



## NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: August 12, 2021

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### Who is doing dynamic work in the field of history? Washington State Historical Society reveals annual History Awards.

**Tacoma, WA** – Public history isn't a subject that garners a lot of news coverage, yet fascinating and important work in the field of history is happening all the time. Each year, the [Washington State Historical Society](#) makes a point of recognizing individuals who are advancing the field of history in the Evergreen State. The annual [History Awards](#) recognize fellow Washingtonians for their excellence in history research, teaching, publishing, and expanding the understanding of cultural diversity.

"The annual History Awards offer a point to review and reflect on important work that our colleagues and communities have undertaken," said WSHS Director Jennifer Kilmer. "We solicit nominations broadly and work with a committee to select awardees. We always look forward to sharing about the contributions of these folks." The seven awards have traditionally been presented to recipients at the WSHS annual meeting in the fall, but in 2020 the awards were presented virtually due to COVID, and the plan for this year is evolving. "Given the ongoing public health concerns, we are considering options to celebrate this year's award recipients. We will share an update on our website once we've finalized that," added Kilmer.

The 2021 History Awards recipients are:

**Robert Gray Medal – Dr. Bill Baarsma, President – Tacoma Historical Society Board**, in recognition of his significant, long-term contributions to the study and teaching of Pacific Northwest history. The Robert Gray Medal is the highest award bestowed by the WSHS. Bill Baarsma's contributions have included an active role in saving historic Union Station and the Murray Morgan Bridge in Tacoma, as well as widely sharing his passion for local history with diverse audiences, and leading the Tacoma Historical Society Board. From a nomination letter: "Among his passions is the history of his native city of Tacoma. He has delivered a myriad of public lectures about the City of Destiny, and since 2013 he has guided the Tacoma Historical Society to new levels of stability, professionalism and civic engagement. In this time he has been a voice for cultural diversity, through promoting an inclusive board and notably through his role in Tacoma's Chinese Reconciliation Park Project."

**David Douglas Award – Brad Richardson, Clark County Historical Museum**. This award honors the significant contribution of an individual or an organization through projects, exhibits, publications, educational products, or other vehicle which informs or expands our appreciation of Washington State history during the year. Nominators spoke to Richardson's leadership and the museum's continued community engagement throughout the pandemic: "When the museum was shuttered, the work was not. The staff worked tirelessly to ensure that exhibits were virtually available; educational efforts continued; and outreach to the community did not stop."

**Governor's Award for Teaching – Leslie Heffernan, Central Valley School District-Spokane, and Lane Sample, Fort Nisqually Living History Education Program Coordinator**. This award was established by the Washington State Legislature and recognizes outstanding contribution by a teacher of

Pacific Northwest history in an accredited K-12 school in Washington or a non-profit organization in Washington.

Nominators lauded Leslie Heffernan as an exceptional teacher who has advanced social studies education through numerous avenues. To describe just one of her endeavors, “Leslie has created additional inquiry units for Pacific Northwest history that are now available as open educational resources for the entire state . . . Of special importance, Leslie has built on this effort over the past five years by collaborating with members of the Spokane Tribe of Indians. Working together, they have created units of study that integrate knowledge of the Spokane Tribe that is accurate and culturally responsive; these units of study provide local, place-based academic content for Washington State and Pacific Northwest history.

Lane Sample received nominations describing her creative and inclusive teaching practices, and her ability to educate people of all ages. “Lane is truly an innovative educator, who always finds unique, eye catching, soul reaching ways to inspire learning – while at the same time individuals have so much fun that they often do not realize that they’ve been ‘learned.’”

**Peace and Friendship Award – Celeste Dybeck, Jamestown S’Klallam, Native Connections Action Group, and David Toledo, author and enrichment program instructor.** This award is presented to a Native American and a second individual, each of whom have advanced public understanding of the cultural diversity of the peoples of Washington State.

Celeste Dybeck received the award for her work on the [čičmehán Trail](#) in Port Townsend. A nomination describe the impact of this work: “The story of the čičmehán Trail is a powerful example of what can happen when Native history is prioritized and valued within the larger context of government-to-government relations and community activism. Celeste’s work with the Native Connections Action Group of the Quimper Unitarian Universalist Fellowship created a lasting legacy in Port Townsend, and I have already witnessed scores of visitors to the Trail and increased awareness of S’Klallam history and culture in myriad ways. This cannot be understated. The Trail is not just about S’Klallam history; it is also about the ongoing relations between the S’Klallam and other Native peoples on the Peninsula to a settler culture that is growing and expanding in the present.”

