Partnering with Original Nations and Peoples: Protect Cultures & the Earth
by Beth Brownfield, Bellingham UU Fellowship, WA (bethbrownf@aol.com)

WHY?
• Indigenous Peoples have always known that it isn’t only about their own survival, but also the survival of humanity, and of all life. We are in this together as partners and allies.
• We have an obligation to educate ourselves, learn the true history of our country from an indigenous perspective, and bridge the gap by connecting personally and strategically with our indigenous neighbors.
• In order to build Beloved Community, we must challenge the larger oppressive power structure

DEVELOPING RELATIONSHIPS
• **Show up at** events open to the public: powwows, music and theatrical
• Support by ‘partnering with’ / not ‘helping’. ‘Work with’, / not ‘Speaking for’
• **Advocate for treaty rights and tribal sovereignty**
• Be an informed neighbor about past history and current situations
• **Take directions from partners**, not leading in working on issues together
• **Listen more, talk less**
• **Be trustworthy**; practice Respect, Reciprocity, Flexibility and Adaptability
• **Appreciate the diversity** of Original Nations and Peoples
• **Be authentic, live with gratitude** and in relations with all beings and elements

HOW?
• **IDENTIFY AND LEARN** the history of the indigenous peoples who previously lived, or currently live, in your region or state.
• **OBSERVE** and understand the pervasiveness of the “Colonial mindset” in oneself and in society at large.
• **ACKNOWLEDGE AND HONOR** the specific first inhabitants of your region.
• **DEVELOP** a relationship with indigenous neighbors and join forces to support them in partnership and/or advocacy for local programs and national issues.
• **VISIT** Native American cultural centers.
• **ATTEND** events open to the public such as powwows, art exhibits, workshops, celebrations, and performances. Be visible to them.
• **FORM** a Native American Ministry or Connection group in your congregation to **Support, Honor, Appreciate, Serve and Support** Indigenous Peoples locally, regionally, nationally and internationally.
• **Recognize** how political, social justice and environmental issues are inter-related, how they feed each and perpetuate injustice.

SUGGESTED EDUCATIONAL ACTIONS:
• **Become familiar with** the Doctrine of Christian Discovery and with the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. (Google “UUA Doctrine of Discovery” for information and actions)
• Read Beacon Press book: An Indigenous People’s History of the United States” by Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz. Hold several sessions to discuss the chapters with others.

• **Subscribe FREE to Indian Country Today** ([http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com](http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com)) Fantastic resource on all topics from health, education, economics, environment, news, art, music, movies, etc.

• **Sign up for Native American Issues & Legislation** on Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL) website: [http://fcnl.org/issues/nativeam/](http://fcnl.org/issues/nativeam/)

• **Learn about:** Federal Indian Policies, Acts, Treaties and practices: Indian Removal and Relocation, Concepts of Self-Determination and Sovereignty, Termination programs and efforts, Allotments, Child Welfare, Gaming, NAGPRA, etc. Also understand the relationship of Original Nations to local, State, and Federal Governments.

• **Find out about current cultural challenges:** sex abuse, violence against women, sex trafficking, teen pregnancy, drugs and alcohol, housing shortages, unemployment, education, health issues and services, etc.

• **Understand the effects of cultural and historical trauma:** Boarding Schools, removals, relocation, broken promises, genocide, devastating diseases, etc.

**SUGGESTED PERSONAL OR GROUP ACTIONS:**

• **Encourage** your community and the greater community to always consult with Original Nations and Peoples in matters that concern them.

• **Show films** produced by, or documented about, Indigenous Peoples: Human Rights Film Festivals, local theatres, through Lifelong Learning programs.

• **Invite** Indigenous Peoples to speak at forums, services, workshops, and conferences

• **Devote** at least one special collection, a year, of your congregation to a 501c3 Native American organization or effort.

• **Join protests and actions** for retirement of sport team logos and mascots that dishonor Indigenous Peoples; Anti-Indian activities; Idle No More Rallies; blockades of mega-loads; pipeline marches; write letters in support of tribal efforts to stop fossil fuel extraction, transport across territories without consent and disrupting fishing and hunting at traditional territories, extraction and abuse of other natural resources on their sacred lands and in their sacred waters.

• **Be supportive:** write letters of support to Original Nations to newspapers; write letters of condolence when tragedy strikes; post information about Native issues on your Facebook pages.

**SPECIFIC LOCAL IDEAS:**

• How can your local community, county **honor the first inhabitants**? Create a proclamation signed by the mayors, county executives, city and county councilmen.

• **Is the local indigenous history accurately portrayed and understood?**

• Work with your City Council to **pass a resolution to change Columbus Day to Indigenous People’s Day.**

• **Provide space for:** indigenous performance, speakers, art exhibits, art sales, and fundraisers.
• **Send out a monthly “Native Events” emails** to interested individuals. It can include performances, art exhibits, workshops, speakers, films, and current events that call for action.

