



DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

NEWSLETTER

Whatcom Family YMCA

NOVEMBER, 2020

NATIVE AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH

What does that mean, exactly?

November is Native American Heritage Month, established as a full month in 1990. During November (and throughout the year) we honor and acknowledge the contributions, wisdom, and experiences of Indigenous peoples, historically and today.

Before this land was “discovered” by European colonizers, Whatcom County was home to Northwest Coast Salish Native Americans, the Lummi, Nooksack, Samish and Semiahmoo Tribes. Living descendants of these First Americans consider these lands their ancestral homelands.

The Treaty of Point Elliott was signed on Jan. 22, 1855, by Isaac Stevens (1818-1862), Governor of the Washington Territory, and by Duwamish Chief Seattle, Snoqualmie Chief Patkanim, Lummi Chief Chow-its-hoot, and other chiefs, sub-chiefs, and delegates of tribes, bands, and villages. The Treaty of Point Elliott removed Indigenous peoples from the majority of their ancestral lands in exchange for fishing, hunting, and gathering rights.

The United States’ Constitution, more than 300 treaties, and over two centuries of Federal law recognize Indian tribes as domestic dependent nations with degrees of sovereignty existing within the confines of the United States. Please see the [American Indian Digital Archive](#) or the [Smithsonian National Museum of American Indians](#) for access to these treaties. There are currently 574 federally recognized American Indian and Alaska Native tribes and villages, 29 of those are federally recognized in the state of Washington. They are: Chehalis, Colville, Cowlitz, Hoh, Jamestown S’Klallam, Kalispel, Lower Elwha Klallam, Lummi, Makah, Muckleshoot, Nisqually, Nooksack, Port Gamble S’Klallam, Puyallup, Quileute, Quinault, Samish, Sauk-Suiattle, Shoalwater Bay, Skokomish, Snoqualmie, Spokane, Squaxin Island, Stillaguamish, Suquamish, Swinomish, Tulalip, Upper Skagit, and Yakama. In addition, many Native Washington tribes remain unacknowledged and are currently petitioning the US government for recognition, the Duwamish, Wanapum, and Chinook tribes have had a long history in present-day Washington.

Indigenous peoples are frequently classified as a racial minority. However, it is important to understand that “Native American” or “American Indian” are not strictly racial categories. Being a member of a tribal nation provides a membership status. Because of tribes’ status as sovereign nations, Indigenous peoples/tribes are **political entities**. Whether an individual is a member of a federally recognized Indian tribe depends on the membership rules of each individual tribe.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS OF LAND AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

One stop on the path to being more more culturally conscious of Indigenous ancestral homelands is acknowledging the land that you occupy, visit and love.

“A Land Acknowledgment is a formal statement that recognizes and respects Indigenous Peoples as traditional stewards of this land and the enduring relationship that exists between Indigenous Peoples and their traditional territories.”

-Native American & Indigenous Peoples Steering Group

The Whatcom Family YMCA serves Whatcom County on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the [Nuxwsa’7aq \(Nooksack\) Coast Salish](#) peoples. In addition, the Whatcom Family Y acknowledges the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of our close neighbors, the [Lhaq’temish \(Lummi\)](#), [Nuwhaha, Skagit](#), and [Xws7ámeshqen \(Samish\)](#) peoples.

To celebrate National Native American Heritage month, we encourage you to take time to acknowledge and educate yourselves the land that you, your ancestors, and/or family reside upon. This can be done by going to native-land.ca.



RESOURCES:

If you would like to learn more, the following books are recommended.

“Where the Salmon Run: The Life and Legacy of Billy Frank Jr.”

by Trova Heffernan

“Power and Place: Indian Education in America”

by Vine Deloria

“Making Space for Indigenous Feminism”

by Joyce Green