



Summer 2019

Window: The Magazine of Western Washington University, 2019, Volume 11, Issue 03

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Recommended Citation

Gallagher, Mary Lane and Office of University Communications and Marketing, Western Washington University, "Window: The Magazine of Western Washington University, 2019, Volume 11, Issue 03" (2019). *Window Magazine*. 23.
https://cedar.wvu.edu/window_magazine/23

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WESTERN WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

WINDOW

THE UNIVERSITY MAGAZINE

SUMMER 2019



Hometown
Love

A piece of the sky

Renowned artist Sarah Sze came to Western in May for the unveiling of the university's newest sculpture, Sze's "Split Stone (Northwest)."

The work is a single boulder, split in half, like two halves of an open geode. On the interior surfaces are photographic images of the sky at sunset, constructed from fragments of color incised into the cut face of the stone. The images on the two surfaces mirror each other, as if the boulder's core held the fixed image of the sky.

Youngsters from Western's AS Child Development Center, who were studying rocks and pebbles, had the honor of officially unveiling the work.

Sze, who was awarded a MacArthur Fellowship in 2003 and represented the U.S. at the Venice Biennale in 2013, is a professor of visual arts at Columbia University. Her work has been exhibited in museums around the world.

AS Child Development Center kids Nox Tuigamala, Ivie Gilbert, and Calder Amos remove the coverings from "Split Stone (Northwest)" during the sculpture's unveiling ceremony in May. Watching are Uzma Randhawa, Early Childhood Education student Emma Shaul, sculptor Sarah Sze, Western Gallery Director Hafthor Yngvason, and WWU President Sabah Randhawa.

Photo by Rhys Logan, '11





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On the cover: ODESZA, the final act in the Double Major concert, wows Civic Field. By **Rhys Logan**, '11, visual journalism.



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Message

from the President

Transformative cultural change requires us to learn from past mistakes

"History, despite its wrenching pain, cannot be unlived, but if faced with courage, need not be lived again."

-Maya Angelou

Over the last year, Western's campus community engaged in important and difficult conversations, as students rightly questioned Western's commitment to living up to our stated values of inclusive success, diversity and equity in our policies and practices, and respect for the dignity of all. College campuses—Western is no exception—are being challenged to improve their response to issues of social justice, equity, and the safety and wellbeing of all their communities. While transformative culture change is an essentially forward-looking process, it cannot succeed without an honest acknowledgment of the mistakes and injustices of the past. This issue of Window profiles two steps of this kind taken in the last year.

The first was establishing a new Office of Tribal Relations and hiring Laural Ballew as Western's first Executive Director of American Indian/Alaska Native and First Nations Relations and Tribal Liaison to the President, with the goal of enhancing Western's relationships with local and statewide tribal communities and increasing access and success for Native American students. Western has also recently adopted a tribal lands acknowledgement statement for use at official university functions, recognizing the fact that Western resides on the ancestral homelands of the Coast Salish Peoples.

The second significant acknowledgment of our history happened at spring commencement, when Western conferred an honorary baccalaureate degree upon James K. Okubo, apparently the only Japanese American student enrolled at Western Washington State College in 1942 when 120,000 West Coast Japanese Americans—including citizens—were incarcerated by Executive Order 9066. From the Tule Lake War Relocation Camp in California, Mr. Okubo volunteered to be a medic in the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, and subsequently received the Silver Star and the Medal of Honor for extraordinary valor during World War II. While he passed away in a car accident in the late 1960's his family was present at spring commencement to receive the degree that should rightly have been his nearly 80 years ago.

While Western still has a long way to go in achieving our equity and inclusion goals, I am encouraged by our progress, and convinced that genuine and lasting culture change requires the courage to face our collective history. I am grateful to everyone at Western who had the courage to engage in these conversations over the last year, and look forward to continuing the critical work of creating an environment where we come together around our shared humanity, where we value the dignity of each individual, and where we can discuss these complex issues with respect and humility.

Sabah Randhawa



Photo by Rhys Logan, '11



WINDOW

The magazine of Western Washington University

Vol. 11 No. 3 Summer 2019

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Window is published three times a year for alumni and friends of Western
Washington University by the Office of University Communications and
Marketing, 516 High St., Bellingham, WA, 98225-9011 (360) 650-3350

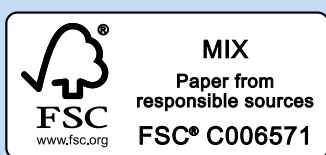
Send change-of-address requests to:

Western Washington University
University Advancement – Constituent Records
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Window magazine editor Mary Gallagher took her WWU water bottle to Athabasca Glacier in the Canadian Rockies on her summer vacation in 2018. Share your WWU gear on vacation on Instagram with #Westerninthewild.

