

Registration is Open for “A Return to the Earth” Webinar Series!

(Register [here](#))



As a way to deepen our own understanding of indigenous rights, history, and culture, and to offer educational opportunities to our Meeting and other interested islanders, the Indigenous Rights Action Committee (IRAC) of the Lopez Island Friends Meeting (Quakers), invites you to join us for a unique 4-week experience this October.

Indigenous storyteller, poet, and retired university professor, Dr. Nia To Go There, will guide us through her webinar series entitled “A Return To The Earth.” Nia is an award-winning educator, whose university courses had a two-year waiting list and whose warm, interactive teaching style weaves music, art, and poetry into the material. Her bio in a recent YouTube video (which you can see [here](#)) described her this way: “In acknowledgment of her name, ‘To Go There’ (Ketoteyin), Nia is a sojourner, intent on making visible the web of relations within which we live. Nia grew up on Turtle Mountain Reservation in North Dakota. Her tribal ancestry is Cree. She has dedicated the past 30 years to rediscovering the ancient teachings and cultural practices of her Indigenous ancestors.”

This webinar series is organized into four modules, covering the following themes:

1. how cultural perceptions affected our ancestors and affect us today;
2. the worldview of indigenous cultures in North America and how seeing with a “Native eye” changes our perception of the world and our own culture;

3. the history and culture of colonialism and the impact it has had on both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples; and
4. practices of “decolonization” and connection with the Earth that can help heal the traumatic effects of colonialism and bring us into right relationship with each other and the planet.

Each week, participants will watch one of Nia’s recorded video presentations on their own, and at the end of the week, we’ll have a *live and interactive* zoom session with her, in which she’ll answer questions and lead a discussion of the content.

The live zoom sessions with Nia will take place **every Monday evening in October (October 5, 12, 19 and 26) at 7pm** and last 60-90 minutes. One week before each live session (starting on September 28), you’ll receive a link to the video module to watch *before* the live session, a short text (6-10 pages) to read that goes with the video, and a link to the live session.

At the end of the series, you’ll be invited to an in-person gathering/potluck on Lopez – tentatively scheduled for **November 14th at 11:00 a.m.** – where we’ll process what we’ve learned together and consider what further steps we may feel led to take, either individually or as a community.

Friends, we hope you will join us for this exciting opportunity!

Click [here](#) to register. Registration for this amazing series is being offered on a “pay as you’re led” basis with a recommendation of \$20-\$50. These funds will be used to compensate Dr. To Go There for her time and to support future educational programming from IRAC. The presentation slides, the readings, and recordings of all four live sessions will be yours to keep. **Registration will close on September 23.**

Below is a more detailed description of the four modules, from the website of Toward Right Relationship with Native Peoples, a project of Friends Peace Teams.

If you have any questions, please email Darcy Leach at darcykl@umich.edu.

In Peace,

The Indigenous Rights Action Committee,
Lopez Island Friends Meeting

MODULE ONE: CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES

Module One defines culture and expands and elaborates upon cultural perceptions as they relate to our personal lives and the lives of our ancestors and how that affects us today.

We will probe deeply into common and personal landscapes of culture and what this means as we move toward being decolonized people. As human beings we mirror each other and long to connect, to interact, to create relationship with, to live with a sense of belonging and a sense of shared “commons,” a place where we fully realize that “other” is essential for self-fulfillment as a human being. We need each other.

As we move into relationships, we come to understand the cultural lens through which we see the world. How a person sees the world is how a person acts toward the world.

MODULE TWO: SEEING WITH A NATIVE EYE

Module Two elaborates on the worldview and ceremonial practices of the Indigenous cultures in North America.

For the Native People, the world was seen as being in constant motion and flux. Everything was animated and imbued with spirit, consisting of energy waves, and a myriad of interrelationships.

Philosophically, they would be in total agreement with the quantum world and would have no problem with the biocentric view of the world, meaning that their participative role in shaping the cosmos was innate to their sense of self. They saw creation as a continuous process and saw themselves as participant-observers. Different words were used to describe this universal energy shared by everyone/everything. For this reason, an individual sense of self was not distinct from the animate universe but, rather, each person was integral to all human experience. (See *The Sixth Grandfather: Black Elk's Teachings Given to John G. Neihardt*, edited by Raymond J. DeMallie, 1984, University of Nebraska Press, p. 81.)

MODULE THREE: COLONIZATION

Module three focuses on colonization as cultural hegemony. This cultural dominance leads to “power over” other cultures and manifests as collective trauma shared by all of humanity today.

We will discuss how colonization was not a one-time event that happened to Indigenous People only, but it was a gradual process of shifting perspectives that emerged into a cultural worldview of hierarchical privilege where some human beings were dominant over other human beings and

other life forms. Colonization and fascism share foundational similarities rooted in systems of hierarchy, exploitation, and violence, particularly concerning the concepts of race, territory, and authoritarian control.

We will also discuss how this colonial culture has led to a profound loss of a sense of place, loss of a sense of community, and loss of self-identity and purpose. These are all earmarks of collective trauma. These scars appear as fractures in the social fabric of society itself. The hallmarks of collective trauma are evident in our healthcare systems, governments, and other cultural, civil, and social bodies.

MODULE FOUR: DECOLONIZATION

Module four addresses DECOLONIZATION as a transformation back to a deep and profound sense of connection to all aspects of the natural world. It requires a shift in consciousness.

As Einstein famously said, “A problem cannot be solved from the consciousness that created it.” Such a worldview shift transforms underlying beliefs and informs values we live and lead by. This sense of interconnectedness is not alien to us, it feels like a homecoming. We have felt moments of this connectedness in our lives when we feel love and aliveness – a heart-felt sense of being aligned, present and true in the moment. If we consider the last 300,000 years, it is astonishing to learn that 94% of the time *human beings viewed all of nature as sacred and interconnected*. They were immersed in the understanding that nothing is separate, that when *we harm one aspect of the world out there, it affects all of us. We ask, is it time to return to our original “story?”*