• **When appropriate read a statement acknowledging your indigenous neighbors** before a service, committee meeting, or large gathering that acknowledges your indigenous neighbors: *We acknowledge that this land is the traditional territory of the Lummi and Nooksack Peoples. Their presence is imbued in these mountains, valleys, waterways, and shorelines. May we nurture our relationship with our Coast Salish neighbors, and our shared responsibilities to this Place of their homelands where we mutually abide.*

• **Put up a plaque, engrave a stone, acknowledging the traditional territory of indigenous Nations and Peoples** near the entrance to your congregation acknowledging that the land where we sit and stand is the traditional territory of whatever indigenous peoples once held the land on which you meet.

• **Stand up for Treaty Rights of indigenous peoples** in regards to water, land, and cultural rights.

• **Nominate local Native Americans for recognition when opportunities arise:** Whatcom Dispute Resolution Center Peace Builders, Human Rights Awards, etc.

• **Request or Suggest Native American films for film or documentary festivals.**

• **Design and submit classes for community Lifelong Learning programs on indigenous topics of importance:** Sovereignty, Tribal Government, Education, Health, Natural Resources, History, etc. Do not speak on their behalf; find some from the Nation to speak. Your job is to facilitate not teach.

• **Work with other social justice, environmental, political and faith organizations** to see that Indigenous curriculum is part of Lifelong Learning in your congregation.

• **Seek participants from both the Native and Settler communities for a Cross Cultural Discussion group** (indigenous and settlers): articles, speakers, movies, topics of mutual interest, or discuss a particular book together.

• **Collect food, money, soaps and hygiene supplies for tribe’s food shelf or commodity program**

• **Write letters**
  - supporting the removal of all offensive sports logos
  - to Congress, supporting particular legislation
  - to State and Federal agencies, reminding them of their federal trust responsibilities

• **Write letters to the editor** bringing Native issues to the consciousness of the greater community

• **Work with religious educators** to see that Indigenous curriculum is part of Lifelong Learning in your congregation.

• **Acknowledge tragedies and cultural attacks with letters from the congregation and signed by members** (for example, shooting deaths by Tulalip High School student of six of his friends, and the picketing of the Native Cultural Center in Anchorage, AK, by Westboro Baptist Church)
CURRENT VITAL ACTION ISSUES

- **Environmental and Cultural Destruction**: Pipelines, mining, damming up rivers, Mt Top removal, environmental pollution, fracking, tar sands, coal mining, transport of fossil fuels, melting ice caps and glaciers, rising sea levels,

- **Oak Flats, Sacred Apache Land Grab** (There are sacred site issues all over this continent, from Hawaii, North to Alaska, the Northeast, the Southwest, the Northwest, and South America.)
  

CONTACTS and RESOURCES:

- **Bellingham Unitarian Fellowship’s Native American Connections Ministry Team**: http://naccatbuf.blogspot.com Beth Brownfield (Bellingham, WA) bethbrownf@aol.com. Deb Cruz dwcruz@comcast.net

- **Unitarian Universalist College of Social Justice**: http://uu.csj.org/first-nations-toolkit/ (First Nation’s Solidarity Toolkit), http://www.uuscj.org/

- **Commit2Respond**: http://www.commit2respond.org, actions in solidarity with Lummi Nation
  
  http://www.commit2respond.org/act_in_solidarity_with_lummi_nation

- **Unitarian Universalist Association**: Resources to support the repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery: http://www.uua.org/multiculturalism/dod

Media and Workshops

- **Indian Country Today Media Network**: http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com


- “**Roots of Injustice, Seeds of Change**.” A powerful 2-hour, experiential, workshop created by Paula Palmer, paularpalmer@gmail.com, 303 443-0402. Paula is presenting this workshop across the country, and is also training others to lead it.

ALLIANCES

- **Unist’ot’en Camp** www.unistotencamp.com

- **Idle No More** www.idlenomore.ca

- **Honor The Earth** http://www.honorearth.org

- **Pachamama Alliance** http://www.pachamama.org

- **Indigenous Environmental Network**: http://www.ienearth.org

- **Nawsamaat Alliance**: http://www.protectthesacred.org/nawtsamaat_is_born

UU CONGREGATIONS AND UU LEADERS WORKING ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES:

- **Bellingham Unitarian Fellowship Native American Connections Ministry Team** (Bellingham, WA) http://naccatbuf.blogspot.com, Beth Brownfield
This handout depicts the work BUF is doing with our Indigenous neighbors and beyond.