Where in the world will you take WWU?

Are you heading out on vacation this summer and taking your WWU regalia? Take the rest of us along.

Snap a photo of yourself or your loved ones wearing WWU gear while on vacation and share it on Instagram with the hashtag #Westerninthewild.

Then search for #Westerninthewild on Instagram to see where your fellow alumni are traveling these days.

Western junior runs after world record in full firefighting gear

Kinesiology junior **James Jasperson's** 6 ½- minute mile in firefighting gear and breathing equipment may have been the most excruciating mile he ever ran, but it was for a good cause—and a world record.

Jasperson's four laps on the outdoor track at Western's Wade King Student Recreation Center June 11 raised funds for Four Season Fighters, a non-profit that provides outdoor recreational opportunities to wounded veterans, firefighters and police officers.

Jasperson, a volunteer firefighter with the South Lake Whatcom Fire Authority near Bellingham, wore about 55 pounds of equipment, including steel-toed boots with one-inch rubber soles and a self-contained breathing apparatus mask and tank.

He raised enough to take a double-amputee veteran out on a bow hunting trip, he reported on his Instagram page after completing the run in 6:33.28.

"That may have been the most uncomfortable six and a half minutes of my running career," he said.



A distance runner on Western's track and field team, Jasperson already holds the world's fastest time for running a mile in firefighter gear without the breathing equipment, at 5 minutes, 51 seconds.



Courtesy of South Whatcom Fire Authority

Small Business Development Center Opens on Kitsap Peninsula

A Small Business Development Center (SBDC) hosted by Western Washington University and located at the Kitsap Regional Library in Poulsbo is now open and accepting clients.

SBDC programs offer a range of services to help small businesses grow and prosper, such as one-on-one confidential business counseling and low- or no-cost training programs on topics including business planning, accessing capital, marketing, technology development, international trade and much more.

Helping launch this new center is returning WWU employee and longtime SBDC Certified Business Adviser Kevin Hoult, MBA. Serving in five Western Washington counties, Hoult has helped hundreds of businesses overcome roadblocks, take control of operations and enter new markets.

The new SBDC will operate in partnership with WWU's Whatcom County SBDC office, which is the state's largest such program.

Learn more at sbdc.wwu.edu/kitsap.

Western students win pair of ultra-competitive scholarships

Spring is “Scholarship Season” at Western, as students find out if they have been awarded the national scholarships and fellowships for which they have applied.

But this spring has been different, as two students have been awarded a pair of ultracompetitive scholarships putting WWU in extremely rarified company. Junior biology major and member of the Honors Program **Darby Finnegan** received Western’s first Barry Goldwater Scholarship since 2007 and junior Environmental Science major **Risa Askerooth** was awarded the first Udall Scholarship in more than a decade.

Finnegan’s incredibly competitive \$7,500 Goldwater scholarship is awarded to college sophomores and juniors who intend to pursue research careers in the natural sciences, mathematics and engineering, and is given to fewer than 10 percent of students who even qualify for the rigorous application process.

Finnegan, a native of Grangeville, Idaho, who will complete a research project this summer exploring how rising carbon dioxide levels may change the swimming mechanics of rainbow trout, said she was honored by the Goldwater award, and surprised.

“Then I was overwhelmed with gratitude,” she says, “both for the scholarship itself and for everyone who helped make it possible.”

Askerooth, a native of Haleiwa, Hawaii, was among five students from Western who were awarded a NOAA Hollings Scholarship last spring, when she also received an honorable mention for the Udall award. So she knew the \$7,000 scholarship, awarded to college sophomores and juniors who show public service, leadership, and commitment to issues related to Native American nations or the environment, was within reach.

Associate Professor of Environmental Sciences Jim Helfield, who wrote a letter in support of Askerooth’s application, said he was not surprised by her success.

“It gives me great comfort to know that she is one of the people who will be working on solutions for our environmental problems in the future,” Helfield says.

Askerooth said her upcoming senior year will be a busy one, and while graduate school looms she knows her focus will remain rooted in environmental stewardship.



Darby Finnegan



Risa Askerooth

“I definitely want to keep working on issues related to natural resource management, such as working to preserve native or endangered species in Washington or elsewhere along the coast,” she said.

Western returns to Bellingham's Memorial Day Parade

More than 100 students strolled, danced, motorcycled and light-sabered their way through Bellingham for the Whatcom Memorial Day Parade.

The parade, a signature community event during Ski to Sea Weekend, had been without a significant presence from WWU for many years.

