

Whidbey Native Connections Initiative Newsletter March 2026

NATIVE CONNECTIONS ZOOM GATHERING IN MARCH CANCELLED

We regret that the NCI gathering for this month, March, has been postponed until April 8.

MARCH 9: BILLY FRANK JR DAY

March 9 commemorates the birthday of Billy Frank Jr, a beloved Native American leader from the Nisqually Tribe who dedicated his life to protecting tribal treaty rights and the region's natural resources.

Lars Benson who grew up not too far from Frank's Landing on the Nisqually River where Billy also grew up, told us, "One thing for sure, Billy Frank would have wanted all of us, native and settler, from all tribes, to come together to protect our salmon and our waters."



Billy Frank Jr was first arrested when he was 14 years old, for fishing in the Nisqually River, in accordance with the reserved treaty rights of his tribe. Though he was arrested at least 50 more times, he never gave up. His sustained activism resulted in the [Boldt Decision](#) in 1974, leaving a [far-reaching legacy](#) for salmon, tribes, and respect for treaties and tribal sovereignty.

Because of the Boldt Decision which upheld the reserved rights granted by the Medicine Creek Treaty of 1854, tribal members of federally recognized tribes can fish in all their usual and accustomed places and share responsibility for the co-management of salmon with Washington State. Importantly, the court decision upheld tribes as sovereign nations.

However, the 1974 Boldt Decision had unintended consequences still felt today. It only benefitted tribes who were federally recognized at the time, and not only pitted commercial and recreational fishers and their families against tribes and Native fishers, but ended up pitting tribes against each other. Many such as the Snohomish Tribe whose ancestral homelands include what is known as South Whidbey Island, not only do not benefit, but endure lasting challenges because of the Boldt Decision. The Snohomish continue to proudly exist, and recognize themselves, and persist in applying for Federal Recognition. But they do not receive federal assistance for education, healthcare, public safety, housing and other infrastructure, and natural resource programs, nor do they have the status of sovereign Nations.

Though the [Samish Indian Nation](#) was originally a recognized tribe, they lost recognition due to a clerical error, and spent 30 years reclaiming it. But due to the wording of the Boldt Decision, they do not have treaty fishing rights.

If you want to honor Billy's legacy, please join us at a future **Save Our Wild Salmon "Hear the People, Hear the River" action hour** - next one is scheduled for **March 24 at 12:30 pm online**.

For more information or to [sign up, click here](#).

Click to watch the [ščədadx^w \(salmon\) video](#)



MARCH 14, SATURDAY, 2:00-4:00PM: MY HEART IS GOOD

At Quimper Unitarian Church in Port Townsend, 2333 San Juan Avenue

Join Port Gamble S'Klallam elder Ron Charles, one of the authors of [this book](#), and Holly Hughes, the publisher of Empty Bowl Press, for a reading and conversation. *My Heart Is Good: Treaty Rights and the Rise of a S'Klallam Fishing Community*, traces the historical arc from the signing of the Medicine Creek Treaty in 1854 to the success of the tribe in reclaiming treaty fishing rights in 1974. Their success was an outgrowth of the persistence of Billy Frank Jr and others who fought for treaty rights.

MARCH 14, SATURDAY, 7:00PM: POETRY ON THE SALISH SEA

At Wheeler Theater at Fort Worden State Park

6:30 pm – Doors open, 7:00 pm – Poetry Reading with award-winning poets Rena Priest, 2021-23 Washington Poet Laureate (Lummi), and Kim Trainor, also known as Kimberly Norris Guerrero (Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation), and Tamarah Rockwood, author and founder of Bainbridge Island Press. A reception follows the reading, at Taps at the Guardhouse, across the street from Wheeler Theater. All are welcome. Yummy food provided by Centrum and Taps.

MARCH 19, THURSDAY, 6-8 PM: LISTENING TO UNDERSTAND: A CALL TO ALLYSHIP SERIES

At Pacific Rim Institute (PRI), 160 S Parker Rd, Coupeville

Designed to introduce Indigenous ways of thinking and being as vital tools for healing our communities, dismantling colonial mindsets, and co-creating a future where everyone belongs. In partnership with Tony Cladusbid (Swinomish Tribal Member), Michelle E. Cladusbid (Author & Cultural Center Co-Founder), and Stephanie Nestlerode of 7th Generation Labs. This is a community potluck. We'll share a meal, then gather in Circle for discussion and reflection. Bring a dish ... a friend ... and come with an open heart. Come ready to listen. Come ready to grow.