- **D.D. Hilke**, Executive Director of Northwest UU Justice Network. Network hub includes resources for NW UUs involved in First Nations issues. [www.nwuujn.org](http://www.nwuujn.org)
- **Jolinda Stephens**, Coordinator for WA UU Voices for Justice. Networking, support and resources for Washington State UUs involved in social and environmental justice issues, including support for First Nations’ issues. [www.nwuujn.org](http://www.nwuujn.org)
- **East Shore Unitarian Native American Social Justice & History Ministry Team** (Bellevue, WA): Kate Elliott, [ESUCNativeAmericanMinistry@googlegroups.com](mailto:ESUCNativeAmericanMinistry@googlegroups.com), 425-747-3780 Focus is to host other Native American heritage groups for gifting and culture sharing; Provide a positive environment for ongoing inter-actions between Elders, the people of East Shore and the broader community; Support the repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery & Washington State tribes in restoration/sustainment of Treaty rights with the US.
- **UU Church of Peoria, IL, Dave Weiman**, (309)264-3561, [daveweiman@comcast.net](mailto:daveweiman@comcast.net) Universalist Unitarian Church of Peoria sponsors the Council at Pimiteoui, an American Indian Interest Group which meets in the church and presents educational and ceremonial events at the church. These have included a Sunday Worship Service, Adult RE classes concerning the Peoria Nation at first encounter and the years through the War of 1812, and a pre-worship Gathering the first Sunday of the month. The church makes a statement of respect and honor for the Peoria Nation at the beginning of each Sunday Service, and there is a Peoria Nation Stone in our Memory Garden engraved with a commemoration to the Peoria’s ancestral land upon which we gather.
- **Kanenuiakea and First Unitarian Church of Honolulu:** Dr. George Williams, [georgewilliams2@mac.com](mailto:georgewilliams2@mac.com). On January 29, 2012, Hawaiian worshipers of the Kanenuiakea, a continuing, original Hawaiian faith, worshipped openly inside First Unitarian Church of Honolulu, sharing of values and prayers. Subsequently they become partners in religious dialogue to begin publicly worshipping and sharing each other’s faith. Together they have created what is called “ohana” (an extended family). The congregation has also created a Hawaiian values curriculum for the children and youth, and the congregation often sings songs in Hawaiian at services and social events. George Williams works with this as historian for the Koa Ike Foundation Preserving Hawaiian Religion and Culture. ([www.koaike.org](http://www.koaike.org))
- **Northwoods UU Fellowship, Brainerd/Pine River, MN: Mary DeYoung** [mjwallitt-deyoung@excite.com](mailto:mjwallitt-deyoung@excite.com). The Fellowship has been active on Native American issues for several years, and currently is working on Goodbye Columbus Minnesota, an effort to change Columbus Day to American Indian and Indigenous Peoples Day, state wide. We feel this will be a vehicle for addressing problems of a wider scope in our state, for education on pressing issues of poverty, racism, alcoholism, sex trade, drug...
trafficking, other social concerns. Another effort is working with Honor the Earth (Winona LaDuke’s organization) to oppose pipeline expansion in Minnesota, which is of environmental concern to the native population as well as the general public.

- **Port Townsend UU Fellowship: Rick Doherty, ricdoh@gmail.com, 206-409-4918**, Newly formed Native Peoples Connection. They have with Green Sanctuary awarded Port Jamestown S’Kallam, Port Gamble S’Klalam, and Elwha Kallam an Eco Hero award for what their ancestors and current members are doing to preserve the ecology of the Olympic Peninsula. Future plans center around supporting local Nations’ participation in the regional Canoe Journeys, and educating people in their congregation, local community, and region on indigenous issues.

- **UU Congregation of Whidbey Island, Freeland, WA. Gary Piazzon, piazzon@comcast.net, 360-678-5131.** UUCWI is committed to learning from and about the Native American experience to promote healing and mutual evolution towards right relationships. To that end, and to begin with, we are working towards incorporating an acknowledgement of prior occupation of Indigenous Peoples into the workings of the congregation. We are planning a forum to share the experiences of our spring intensive with Lummi Nation with the congregation in the Fall. Also in the fall we plan on showing the documentary of the 2014 Totem Pole Journey, Our Sacred Obligation, again in collaboration with the Island County Museum with an accompanying workshop.

- **UU Church of the Palouse, Boise Idaho Pat Rathman patty0727@hotmail.com, 208-882-8262.** Congregation is reading “An Indigenous Peoples’ History of the United States.” They are creating a cross-cultural discussion group with members of the Nimmipuu (Nez Perce) Nation, and are co-sponsors of the “Nimmipuu Protecting the Environment” which brings activists together on a quarterly basis.

- **Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Corvallis, Corvallis, Oregon, Jesse Ford, 541-929-4240, jesseisuu@gmail.com.** The Climate Justice Committee is supporting Lummi Nation’s efforts to stop the proposed coal terminal on their traditional territory. A successful service auction salmon dinner and discussion about the April UU College of Social Justice immersion experience at Lummi Nation looks like it may be inspiring an Indigenous Connections network.

- **Rev. Katherine Jesch, Community Minister, affiliated with 1st Unitarian Church of Portland, thjesch@earthlink.net, 503-758-6662:** program leader for UU College of Social Justice; working on Columbia River Treaty Advocacy.

**RECOMMENDED BOOKS** (So many books, so little time!)

- **An Indigenous Peoples’ History of the United States** (Beacon Press), Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz


- **Mayflower: A Story of Courage, Community, and War,** Nathanial Philbrick.

- **1491: New Revelations of the Americas Before Columbus,** Charles C. Mann.

- **The Man Who Planted Trees:** by the French writer Jean Giono

- **This Changes Everything:** by Naomi Klein.