Students from such varied campus organizations as the WWU Hockey Club, AS Recycle Center, men's basketball team, and the Analog Brass band made their way down Cornwall Avenue, handing out WWU swag and coupons. WWU Parking Services even gave out goodies in yellow parking ticket envelopes.

"I'm excited that so many students showed up to celebrate being a part of the Western and Bellingham community," says Chris Roselli, director of Community Relations at Western. "We look forward to celebrating our community and honoring our heroes in the parade for years to come."



WWU Awarded Grant for 'Dare 2 Dream' Summer Academy

About 100 high school students from migrant farmworking families spent a week on campus recently attending classes, living in residence halls and learning about college life in the Dare 2 Dream Summer Academy.

The academy was funded by a \$174,375 grant from the Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. The purpose of the academy is to create

an opportunity for students to see the connections between education and potential careers as well as exposing them to the resources available to them to make higher education possible.

The OSPI Office of Migrant Bilingual Education requested that Western offer the Dare 2 Dream Academy as the majority of migrant farmworking families in western Washington live within 30 miles of Western's campus.

"Many of our students do not have a single family member who has attended college. They do not see the connections between education and a career, and often they do not see the strengths and resiliency they bring

in pursuing education," says Maria Timmons Flores, a WWU professor of elementary education, interim director of the Compass 2 Campus mentoring program, and principal investigator for the OSPI grant.

"Our goal is to introduce them to the resources and people they need to chart a path to higher education," Timmons Flores says. "To open their eyes to possibilities and help these students move from dreaming to the realities of pursuing their future goals."

MAKE YOUR LIFE A WORK OF ART

It takes more than courage to be a band nerd breakout. It takes hard work, grit and a mentor. Under the tutelage of Rich Brown and other Theatre Arts professors, alumna Rashawn Nadine Scott spent her college days mastering the craft of comedy, acting and singing. It paid off when she landed in Chicago on the Second City's Mainstage, and then on to LA and roles on Empire and Comedy Central's Southside. Proof that close relationships with professors can set the stage for success.



MAKE WAVES.



LEARN MORE ABOUT HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITIES
AT OUR COLLEGE OF FINE AND PERFORMING ARTS AT WWU.EDU/MAKEWAVES

Photo courtesy of Todd Rosenberg and The Second City



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND GRATITUDE

Western's tribal lands acknowledgement, tailored by location, is recommended to be included in opening remarks for official university functions.

"I would like to begin by acknowledging that we gather today on the ancestral homelands of the Coast Salish Peoples, who have lived in the Salish Sea basin, throughout the San Juan Islands and the North Cascades watershed, from time immemorial. Please join me in expressing our deepest respect and gratitude for our indigenous neighbors, the Lummi Nation and Nooksack Tribe, for their enduring care and protection of our shared lands and waterways."

Laural Ballew holds up a resolution from the Board of Trustees at a ceremonial welcome for her at WWU, where Lummi Tribal elders and the Blackhawk Dancers ceremoniously covered Ballew, the WWU trustees and President Sabah Randhawa in blankets and headbands.

Photo by Robert Clark

A Voice at the Table

As Western's first tribal liaison, alumna Laural Ballew is an advocate for Native students.

Earlier this year, Laural Ballew, '02, B.A., became Western's first Executive Director of American Indian/Alaska Native and First Nation Relations and Tribal Liaison to the President. A 40-year resident of the Lummi Reservation, Ballew is a member of the Swinomish Tribe and most recently worked as the chair of the Tribal Governance and Business Management Department at Northwest Indian College.

Today Ballew sees her role as something of a cross between supportive grandmother to Native students (and she's still a student herself, working toward a doctoral degree) while persistently advocating on behalf of those students—as well as area tribes—at Western.

Why was this position created and why does it matter?

This position was at the top of the list of five requests by the Native American Student Union in a letter dated May 2016. It was President Randhawa who moved forward with this initiative along with a committee of Native faculty, staff and students. The Board of Trustees passed a resolution establishing the Tribal Liaison office back in April, which is historic for this institution and for Native communities.

The Native Students acknowledged the importance of a Tribal Liaison to support American Indian/Alaska Native and First Nation students with academics, retention and opportunities to provide for their well-being. We owe a lot of this position to the hopes and aspirations of the Native students who were strong enough to believe in themselves and in what they needed to succeed—and what this institution needed to succeed.

It's also important because of the territory in which Western resides, the *Lhaq'temish* (Lummi) territory. Western now has a land acknowledgement statement we use at events and is also posted on our website. Adding the Tribal Liaison position puts action behind the land acknowledgement statement.