MARCH 22, SUNDAY, 1-3 PM, PDT: ROOTS OF INJUSTICE, SEEDS OF CHANGE: Toward Right Relationship with Native Peoples (ONLINE)

In this 2-hour participatory program, you will experience the history of the colonization of Turtle Island, the land that is now known as the United States. The story is told through the words of Indigenous leaders, European/American leaders, and Western historians. You will engage with this history through experiential exercises and small group discussions. Facilitated by TRR's Native and non-Native teams. Appropriate for high school students and adults.

Sunday, March 22nd, 1-3pm PT. [REGISTER HERE](#)

MAY 9, SATURDAY, 11:00AM to 5:00PM PENN COVE WATER FESTIVAL.

In Coupeville: downtown streets, on the wharf, at the museum, and at the boat launch

The Festival features annual tribal canoe races, native arts & crafts vendors, story-telling, musical and dance performances, artist demonstrations, authentic Native foods, youth activities, exhibits and displays. If you'd like to help plan the Festival, send an email to: penncovewaterfestival@gmail.com.

To volunteer at the Festival, go to the [Sign Up Genius site](#).

For the schedule (coming soon) and more information, go to the [PCWF Website](#).



MAY 7-11, THURSDAY THROUGH MONDAY, GLOBAL EARTH REPAIR CONVERGENCE

At Fort Worden State Park and Conference Center, Port Townsend, WA

The [Global Earth Repair Convergence](#) honors and highlights the wisdom, knowledge, and leadership of Indigenous First Nations peoples from around the world. This is a groundbreaking gathering of global change-makers dedicated to restoring ecosystems, regenerating our planet,

and fostering community. Five transformative days of learning, collaboration, and celebration. Join online (May 8-10) or in person (May 7-11). More information and registration [HERE](#).

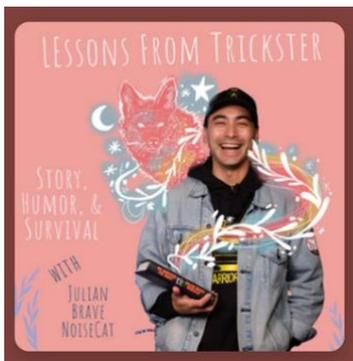
You might want to check out their Field Trips. Howard Garrett will lead a field trip to see salmon restoration on the Elwha River, and Naomi Kreinke will lead a tour to the Chemacum Tribe's new longhouse.

MAY 13 AND 14, WEDNESDAY AND THURSDAY: DINNERS FOR THE INTERTRIBAL YOUTH CAMAS BAKE AT PRI:

On Wednesday May 13 and Thursday May 14, **NCI** has been invited to make two dinners for participants in the annual INTERTRIBAL YOUTH CAMAS BAKE hosted by the [Coast Salish Youth Coalition](#), held at [Pacific Rim Institute](#) for the 8th year. We are honored to be invited to serve. Mark these dates on your calendar if you want to bring salads, breads, desserts, fruit, and help serve and clean up. If you sign up to help with a meal, you are welcome to engage with the tribal people during the meals. To sign up, send an email to: nciwhidbey@gmail.com
***We are NOT invited to participate in the event, nor to be observers. Please respect their privacy.



ALL MY RELATIONS PODCAST: Lessons from Trickster: Story, Humor and Survival with Julian Brave NoiseCat



Did you miss this January 21 Podcast episode? [CLICK HERE](#). Matika Wilbur interviews Julian Brave NoiseCat, author of *We Survived the Night*, and filmmaker of the documentary, *Sugarcane*.

“When writer and filmmaker Julian Brave NoiseCat talks about survival, he does not begin with abstraction. He begins with a story. On this episode of All My Relations, Julian joins us to discuss his new book, *We Survived the Night*, a father–son narrative shaped in the tradition of a Coyote story—layered, funny, painful, and exacting in its truths.”

NOTES FROM OUR FEBRUARY 11 NCI GATHERING

“It’s not about building the great ark and shipping everyone back to Europe or wherever they came from. It’s about how we live together in this shared space. For me, the ideal is for people to have the same love for the land, and for being part of the land, as we have. It’s on that basis that one can be here legitimately.”

gkisedtanamoogk, (enrolled Wampanoag),
in *The Gatherings: Reimagining Indigenous-Settler Relations*

In our February zoom Gathering, building on the above quote, we asked the question, **“What might it feel like to you to be here legitimately?”**

Many of us felt we needed more time to sit with this question, but we responded as best we could. Of the 34 people who attended, 9 identified as sduhubs (Snohomish), and several others identified as descendants of other tribes. Everyone’s responses helped us feel more deeply into how we might live with integrity on land stolen from the Indigenous people.

Here are a few responses paraphrased, that we remember from our notes on the conversations, from both Native voices and the voices of us *New* people. We did not record the conversation, so these are not direct quotes:

“To be here legitimately” is a verb. It’s how you act, what you do. Land is not a resource, but a living being to be respected and loved and cared for, not used without gratitude and reciprocal care. The land takes care of us, and will take care of the future generations

It’s important to develop a “sense of place,” to listen with our whole bodies, with our breath, with movement, with our hearts, to the earth in the place we live. Important to make gestures of care as gratitude, and to do no harm.

