



Promoting and nurturing early learning communities where families and children thrive.

## EQUITY, INCLUSION AND RACIAL JUSTICE WINTER 2024

*Kind and compassionate service to others*

### A MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

As you may have noticed, our EIRJ work as an agency has been on a pause. A number of factors led to this. We heard from staff that there was an interest in having some of our all staff training meetings focused on other topics; two of the four sub-groups completed their work; many of the staff that were leading various portions of the EIRJ work had an increase in new work assignments for their jobs and had to step away from leading aspects of the projects; and finally many staff were feeling the effort wasn't as impactful as they would like. Some of the concerns around impact centered around the content not being tailored to where individuals were in their personal journey and others felt that there was a push for everyone to have the exact same ways of approaching every issue.

I mentioned in the last newsletter the idea of conducting a survey in the fall to help us determine future direction. As I considered this, I realized that a survey probably wouldn't give us the level of detailed information we need to move forward. What I'd like to do instead is enter into a process of envisioning what we would like our agency to do in a second phase of EIRJ work.

Our Leadership Team will be reaching out to everyone to see who might be interested in helping to design the process we use to gain information and to set our future direction. In the meantime, I hope that you will take advantage of the resource libraries and explore other avenues for continuing your personal journey to support equity, inclusion and racial justice.

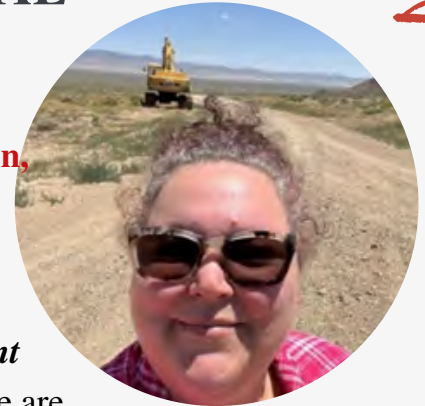
*Dary Bernis*

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE



- [Get to Know Heidi DeVries](#)
- [Belonging at Work: The Missing Link to Diversity and Inclusion in the Workplace](#)
- [Cultivate Belonging](#)
- [Winter's Gifts](#)
- [Tribal Resources](#)
- [Who is my neighbor, who belongs?](#)
- [Let's Talk Series: YWCA](#)

## GET TO KNOW **HEIDI DEVRIES**, CCAC INFANT FAMILY SPECIALIST AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATOR



“**What are three of your values related to your work with children, families, and your community?**

“My values are *relationships*, because this is the foundation of everything, of everything we do and who we are. *Listening, active listening* because this is how we learn and understand. *Being present with others* because this is how we are attuned to one another. These are my values. If something is not aligned to my values, then I pass on it and I move towards where I can live my values.”

**How can you improve your most important relationship, the relationship you have with yourself?**

“I pay attention to myself, taking care of my needs, I schedule time for myself to do the hard work of listening to my feelings, understanding my triggers, knowing my body cues. If I feel triggered, I have a plan to manage myself through reflection and self-care. I have self-respect and attending to self-care is how I nurture myself.”

**How do you make a difference and inspire others to make a difference?**

I make a difference when my work aligns with my values and goals, of being part of trusting relationships, of listening to understand, and to being fully present in the moment with others. I can inspire others by having curiosity about a person’s hopes and dreams and then reflecting back to them their possibilities so they can become their best selves.



**Staying connected to others in healthy relationships at work and in your personal life leads to resilience and healing. How do you stay connected with friends, family, and coworkers?**

“Because I am an introverted person, I must intentionally practice staying connected. I do this through finding commonalities with others. I have a small circle of family and friends and in this way, I can have balance between my need for alone time and my need for connection with cohesive community.”

**What do you do to manage stress in your life?**

“I take time out and schedule spending time in nature, healing spaces I call them. I enjoy art; painting, woodworking, photography, rock collecting and jewelry making. I find stress relief through creativity. I see my therapist when I need to, and this is also an important way to work through stress.”

**What does justice and mercy mean to you? What would a world of justice and mercy look like?**

“Justice is a wrong corrected. Mercy is compassion. A world of justice and mercy is a world where we are allowed to make mistakes, we are given grace, and we give grace to others; this is how we become better.”

**Imagine yourself many years in the future. What advice would your future self give your present self?**



“The advice I would give myself is to do the hard work now and not wait. I would tell myself that I have the capacity to do the hard work. I would tell myself that I have something to impart, to give, and to contribute. What I have to give and contribute is that I am supportive, that I support teachers to be healthier and happier, I support the mental health of children, families, and teachers. I would advise myself to advocate for more mental health consultation, and for teachers and all of us to be able to share our stories.

