

**Whidbey Native Connections Initiative Newsletter
June 2026**

NATIVE CONNECTIONS: MAY, JUNE, AND SUMMER GATHERINGS:

We did not hold a Zoom Gathering in May, instead, we provided three meals for the Coast Salish Intertribal Youth Camas Bake.

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, and to hear your thoughts as we go forward.

We NCI co-facilitators take time off from gathering 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!

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 10, 6:30-8:00: Online Gathering with the NCI Community

Join us via Zoom to review and celebrate all we have experienced together since October 2025. It's been a significant year. We'll review the purpose of the NCI, feel into where we've traveled together this year, and imagine where we might go next.

We'd love to have your company at the Zoom gathering on June 10th and hear what has been meaningful for you. Have you grown relationships, made connections, or participated in Native-led events beyond our NCI circle? How would you like to engage going forward?

**Whidbey Native Connections Initiative began in the fall of 2021.
Our purpose is to:**

EDUCATE OURSELVES to better understand the history of the Indigenous people, nationally and locally, as well as the far-reaching impact that colonization continues to have on both Native and non-native people. Learn how to be in right relationship with Native peoples.

DEEPEN RESPECT for all Native cultures, including spiritual and social philosophies, traditional and contemporary art, and land use and environmental issues. Learn how to appreciate, not appropriate.

STAND IN SOLIDARITY with Native Peoples, humbly cultivating relationships first. Partner with Native-led projects addressing critical environmental, cultural and social justice issues, and support and participate in Native-led educational events and cultural exchanges when invited.

We support all Native Tribes, communities, and peoples. Though we have focused our attention for the last years on building relationship with local tribes, support for all Native people is in our hearts.

REVIEW: Since October 2025, we have gathered on Zoom and in person:

- **October, 2025:** We began the season by viewing the film, *Promised Land*, an award-winning documentary exploring the long battle of the Duwamish and Chinook Tribes to restore their Federal Recognition and regain their denied treaty rights. We chose to view this film together because the issues that the Duwamish and Chinook face are also common to the Snohomish Tribe. In addition, the film is not readily available to stream, and we were able to borrow a DVD from our colleagues in Port Townsend.
- **November 2025:** Carly Mathews, chair of the Snohomish Tribe of Indians, together with eight other Snohomish members, joined us to speak about their tribal history and the difficulties of being a Tribe that does not have the advantages of the legal status of being “Federally Recognized.” The US government forces tribes to go through a bureaucratic process of proving their historical and cultural existence. In January 1855, important members of the Snohomish Tribe with ancestral ties to South Whidbey Island were signatories to the Treaty of Point Elliott. Year-round Snohomish villages with long-houses existed on Whidbey Island, yet the Snohomish were told to move to a reservation on the Tulalip Bay along with other tribes. By the 1930’s, those living on the reservation on Tulalip Bay, including many descendants of the Snohomish, worked hard to become recognized as the Tulalip Tribes. After the Treaty signing in 1855, many Snohomish refused to be relocated to Tulalip Bay, and remained off-reservation on Whidbey and in other traditional areas. Today, the off-reservation descendants are known as the Snohomish Tribe of Indians, and they are still working to gain Federal Recognition.

The historical information that the Snohomish Tribe shared so generously with us during our November gathering is available as a recording. It was a deeply-felt honor to be trusted with their Tribal story.

- **January, 2026:** Carly Mathews wrote an eloquent reflection about the 1855 Treaty that we published in our January newsletter. The anniversary of the Treaty of Point Elliott is on January 22. On that day, members of the Whidbey NCI rode the Clinton-Mukilteo ferry and read the Treaty out loud, both during the crossing, and on the shores where the Treaty was enacted 171 years ago. Other NCI members read the Treaty at Snakelum Point on the shores of Penn Cove. [The village at Snakelum Point \(čobaʔálšj̓d\)](#) was considered the most prominent village of the Lower Skagit Tribe. The Swinomish and Samish Tribes also have ancestral ties to Penn Cove and North Whidbey.

For our January online gathering, we showed an inspiring documentary, *First Descent: Kayaking the Klamath*. Directly after the four major dams were removed from the Klamath River, 28 Native teenagers and young adults became the first people in over a century to paddle the entire Klamath River from its source in Oregon to the Pacific Ocean in California. The film, much more than an adventure documentary, highlights Indigenous success, generational healing, environmental justice, and the restoration of cultural identity. Available to stream through [Oregon Public Broadcasting \(OPB\), on YouTube](#).

- **February, 2026:** During our February online gathering, we invited people to break into small groups and consider the question, “How might you live legitimately on lands traditional to Indigenous people?” We were all moved by the thoughtful reflections of Native and non-Native people.
- **April, 2026:** In April, we were honored to re-play a recording of Sam Barr’s presentation that he gave last year on the importance of Camas to many Salish Sea Tribes. Sam Qol7anten Barr, a citizen of the Samish Nation, leads the Coast Salish Youth Coalition.

- **May, 2026:** We were honored to be invited for the third year to make three dinners for the 100-120 participants in the 8th annual **Intertribal Coast Salish Youth Camas Bake**, held at Pacific Rim Institute. This is such a tangible way to support the people of many Tribes. When we provided some meals, the elders in the encampment were freed to fully focus on caring for and teaching the youth. At times we were invited to witness cultural presentations of songs and dances, and to connect with many. Their gratitude was palpable.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

THURSDAY, JUNE 25, 2026: INDIGENOUS CELEBRATION DAY on Guemes Island with the Coast Salish Youth Coalition

Everyone is invited to join the CSYC on Guemes Island for a day celebrating Indigenous culture of the Salish Sea. Activities include cultural presentations, tribal artist vendors, and more. This community-centered event celebrates Coast Salish identity, knowledge, and resilience. Walk across on the 1 pm ferry from Anacortes to Guemes, and enjoy activities at the Guemes General Store right next to the ferry landing. RSVP is appreciated but not necessary. You'll get updated details if you register! They are also inviting Indigenous Vendors to sell their wares.