We “new” inhabitants so often skip over the history of the places we live, and don’t teach our children about the first Nations. To be here legitimately we need to know the history, and even if our blood ancestors weren’t the particular settlers here, we can live here because of the history. The land was stolen, and we are the ones who benefit now. Acknowledging that is a first step.

I never understood the concept of ownership of property. Could we take down the fences and care for this place as if we were honored guests?

Animals have legitimacy here. Maybe we could just learn from the animals, how to be better animals.

I need to know my own ancestors, all those who contributed to colonization, and especially those further back who lived deeply with Earth traditions. I may not be able to find those on an ancestry chart, but they are there in our collective histories. Ask them to help me know how to live here with respect and integrity.

The treaties (signed in 1855) are still in effect. As new people here, we inherited the responsibility to uphold the treaties, and to understand their long-lasting and not-such-good effects.

Land gives us our identities and holds the memories of our ancestors. Legitimacy is a way of belonging, of being in the right place.

Even though our tribe (sduhubs) is not federally recognized, we know we are legitimate and live here legitimately. We recognize ourselves and each other. It would help to have a place to gather, to come back to over and over, to renew relationship with a particular place. Relationship is the backbone of legitimacy.

We carry with us the strands of different tribes, ancestries, and reservations, and recognize the different faces of the same trauma. We are grateful to learn how to sit with being uncomfortable.

**What might it feel like to you,
to be here legitimately?**

MOON WHEN FROG TALKS from the Swinomish Indian Tribal Community

YouTube by Children of the Setting Sun

[Swinomish YouTube for the Moon when Frog Talks](#)

The Moon of late February into March is *Moon when Frog Talks*

Spring greens begin to emerge as a welcome addition to the winter fare of dried and smoked foods in the traditional diet. Tiger Lily bulbs, Giant horsetail shoots, cattail shoots, wild violets, and of course nettle. April James of the Swinomish Tribe shows how to make **Nettle Pesto**.

Enjoy as she tells the story of *How Nettle Saved the People*.



*Moon of Blossoming (March)
from the Samish 13 Moons Calendar*

NEWS ORGANIZATIONS TO FOLLOW

Now more than ever, it's essential that we keep our eyes on how Tribes and Native communities are losing ground or persisting with struggle, under the current administration. Some have been able to push back. Every day there are urgent messages to send to legislators and heads of governmental branches. Every day a new rally or protest. Do what you can with the time, energy, and privilege you have. And take time out to walk in wild places.

Native News Online: <https://nativenewsonline.net/>

[Deb Haaland dominates pre-primary in New Mexico race for governor.](#) “..... the Democratic Party of New Mexico released the results of the 2026 Democratic Pre-Primary Convention, showing Deb Haaland (Laguna Pueblo) with a decisive 73% of the vote as she prepares to face Trump’s Republican Party in the gubernatorial election. Her margin of victory was the largest among candidates competing for an open seat, signaling strong momentum heading into the June primary.”

Native Organizers Alliance Action Fund

Almost daily this group suggests letters to write to legislators, Interior Secretary, DHS Tribal Affairs Director, and numerous other people in power. Grassroots organizing to speak up as allies as the administration continues to remove Indigenous history, target Indigenous people for deportation, and trample Treaty rights and basic citizen rights for Indigenous people and communities around the country.



ACTIONS TO TAKE: Stay informed by the [Friends Committee on National Legislation, \(FCNL\)](#) focused on Indigenous issues. You can sign up with FCNL for monthly justice updates. This group makes it easy to take appropriate action. “The federal government has a trust responsibility to protect and enhance tribal self-determination and prosperity. FCNL advocates for legislation that will protect tribal sovereignty and treaty rights.”

INDIGENOUS NEWS SOURCES and Resources for Action:

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

[Underscore Native News](#) (Indigenous-centered journalism in the Pacific Northwest)

[Native News Online](#)

[Indian Country Today](#)

[High Country News, Indigenous Affairs](#)

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.

*The UUCWI and WIFM convene on the traditional lands of the sduhubs (Snohomish People), the Lower Skagit People, Swinomish, and Samish. Descendants of these Tribes have lived here continuously since time immemorial. Many other people of Coast Salish Nations utilized the coast and nearby waters, and still do. We acknowledge the significant ways the Native People, their families and their communities **are still here**, continuing to steward this island in ways physical, spiritual, political, and social. We honor the elders of the past, present, and future, with profound gratitude.*

Contact us at nciwhidbey@gmail.com

Let us know if you'd like to [unsubscribe](#).