

Whidbey Native Connections Initiative Newsletter May 2026

NATIVE CONNECTIONS: MAY, JUNE, AND SUMMER GATHERINGS:

We will not hold a Zoom Gathering in May, since we'll be serving meals for the Coast Salish Camas Bake (see below for how to participate).

We plan to gather again on **June 10th**, via Zoom, to celebrate what we've offered, and what has been offered to us, in the last year.

We NCI co-facilitators take time off during the summer (July – September this year) in order to focus on attending Native events and working in other ways in our communities to sustain ourselves and our mutual Democracy. After June, our next Gathering will be in October. We often try to send brief newsletters about summer events. Stay tuned, and keep in touch!

MAY 13, 15 AND 16, WEDNESDAY, FRIDAY AND SATURDAY: PROVIDE MEALS FOR THE INTERTRIBAL YOUTH CAMAS BAKE AT PRI:

We have been invited to make **three 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 two of the soups,

and a courageous group of soup-making-volunteers from the UUCWI will make one soup. The rest of us volunteers will bring salad ingredients, breads, desserts, fruit, tea, drinks, and other offerings. To track numbers and make sure we have what is needed, we ask you 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



**COAST SALISH
YOUTH COALITION**

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. We'll let you know what food is needed for the meal, and details about arrival and protocols for us.

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 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.



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 events. (Note which events are “specifically for tribal members, families, and specially invited allies,” and which are “Open to all.”)

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 table. 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

Information and registration [HERE](#).

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.

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.



MAY 21, THURSDAY, 6-8 PM: S'wədəbš Alliance Gathering

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

The S'wədəbš Alliance meets on the third Thursday of every month, at PRI.

"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."

PADDLE TO NISQUALLY MEDICINE CREEK POTLATCH JOURNEY: JULY 31 TO AUGUST 5

The 2026 Paddle to Nisqually Medicine Creek Potlatch is hosted by the Nisqually Tribe.

"Canoe Journey 2026, Paddle to Nisqually Medicine Creek Potlatch, continues an inter-tribal celebration and annual gathering of Northwest indigenous nations. Since the Paddle to Seattle in 1989, the Canoe Journey has grown to include over 100 canoes and the participation of Canoe Families from other native canoe cultures, including Native American tribes, First Nations peoples, Alaska Natives, Inuit, Maori, Native Hawaiians, and other indigenous peoples from across the world." **For more information:** [Here](#)

MOON OF THE DIGGING TIME: from the Swinomish Indian Tribal Community Calendar

Much of May is the [Moon of the Digging Time](#) because the roots of many plants are dug during this time. Swinomish people traditionally consumed a variety of nutritious root foods. Watch the video made by Children of the Setting Sun to learn about Camas. Anna Cook of the Swinomish Tribal community shares the nutritional benefits of Camas, shows how they dig Camas, and a modern way of cooking the Camas bulbs. She also shares a Camas Story, as told by Roger Fernandez of the Lower Elwha S'Klallam Tribe. The traditional process of cooking Camas in earthen pit-ovens will be used by the Intertribal Youth Camas Bake



Penáxweng, MOON OF GATHERING SEAWEED AND CAMAS from the Samish Nation 13 Moons Calendar

The Samish Nation also has a Seasonal Calendar. The Spring Season ([Chenqw'íles Season](#)) includes **Sxwán7elh**, the Moon of the Bullfrogs, that marks the end of winter, and **Penáxweng**, the Moon of Gathering Seaweed and Camas. During the transition between **Sxwán7elh** and **Penáxweng**, days begin to get much warmer and it rains much less. Feel it now in early May? The moon of **Penáxweng** marks the end of spring and the start of summer. Watch the Samish Tribe's video to learn about harvesting and using the shoots of Salmonberry. Read about traditional uses of Nettle, Devil's Club, Giant Horsetail, Thimbleberry, and Common Blue Camas.

LOCAL/REGIONAL TRIBES IN THE NEWS

Lummi Nation sues over burial grounds

The Lummi Nation is suing Whidbey Telecom, Whatcom County and two federal agencies for their roles in allegedly disturbing and degrading human remains in ancestral burial grounds amid broadband projects on Point Roberts for years. [Read more](#)

Chinook salmon benefits from Stillaguamish Tribal restoration project

Cascade PBS takes a look at how the Stillaguamish Tribe is restoring Chinook Salmon habitat. [Watch here](#)

Makah Tribe prepares for whale hunt- Underscore News— April 13, 2026

The small tribe on the northwest corner of the Olympic Peninsula has asked to revise their permit application to allow a chance to resume their traditional subsistence whale hunt this July. The federal government has not yet responded to the original application, filed in March 2025. Their permit remains in limbo. [Read more](#)