[Community RSVP](#) and [Vendor Pre-Registration](#)

THURSDAY, JUNE 18, 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.

"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 "Healing Through Our Waters by Honoring Our Ancestors"

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](#)

POW-WOWS

A Pow Wow is a Native American tradition that brings together many different tribes and communities. They are vibrant cultural celebrations that include dancing, singing, socializing, crafts, arts, and food. Find a calendar of PowWows in our area [Here](#).

ICT News (Indian Country Today) provides [this calendar](#) of powwows all around the country. Plan your vacation so you can go to some of them! Learn about powwows and how to be a respectful spectator in ICT's very helpful ["What to Know Before You Go."](#)

Two-Spirit PowWows

Two-Spirit powwows have been a growing space in nearly the last 15 years all across Turtle Island for Two-Spirit and Indigiqueer community members and allies. Be sure to read [this article in Underscore News](#) which offers resources for us to learn about and attend Pow Wows celebrating LGBTQIA2S+.

“We want to honor and celebrate the fact that even through genocide, even through assimilation, Two-Spirit and Indigiqueer folks are alive and thriving, and are contributing in endless ways to their own families, to their own communities, and to the world,” said Angel Fabian, executive director of the Bay Area American Indian Two-Spirits. Fabian is Ben’Zaa (Zapotecx) and Xicanx.

SE’SI’LE CAMPAIGNS AND UPDATES

“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.” [Se’Si’Le website](#)

Seven Sisters: Return of the Matriarchy

“[The Seven Sisters Campaign](#) is a National, multi-site public engagement and leadership initiative led by Se’Si’Le in partnership with tribal, environmental, and faith-based organizations. This campaign will launch events designed to elevate the leadership of Seven Indigenous Women whose work addresses the intersecting crises of biodiversity loss, climate disruption, and environmental injustice.”

Watch for local events on Orcas Island and in Seattle.

June 13, Orcas

June 27 and October 16, Seattle

Land Return

Se’Si’Le secured a loan to assume title to land on Orcas Island (the ancient village site of Tsil’Whi’Sen), a traditional cultural property highly regarded by the *LhaqTemish* Peoples of the Northern Straits of *Xw’ullemey* (the Salish Sea). This heritage landscape on Orcas Island was slated for commercial development until Se’Si’Le stepped in and assumed title at the 11th hour. [Read more here.](#)

WORTHY ARTICLES TO READ:

From Stephen Carr Hampton

Stephen Carr Hampton is an award-winning writer based in Port Townsend, WA. An enrolled citizen of Cherokee Nation (GWJ), he writes about Native issues, past and present, birds and climate change and environmental issues, and sometimes other things. [Read more about him here](#), and definitely read his recent [article on Substack](#):

125 years ago today, an Indian Reservation was turned into a wildlife refuge to save the buffalo: Today, Native tribes spearhead countless efforts to restore endangered ecosystems

From Rebecca Nagle:

Rebecca Nagle is a 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 recent essay is illuminating: [What does birthright citizenship have to do with Native Americans?](#)

MOON OF THE SALMONBERRY from the Swinomish Indian Tribal Community Calendar

For the Swinomish, much of June is the Moon of the Salmonberry. During this moon, fruits such as salmonberry and red huckleberry are ripening and ready to harvest, signaling the start of many salmon runs. Activities during this moon focus on celebrating the coming of summer by preparing low-sugar salmonberry soda and a healing salve used for treating bumps and scrapes. [Watch a short video](#), created in collaboration with Children of the Setting Sun.

MOON OF THE SALMONBERRY from the Samish Nation 13 Moons Calendar

The Samish Nation also has a Seasonal Calendar. With the warmth of the Summer season comes the ripening of essential fruits such as skw'óqwchis (red huckleberry), yíy7xem7 (evergreen huckleberry), ts'éxwen (june plum), sqw'eláIngexw (blackberry), séni7 (oregon grape berry), sxwásen (soapberry), elíle7 (salmonberry), and t'qwém7 (thimbleberry). [Read more here](#).



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. Here are some links to several sources of Native News by Native journalists.

UNDERScore NATIVE NEWS

This news source highlights issues concerning Culture, Justice, Land, and People in the PNW. [Read here](#).

NATIVE NEWS ONLINE:

For up-to-date national news coverage by and about Native communities [Read here](#).

HIGH COUNTRY NEWS: INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

High Country News reports on issues concerning the West. Their Indigenous Affairs desk has archived articles worthy of reading. [Read here](#).

INDIGENOUS COUNTRY TODAY (ICT NEWS)

ICT brings you Indigenous journalism that uplifts Native communities, supported by members, donors, and partners through the non-profit IndigPublicMedia.

Tribal Leaders call for Sovereignty as Federal Support Waivers. [Read Here](#)

To get the ICT *Weekly Newsletter*, [Sign up here](#)

FRIENDS PEACE TEAMS:

News, Resources and Actions from Native Organizations

[Sign up to receive monthly news](#). from Friends Peace Teams

ACTIONS TO TAKE:

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

FCNL 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.”

[May 2026: Native American Legislative Update \(NALU\)](#)

*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](#).