An important thing I contribute is that - *I am a person who you can trust to care about you.*”

**Is there someone you need to forgive (no names)? How do you go about forgiving?**

I talk through a situation and try to seek repair in the relationship. Forgiveness is a dual responsibility. It is important to be able to forgive yourself too, so I work through carrying this emotional load. My mother used to say, “Forgive but don’t forget”, I am still working through what that means for me.”

***Belonging at Work: The Missing Link to Diversity and Inclusion in the Workplace*** article selection by Debbie Roberts

In the article below, *The Value of Belonging at Work*, by Evan Carr, Andrew Reece, Gabriella Rosen, and Alexi Robichaux, highlights research on how inclusion causes increased productivity and teamwork, while decreasing absenteeism. While a lack of belonging and exclusion takes the form of discreet manipulation and passive micro-aggressions, belonging is the cornerstone of an inclusive agency and workplace. Click on the button to learn more about how to support a sense of belonging and inclusivity at work.



[FULL ARTICLE >](#)



## *Cultivating Belonging through Meditation*

To nurture yourself and cultivate a sense of belonging try guided meditation with **Dr. Allison Briscoe-Smith**. Follow the link below to get started:

[MEDITATION](#) >



*Who makes me feel like I belong?*

*What did they do to make me feel like I belong?*

*Bring these people to mind, how did you feel about yourself around them?*

## *Children's Book and Poem Recommendations* by Melinda Luark

U.S Poet Laureate Joy Harjo's poem reminds us to pause and reflect on the wonder of the world in which we live. She and illustrator Michaela Goade collaborated to create a children's book called *Remember* that captures the beauty of the wonder of the world around us and the importance of their place in it.



[BUY BOOK](#) >



[READ ALOUD](#) >



Remember the sky that you were born under, know each of the star's stories.

Remember the moon, know who she is.

Remember the sun's birth at dawn, that is the strongest point of time.

Remember sundown and the giving away tonight.

Remember your birth, how your mother struggled to give you form and breath.

You are evidence of her life, and her mother's, and hers.

Remember your father. He is your life, also.

Remember the earth whose skin you are: red earth, black earth, yellow earth, white earth, brown earth, we are earth.

Remember the plants, trees, animal life who all have their tribes, their families, their histories, too.

Talk to them, listen to them. They are alive poems.

Remember the wind.

Remember her voice. She knows the origin of this universe.

Remember you are all people and all people are you.

Remember you are this universe and this universe is you.

Remember all is in motion, is growing, is you.

Remember language comes from this.

Remember the dance language is, that life is.

Remember.



## *Winter's Gifts by author Katlin Curtice and Illustrated by Gloria Félix.*

I chose this children's book to celebrate the transition between fall season into winter...the gifts of rest and waiting. It's a real time of change in the fall to an even slower pace where we have the opportunity to go within and slow down even more like nature shows us how. "Even the bears rest in winter," reads author Curtice.



It struck me when I first heard this children's book how Dani, the little girl in the story, chooses to be brave and speak up to her school friends to share her perspective (beliefs) about nature. She has grown over time a relationship with Nature and about Mother Creator that she learned growing up in her family. She shares by storytelling to her friends her relationship with Nature and Creator. She risks sharing her songs and stories about winter's gifts at the risk of being laughed at or misunderstood. Although at first, her school friends laughed at her sharing that her family (protective factor) is there for her to help her understand. Later, she risks again and some of her friends are kind. They are tender by responding with curiosity and listen to the song from her dream. A few of her school friends stay present for her sharing. By showing Dani they care about what she has to say, her friends help her feel a belonging in her community. Creator's gift of gratitude can transform the way we see the world.

Also, I love words and the power of words. I love how author Curtice intentionally uses her indigenous language interspersed through the book, sharing her personal indigenous tribal language.



