Mathews (qʷuʔqʷuʔšuliaʔ) of the *sduhubs* spoke with us about her response to President Biden’s October 25th apology for the harm caused by the federal Indian boarding school system. A small piece of what Carly shared:

"I watched the presidential apology as it was live streamed with tears flowing down my face. This is monumental, and I am grateful. Yet, this is just a start; it cannot be the end."

"As tribes that are 'non-federally recognized' or as individuals who do not presently qualify for enrollment in the federally recognized tribes from which we descend, we are currently EXCLUDED from, and will not benefit from, any forthcoming promises of action."

"While significant progress has been made for many of our relations, for which I am deeply grateful, there remain numerous Tribes and indigenous individuals whose narratives have yet to be shared."

Here are some other reactions to Biden’s apology in Indian Country Today:

<https://ictnews.org/news/reactions-mixed-to-boarding-school-apology>

A recent episode of the *All My Relations Podcast*, hosted by Matika Wilbur and Adrienne Keene, highlights Native women at the forefront of the efforts to bring about the apology:

[*Biden Apoloqized and the Women That Made It Happen.*](#)

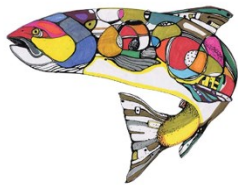
Another pertinent episode highlighting Indigenous knowledge from *All My Relations Podcast*:

[*Reclaiming Thanksgiving: Honoring the Past, Nourishing the Future.*](#)

TAKING ACTION MATTERS

UPDATE: ELWHA LEGACY FOREST TIMBER SALES and watch [*The Last Stand*](#)

Thank you to those who responded to the special call out from Fred Lane (Lummi Nation) and Elizabeth Dunne (Earth Law Center), requesting that the DNR cancel the upcoming timber sales in the Elwha Watershed and Permanently Protect Elwha Legacy Forests. There were three parcels up for sale by the DNR.



In the Nov 5th meeting of the DNR commissioners (yes, they scheduled it on election day!), after listening to comments from the Lower Elwha Tribe, the public, the Elwha Legacy Coalition, and Thurston County officials, the DNR chose to approve two of the three timber sales. In significant nation-to-nation consultation with the Tribe, the DNR removed one area (Alley Cat) from the sale. The sale of the other two will take place in mid-December.

**Always be encouraged that your comments make a difference.*

Support the Tribes and the Indigenous communities whose consultations make the most impact.

NATIVE AMERICAN LEGISLATIVE UPDATES:

Even though we are at the very end of this lame duck session of congress, please continue to support the establishment of the [Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding Schools](#). Call your senators and representatives. The link here takes you to the Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL) page where you can easily contact your congress-people. If these bills do not pass now, we will have to start over with the new Congress and Administration.

And thank Sen Patty Murray who has fought tirelessly for this bipartisan bill. In a quote to ICT:

“It’s long past time for our government to fully come to terms with the horrific legacy of Indian boarding schools, which were designed to systematically strip away Native language, religion, and heritage — in brutal and traumatic ways. The next step is to pass our bipartisan bill to establish a Truth and Healing Commission so that we can help Native families and communities in Washington state and across the country heal from this painful chapter in our nation’s history.”

[The Friends Committee on National Legislation](#) (FCNL) advocates for legislation that will protect tribal sovereignty and treaty rights. You can sign up for monthly updates. This group makes it easy to take appropriate action.

[Native Boarding School Report Tells the Truth but Doesn’t go Far Enough](#)

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](#)



from "Land Back". Sierra Magazine

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 to some tribes in Lushootseed as Ts’a-kol-che, 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 JUUsticeWA. We are also supported in numerous ways by Whidbey Island Friends Meeting (WIFM) and the broader Quaker justice work.

Contact us at nciwhidbey@gmail.com