

Whidbey Native Connections Initiative Newsletter April 2026

NATIVE CONNECTIONS ZOOM GATHERING: APRIL 8, 6:30 PM

Talking About Qwlho7el/c'abid (Camas)

In February 2025, Sam Qol7anten Barr, a citizen of the Samish Nation, gave a wonderful presentation to our NCI Zoom gathering about the historical and modern traditions of Camas in the Northern Straits Salish Sea. Fortunately, we recorded it. We heard that it was one of the favorite presentations, so we got permission to replay it this month.

For the April 8th NCI gathering on Zoom, we will screen Sam's 50-minute talk about Camas. This is a great opportunity to review Coast Salish cultural traditions around Camas in preparation for supporting the Coast Salish Youth Coalition's (CSYC) annual Intertribal Youth Camas Bake. Sam Qol7anten Barr is a citizen of the Samish Nation. He directs the CSYC, a non-profit venture that aims to empower Indigenous youth through cultural collaboration and environmental stewardship of traditional foods and ancestral lands. He is a warm, inspirational speaker.

Watch for your zoom link in the email that brought you this newsletter.

INTERTRIBAL YOUTH CAMAS BAKE: MID-MAY AT PACIFIC RIM INSTITUTE (PRI)

"Traditional foods connect us to our ancestors, our land, and our community."

The Coast Salish Youth Coalition is dedicated to sustaining their cultural practices of honoring traditional foods with their youth and Tribal communities. They want to ensure that future generations have the knowledge and skills to carry the traditional practices forward. At their annual Intertribal Camas Bake, youth, families, and community members gather to celebrate and honor this important food source. Many PNW tribes are invited to gather and camp for 5 days on the lands of the Pacific Rim Institute where they have cared for Camas in a natural prairie.



**COAST SALISH
YOUTH COALITION**

Through hands-on experiences, youth learn how to cultivate, harvest and prepare Camas for traditional methods of cooking in earthen pits. This relationship with Camas and other traditional foods fosters an understanding of their cultural significance and the ecosystems that support them.

"The Coast Salish Youth Coalition integrates traditional foods and practices into all aspects of programming. Whether gathering shellfish, cooking fish, foraging for berries, or identifying edible plants, these activities teach youth the importance of food sovereignty and environmental awareness. Our ancestors left us foods that are all around us if we know how to care for them."



See the CSYC website: coastsalishyouth.org for more information about their work with youth and traditional foods. And [visit their Spring newsletter](#) for some wonderful events. (Note which events are "specifically for tribal members, families, and specially invited allies," and which are "Open to all!") ((Images from CSYC website))

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

On Wednesday May 13 and Thursday May 14, we have been invited to make two dinners for participants in the 8th annual **Intertribal Youth Camas Bake**, held at Pacific Rim Institute. We are honored to be invited to serve. Clancy Dunigan and the Open Table folks have generously offered to cook the soups. The rest of us volunteers will bring salad ingredients, breads, desserts, fruit, tea, drinks, and other offerings. To track numbers, we need people to register in advance to prepare food, help set up about 4:30, stay to serve and mingle with participants, then help clean up.

***Note that we are *not* invited to participate in the traditional teachings and ceremonies

If you'd like to volunteer, please send an email to Anne Hayden at nciwhidbey@gmail.com and let us know which date you can be available and what you'd like to bring.

NCI IN MAY:

Because we will be busy preparing and serving dinners for the Camas Bake, we will not hold a Zoom Gathering on the second Wednesday in May. Come join us at PRI instead!



APRIL 16, THURSDAY, 6-8 PM: S^wədəbš Alliance Gathering

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

The S^wədəbš Alliance shares Indigenous ways of being, doing and learning - vital practices for healing our communities, dismantling colonial mindsets, and co-creating a future where all our relations flourish. Organized by Tony Cladusbid (Swinomish Tribal Member), Michelle E. Cladusbid (Author & Cultural Center Co-Founder), and Stephanie Nestlerode of 7th Generation Labs, we gather every third Thursday from 6 to 8 pm. We share a meal and then gather in Circle for conversation and reflection. Bring a dish ... a friend ... an open heart. Come ready to listen and grow. For inquiries or to be placed on the S^wədəbš Alliance mailing list, text Stephanie Nestlerode at 512-925-1360.