### *Storybook Curriculum Activity for Winter's Gifts: Thankfulness for Our Earth by Debbie Roberts*



#### **Content Areas:**

- Earth Sciences ~ *Learning About My World*
- Language Arts and Literacy ~ *Communicating*
- Visual and Performing Arts ~ *Learning About My World*

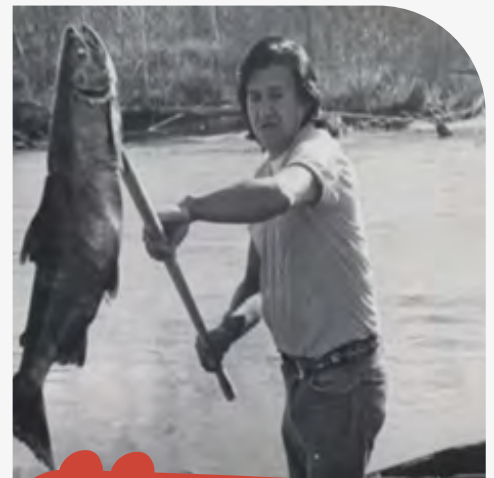
1. Nature Walk to collect beautiful items from Nature
2. Discuss, draw, dictate what children say about what they have found on their nature walk. Ask what children like about their found items. Discuss why we are grateful for our earth and sky. For older children in small groups, teachers may want to use modeled writing to list the items found on the walk.
3. Sing *Thankful for Our Earth* Song: (to the tune of “*If You Are Happy and You Know It*”) about the found natural items and our earth and sky.

Example below:

- a. “If you’re thankful for your pinecones, show your pinecones.”
  - b. “If You’re thankful for your rocks, show your rocks”.
  - c. “If you’re thankful for your leaves, and you really want to show it, if you are thankful for your leaves show your leaves.
  - d. If you’re thankful for the sky, kiss the sky
  - e. If you’re thankful for the clouds, kiss the clouds,
  - f. If you’re thankful for the earth, say, “I am thankful for the earth!”
  - g. If you’re thankful for the earth, say, “I AM! – I Am!
4. Take a walk to a favorite tree. Children bring along their found items from the nature walk.
    - a. Children can donate their found items to the favorite tree (like a tree alter).
    - b. Children can hold hands, making a circle around the tree and can sing the Thankful for Our Earth song (above).

## *The Leadership of First Nations and Washington State Tribes* by Shelly Knight

I love working with tribal nations and peoples. It brings me back to my roots, which were so far removed from me when I was growing up. I enjoy collaborating with other Coaches and Leads to gain more insight into Washington tribes and Early Learning programs on tribal lands. I collect and share resources to help all of us working with Indigenous people. Our work is relational and sometimes cannot be measured with the impact we actually have. Therefore, I really enjoyed being a part of the physical Land Acknowledgment displays in each of our offices. I can look at it and feel like I accomplished something important!



**“It’s all of us together that will turn the tide for salmon.”**  
– Billy Frank Jr.

Another thing that especially moves me is about salmon in the Puget Sound. The video below features the Nisqually river, and the Tulalip tribes work to save the salmon and native fishing culture and connection to the ecosystem.

[WATCH VIDEO](#)



## *Tribal PLC Web Resources*

[DCYF](#)



[Tribal Relations | Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families](#)

[ACTIVITIES](#)



[Native American Heritage Month Resources for Preschool Teachers](#)

[BOOKS](#)



- [Diverse BookFinder | Identify & Explore Multicultural Picture Books](#)
- [Kids & Educational Resources - Indigenous Designed - Native Northwest](#)
- [Where to Find Diverse Books](#)
- [American Indians in Children's Literature \(AICL\): Best Books](#)

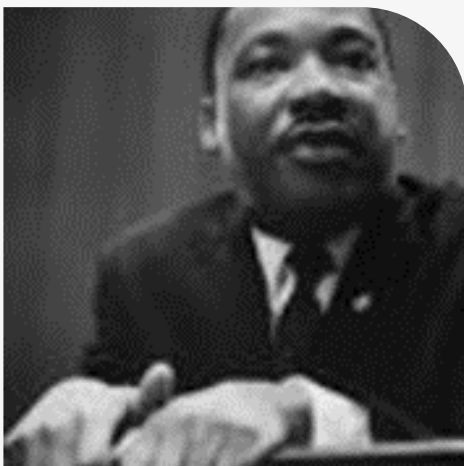
[VIDEOS](#)



[Restoring the Circle: Pediatric Nutrition Education](#)

[Back To The River - Salmon Defense](#)

## *National Day of Racial Healing*



On Monday, January 15th we celebrated the birthday of Martin Luther King Jr. This is generally a day where many Americans work in their communities to support racial justice and equity. Tuesday, January 16th was The National Day of Racial Healing, sponsored by the Kellogg Foundation. To learn more about the National Day of Racial Healing click the button below.