David Toledo has built unique programs that educate underserved youth in Seattle, and his book [Skin, Bone, and Fat Laces: Race, Culture, and Community in Seattle](#) was the first novel focusing on the history of Seattle’s hip hop culture. As noted in a nomination, “David Toledo has a lifelong history of actively building bridges between cultures, communities, races, and economic status.” Toledo was further described as an administrator who builds programs that attract and retain a diverse group of leaders, teachers, and students, and a teacher who builds inspired curriculum for ESL, low-income, and special needs youth, using traditional and contemporary arts to provide equal access and equity. In 1998, Toledo helped to establish the [Unified Outreach](#) youth arts program to serve children in transitional housing shelters; today, Unified Outreach is one of the most diverse programs serving Seattle, with a board comprised of more than 70% people of color and over 50% identifying as women. He has actively recruited instructors and students from Seattle's most underserved areas.

**Charles Gates Award – Madison Heslop** for the journal article *Linking Violence Across the Pacific: The B-29 Superfortress in Seattle’s and Tokyo’s Urban Landscape*, published in *PNQ* Winter 2019-2020. This award recognizes the most significant achievement among all articles published in the University of Washington’s [Pacific Northwest Quarterly](#) during the previous year.

**John McClelland Award – Jo Miles** for the article *Written Under Duress: The Abduction of Involuntary Scribe Frederick White*, published in *COLUMBIA* Winter 2020-2021. This award recognizes the best article published in [COLUMBIA Magazine](#), the quarterly journal of the Washington State Historical Society, during the previous year. The article will exhibit the readability and general interest that typifies *COLUMBIA*.

The **R. Lorraine Wojahn Award** for outstanding volunteer service at the Washington State Historical Society is posthumously awarded to Henry “Hank” Fenbert. Hank passed away suddenly in November 2020, “leaving a large hole in the heart of the WSHS volunteers, especially the close-knit Friday volunteer team.” For 24 years, Hank shared his genial personality and encyclopedic memory with Washington State History Museum visitors. His ease in talking with strangers about anything that interested them made him an excellent ambassador, and he had an incalculable impact in the history community.

The 2021 History Awards review committee was chaired by John Hughes, chief historian for Washington’s Office of the Secretary of State, and included Robert Carriker, professor emeritus of history at Gonzaga University; Michael Finley, tribal liaison at the Washington State Historical Society; Jerri Honeyford, chair of the Washington State Heritage Barn Committee; Stephanie Johnson-Toliver, president of the Black Heritage Society of Washington State; John Larson, director of the Polson Museum; and Michael Sullivan, principal and historian at Artifacts.

Find out more about the Washington State Historical Society and the History Awards at [www.WashingtonHistory.org](http://www.WashingtonHistory.org).

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### **About The Washington State Historical Society and History Museum**

The Washington State Historical Society partners with our communities to explore how history connects us all. The Society’s most visible activity, the Washington State History Museum is located in downtown Tacoma on Pacific Avenue among a thriving cultural scene. The museum features interactive permanent exhibitions about Washington’s past in the Great Hall, unique rotating exhibitions highlighting the Society’s collections, and dynamic feature exhibitions, and hosts events and programs on a wide range of historical topics. The WSHS also offers curriculum, downloadable exhibitions, and statewide educational support as well as consultation, support and resources for museums and heritage organizations across the state.

**Address:** 1911 Pacific Avenue, Tacoma, WA 98402

**Hours:** 10:00 AM–5:00 PM Tues.-Sun. Third Thursday of each month, 10:00 AM–8:00 PM.

**Admission:** [FREE for members](#); Adults \$14; seniors (age 65+), students (age 6-17) and military (with ID) \$11; free for children 5 and under; family rate \$40 (up to two adults and four children under age 18). Patrons with a [Washington Quest card](#) and licensed Washington Foster Parents can attend for \$1 per person or \$2 per family. FREE for active duty military and up to 5 family members with ID as part of Blue Star Museums, through September 5, 2021.