MAY 3, SUNDAY, 1-3 PM, PT: 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, May 3, 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, storytelling, 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.

Many volunteers are needed on May 9th. To volunteer at the Festival, go to the [Sign Up Genius site](#).

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

The S^wədəbš Alliance and NCI will co-host an information booth. Be sure to stop by!

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).

Tentative plans for the event include a grand opening Friday morning honoring all indigenous participants, a Saturday eve Coast Salish coastal jam, and ongoing storytelling, wisdom sharing and many workshops with indigenous panelists. Importantly, the indigenous caucus is deciding what they want to do for programming, so watch for updates.

More information and registration [HERE](#).

You might want to check out their [Field Trips](#). You can register for these separately from the conference. The following field trips are on May 7th:

Debra Ellers of the Port Townsend Native Connections Action Group will lead a field trip to see **Salmon**

Restoration on the Elwha River. It will include a morning tour with Howard Garrett (Orca Network and the Center for Whale Research) at the [Balcomb Big Salmon Ranch](#) (BBSR) conservation property on the Elwha. The BBSR might be the only conservation property in the world exclusively dedicated to recovering the Southern Resident Orcas.

In the afternoon, they are excited to offer a tour of the Elwha estuary with Vanessa Castle, Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe member and wildlife biologist who worked on the Elwha dam removals and restoration afterwards. Vanessa is incredibly knowledgeable and passionate about the Elwha recovery. She was featured in this PBS special "**Wild Hope, The Beautiful Undammed**" about the Elwha: [The Beautiful Undammed | WILD HOPE | Nature | PBS](#)

Naiomi Kreinke will lead a tour to the new Native-style longhouse near Chimacum, "**Naiomi's Longhouse for the People.**" Naiome Kreinke is the motivating force behind the Longhouse being constructed, and will speak about how this one came into being. Paul Chiyokten Wagner (Saanich) will talk about the role of Longhouses' in Salish Sea cultures. It was illegal for longhouses to be built in Jefferson County until just recently. Come prepared to help plant in the native cultural plant garden.



APRIL 19, EARTH DAY: SALISH SEA TRILOGY

Join our colleagues with the Port Townsend Native Connections Action Group for a free family & friends viewing of the Salish Sea Trilogy. Celebrate Earth Day **on Sunday, April 19 from 1:00 to 2:30 PM** in the Quimper Unitarian Universalist Fellowship (QUUF) Sanctuary, Port Townsend.

The Salish Sea Trilogy (1 hour; [click here](#) for details) is a series of films exploring the entwined extinction threat facing iconic Southern Resident Killer Whales, and the Chinook salmon they prey on in Pacific Northwest waters.



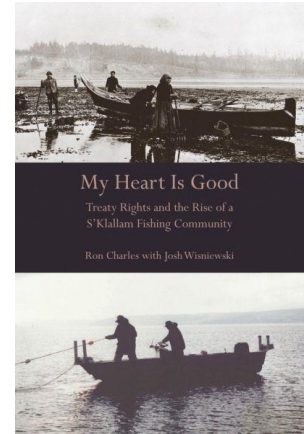
Infused with science and indigenous perspectives, this series invites viewers to imagine how traditional indigenous knowledge and contemporary science might come together to help recover an iconic species. Jessica Plumb, Director & Producer will share the film and answer questions.