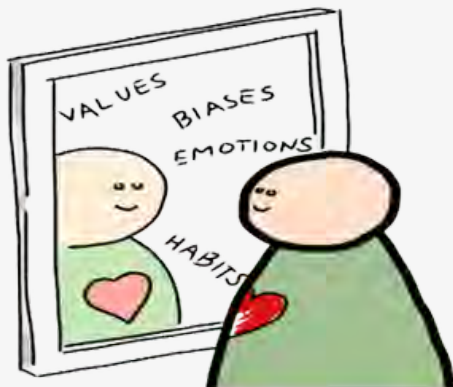
[FULL ARTICLE](#)



## Who is my neighbor, Who belongs?

by Debbie Roberts

I am struggling. Struggling to come to terms with what is difficult to admit, but my ideas about class and belonging are in conflict. How can I let go of judgement and live compassionately and empathetically when my own hypocrisy is in my face, everyday? I like to think of myself as a person who advocates for the houseless, the marginalized, and oppressed groups. I am an ally; I think to myself, and I feel proud.



### Practice Self-Awareness

Who we are determines how we design. Looking in the "mirror" reveals what we see, how we relate, and how our perspectives impact our practice.

Two weeks ago, two adult children of my neighbors moved back home – they moved an RV onto their property along a long gravel road which leads to my driveway.

The irony is that I have my own adult children who need mine and my husband's help many times with housing, car repairs, food, etc. My hypocrisy is so blatant.

I could not ignore it and remain feeling "proud" of my humanitarian ideals. Life has a way of teaching us what we need to learn, and mistakes are the best teachers.

So, life requires that I assign myself:

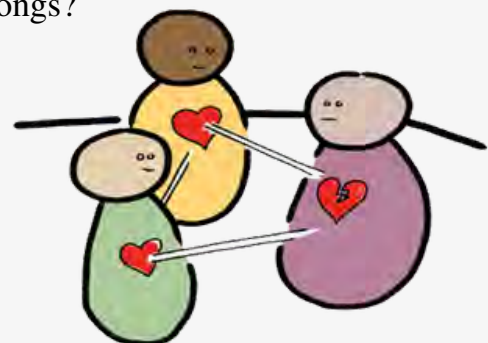
**Step 1**, I am admitting my failings to be more compassionate.

**Step 2**, Understand the causes of such despair and stop blaming the victims of grinding poverty. There are so many people living on the streets that they all can't be at fault; asking what happened to them is a better question than assigning blame.

**Step 3**, Forgive myself my failings and move forward with living compassion. How can I begin to welcome my new neighbors?

Yesterday, Amazon delivered a package to my door meant for the neighbors, so I walked over to deliver it. There I met the little daughter who lives in the RV with her mom and dad. They were getting ready to go visit Santa.

I know I will make mistakes, but I am going to get started doing a better job living my values. Who is my neighbor, who belongs?



### Build Relational Trust

Invest in relationships with intention, especially across difference. Honor stories. Practice empathetic listening.



## LET'S TALK SERIES:

### *A Sense of Community and Belonging through Dialogue*



The YWCA in Olympia has been leading community discussions for several years now on topics meant to bring communities together, while at the same time, helping us all understand how to support inclusion. Workshops are both in person and online. Click on the icon to learn more about the *LET'S TALK Series*.

### IN-PERSON WORKSHOPS:

#### Lets Talk History of Racism

February 22nd, 2024 | 6pm-8pm

*Join us in Friendship Hall to discuss the history of racism as we know it*

#### Lets Talk White Supremacy

March 28th, 2024 | 6pm-8pm

*Join us in Friendship Hall to discuss white supremacy culture and what we can do to combat it*

#### Lets Talk Race and Class

April 25, 2024 | 6pm-8pm

*Join us in Friendship Hall to discuss race and class and how the two are interlinked*

### ON-LINE WORKSHOPS:

#### Lets Talk History of Racism

February 13, 2024 | 6pm-8pm

*Join us online for a history of racism as we know it*

#### Let's Talk White Supremacy Culture

March 12, 2024 | 6pm-8pm

*Join us online to discuss white supremacy and how it affects our everyday life and how to combat it*

#### Lets Talk Race and Class

April 9, 2024 | 6pm-8pm

*Join us online for workshop talking about the intersections of race and class*

## *Life is Beautiful & Life is Wonderous*

Listen to the song by Keb'Mo to uplift your spirit and inspire you to live beautifully.