Protecting, Connecting and Restoring Wildlands and Wildlife—while returning land to the Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis Reservation

Besides protecting land that might be the best place for a wildlife crossing over I-5, this is inspiring because as part of this project, land was returned to the Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis Reservation. [Read more](#)

Samish Tribe holds first weaving retreat to unite tribal citizens

From March 20 to 22, the Samish Indian Nation brought together tribal citizens from across the region and beyond to learn [traditional Samish weaving techniques](#), with around 40 participants making wool skirts and tunics, as well as cedar hats and headbands. [Read more](#)

We Are Still Here: Documentary by and About the Duwamish People

We Are Still Here sheds light on the Duwamish Tribe's enduring fight for federal recognition. Despite being the first people of Seattle and signatories of the 1855 Treaty of Point Elliott, the Duwamish have spent decades battling for the rights promised to them. This film captures the resilience of a tribe that refuses to be erased, showcasing their cultural strength and ongoing activism. [Link to documentary](#)

Readjusting Traditional Plant Knowledge: How the Suquamish Tribe is finding ways to harvest, educate and prepare for ongoing plant cycle alternations due to climate change.

As climate change continues to shift and accelerate around the world, seasonal indicators that have been relied on by Indigenous peoples since time immemorial are being tested. In the Pacific Northwest, the traditional ecological knowledge of the Suquamish Tribe is among the knowledge systems being tested as growth cycles shift, leading to unpredictable harvesting dates and bounties. [Read more](#)

How Indigenous leaders of PNW Tribes are "carrying fire" from Northwest history to the present

[Joe] Scott is part of a growing Indigenous movement to revitalize the knowledge and burning practices that once commonly shaped many Oregon landscapes. Even its wettest ones. Emerging research from Oregon State University is affirming this fire history, one long held among accounts from Indigenous communities. [Read more](#)



Supreme Court Denies Chinook Petition for Federal Recognition

In September 2025, the Chinook Indian Nation [petitioned](#) the U.S. Supreme Court to review a decision from the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in June 2025, dismissing their case for federal recognition under the 1994 List Act.

The act mandates the Secretary of the Interior to maintain and annually publish a list of all federally recognized Native nations.

The Supreme Court declined to take on the petition.

For the Chinook Indian Nation, that means continuing to pursue other avenues for federal recognition, namely getting legislation through Congress. [Read more](#)

NEWS ORGANIZATIONS TO FOLLOW

Now more than ever, it's essential that we keep our eyes on how Tribes and Native communities are faring in their centuries-long 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.

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

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?](#)

UNDERScore NATIVE NEWS

Standing Rock 10 Years Later: 'We Still Have a Lot of Unknowns'

"What many don't realize is that the tribe has spent a majority of the last decade fighting the pipeline," Alkire said. "Even after the nation's attention shifted away from the camps, the protesters and the movement, the tribe has quietly continued fighting against what leaders feel is a great danger to their only water supply."

[Read More](#)



NATIVE NEWS ONLINE:

The Dismantling of Voting Rights is Happening in Plain Sight

"Voting rights in Indian Country have never been guaranteed. They have been fought for — and defended — generation after generation. That is why the U.S. Supreme Court's latest voting rights decision isn't just another legal development. It's a shift — one that will be felt in Native Americans communities across the country. It is part of a broader pattern eroding the foundation of American democracy, including for Native voters." [Read More](#)

HIGH COUNTRY NEWS: INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Congress contemplates sweeping investigation of Native boarding schools

“This is quite simply, an opportunity for the United States to inquire about questions that have been asked by Indian Country for generations. It is legislation that has received overwhelming support from both parties, from tribal leaders everywhere.”

[Read More](#)

FRIENDS PEACE TEAMS:

News, Resources and Actions from Native Organizations

Wear red on May 5 to honor and bring attention to the ongoing crisis of unsolved murders of Native people, especially young women. On some reservations, Native women face murder rates more than ten times the national average. [Click here](#) to learn about the National Day of Awareness (May 5) and the National Week of Action (May 4-9) for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Relatives (MMIWR). Check out the [National Indigenous Women’s Resource Center’s](#) advocacy tool kit and learn what needs to be done in your state – and how to do it. [Read more](#)

ACTIONS TO TAKE:

Stay informed by the [Friends Committee on National Legislation](#) (FCNL)

This program focuses 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.”

April 30, 2026 FCNL Native American Legislative Update

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

*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](#).