JEWELL JAMES, LUMMI (LHAQ’TEMISH) ELDER, GIVES NO KINGS DAY KEYNOTE IN BELLINGHAM

Jewell James is a Lummi Nation (Coast Salish) master carver of totem poles, author, an environmental activist, and an acknowledged expert on treaty rights and tribal sovereignty. His ten-minute speech was riveting, correlating the beginnings of the U.S. with the Constitution framework the founders learned from the Iroquois Confederacy. [WATCH HERE](#)

MY HEART IS GOOD: TREATY RIGHTS AND THE RISE OF A S’KLALLAM FISHING COMMUNITY

Anne recently had the joy of attending a book signing and conversation with Port Gamble S’Klallam elder and former tribal chair Ron Charles, author of *My Heart is Good*. Ron and co-author Josh Wisniewski trace the historical arc from the signing of the Medicine Creek Treaty in 1854 to the success of the tribe in attaining federal recognition in the 1930s, establishing a reservation, and reclaiming their fishing rights, all told through the fascinating life story of Ron Charles. A wonderful read, and an accessible way to understand more deeply the history and current situations of Coast Salish tribes.



UPDATE on CHINOOK NATION fight for federal recognition

Tony Johnson, Chairman of the Chinook Indian Nation wrote on March 26: “In late March, the United States Supreme Court declined to review our case. You can read more about the decision and the Nation’s full statement [here](#). While this decision is a deep disappointment and yet another example of the broken federal recognition process, it is not the end of our fight. It is the beginning of a renewed, revitalized phase of our efforts.”

“Federal recognition is essential for our community. It will finally deliver Indian Health Service health care, educational opportunities, NAGPRA protections for our ancestors, and other vital resources long denied to our citizens. It will fuel economic development, environmental stewardship in our important region, and healing from intergenerational trauma inflicted by the federal boarding school system. Most importantly, federal recognition will ensure our sovereignty is respected by the United States for all generations to come.”

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. We bring you links to several sources of Native News by Native journalists.

NATIVE AMERICA: An Indigenous perspective on news & history with Rebecca Nagle

“Indigenous communities deserve the same standard of journalism as the rest of the country, but rarely receive it from non-Native media outlets. My writing seeks to correct this.”
Rebecca Nagle is an award-winning journalist and citizen of the Cherokee Nation. Nagle’s debut book, *By the Fire We Carry: The Generations-long Fight for Justice on Native Land*, was an instant national bestseller and a *New Yorker* Book of the Year. Nagle is also the writer and host of the podcast *This Land*. You can read more from her on her Substack [Native America](#). Her latest essay is illuminating: [What does birthright citizenship have to do with Native Americans?](#)

INDIGENOUS NEWS SOURCES and Resources for Action:

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

[Native News Online](#)

[Indian Country Today](#)

[High Country News, Indigenous Affairs](#)

NATIVE NEWS ONLINE:

[Tribes Object as Trump Administration Moves to Reopens Chaco Canyon to Oil Drilling](#)

ACTIONS TO TAKE: Stay informed by the [Friends Committee on National Legislation](#) (FCNL)

program 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.”

March 2026 FCNL Native American Legislative Update, April 1, 2026

<https://www.fcnl.org/updates/2026-04/march-2026-native-american-legislative-update>

MOON OF THE WHISTLING ROBINS: from the Swinomish Indian Tribal Community Calendar

Video by Children of the Setting Sun Productions

[Moon of the Whistling Robins](#) occurs during much of April. The sounds of bird song signals springtime. Greens, fish, and shellfish are harvested. Ironwood, also called ocean spray, is harvested and used for making a variety of tools including needles for sewing cattail mats, stakes for roasting salmon, and hunting tools.

[Sxwán7elh](#), MOON OF LITTLE BULLHEADS (April) from the Samish Nation

The Samish Nation also has a Seasonal Calendar. The Spring Season ([Chenqw'iles Season](#)) “is the time of year when the sun begins to shine a little more and days grow slightly longer. This moon cycle marks the end of winter dances and the longhouse season. Activities begin to move outdoors for a season of harvesting and hunting, celebration and ceremonies.”



*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.*

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