What unique life experiences do you bring to this job?

First and foremost, I am a Native woman, mother, grandmother and great-grandmother. My traditional names are *Ses Yehomia* and *tsi kats but soot*. I feel I have been trained from a very young age by my own grandmothers to prepare myself for this position. Education has always been an important goal in my life and my grandparents always wanted me to succeed in my education. I am proud to be answering their prayers.

I consider myself a non-traditional student—I returned to

college when I was in my 40s. I graduated from Northwest Indian College with a two-year degree in business administration, then from Western with a B.A. in American cultural studies. By the time I graduated Western, my oldest son had enrolled as a freshman. (That doesn't happen too often in families, and for sure not in Native families!) I went on to The Evergreen State College where I earned a Master's in Public Administration in tribal governance. I am currently working on my Ph.D. from Te Whare Wānanga o Awanuiārangi, a Maori university in New Zealand.

I know full well the challenges our Native students face every day because I have been there, and it was hard. I hope that I can be a role model and someone that Native students can look up to and see they can make their dreams become a reality.

What are your priorities in your work to improve the experience for Native students at Western?

Well, number one, I carry that letter that the Native students sent to then-President Shepard. The number-one request was the tribal liaison. Number two was a traditional Coast Salish longhouse. Three was to certify Native tribal enrollment or descendency at Western in order to ascertain an accurate count of our Native student population. Four was funding for the annual pow-wow, and five was government-to-government training.

I use those five objectives as pretty much my first-year plan. I'll add to my list every year, but those are the five things that I'm working on right now.

How will you know you've succeeded?

When I was at NWIC I would always tell my faculty and staff, "every day our students walk in the door is a success." We don't know what challenges they are facing before they come to class. If they can make it to class, that is a success. It's the small steps we want to recognize.

The other success I see is at graduation. I love watching our students when they walk to get their diplomas. They are carrying with them all the hopes and dreams of their ancestors, their families and the future generations. That diploma is more than just a piece of paper. It's an acknowledgment that we as Native people are still here. We're still representing. And Native students deserve to have their voices heard. And for me, as a professional, I will see success when I can continue to advocate for those voices and bring those voices to the table.

THE STORIES THEY SHARED

One father was forever changed by Nazi indoctrination.
Another father almost died in the Holocaust.

Today, their sons are co-workers.

By Frances Badgett

Victor Poznanski, a Microsoft manager with a doctorate in computer science from the University of Cambridge, had carried a secret his entire life—until the day he took a lunch break stroll with his boss around the Redmond campus and they started talking about WWII.

His boss, Bernhard Kohlmeier, told Poznanski that his parents had been children in Nazi Germany and educated in Nazi-controlled schools, an indoctrination that affected their whole lives. Kohlmeier grew up questioning the perspective that had been imposed upon his parents, working against their resulting prejudices and doubts about the Holocaust, and rejecting their casual remarks about how the time under Hitler had positive sides as well. He denounced the way the Nazis used schools and education as propaganda tools to indoctrinate young people.

As he listened, Poznanski decided to tell his own story, a story he had told only one other person. Poznanski's own father, Arthur, had escaped the Nazis as a teenager after years of imprisonment. His secret out, he felt tremendous relief. For all the differences in their respective histories, the two men found they had a lot in common.

SAVED BY A SPOON

Born in 1928 in a small town in Poland, Arthur Poznanski's childhood began peacefully. He was the oldest of three brothers. When he was 12, the Nazis forced his family to move into a ghetto and made Arthur leave school and work in a glass factory to support the German war effort. At 14, he came home from the factory to discover that his parents and younger brother were gone—transported, he later learned, to the Treblinka extermination camp. Only his 12-year-old brother, Jerzy, was left; the boys never saw their parents again. Arthur, now the man of the house, took Jerzy with him to work at the factory, where Jerzy became a master glassblower. Arthur was small and struggled with the



This spoon was in Arthur Poznanski's pocket when he escaped.
Photo courtesy of Victor Poznanski

physical nature of glass work, so he survived by assisting the Nazis loot vacant apartments and scrounging what he could to keep himself and his brother alive.

In 1944, when Arthur was about 16, the Nazis sent him to Buchenwald, a work camp in Germany with a typical life expectancy of three months, and he lost track of Jerzy. In 1945, as the war was coming to an end in Europe, Arthur knew the cattle train he was on was a death transport to Theresienstadt in Czechoslovakia. Each of the prisoners had been given a spoon, and Arthur and his friends used them to pry open the train window to escape. Both Arthur and a friend were shot the second they leaped from the train, but the spoon in his pants pocket saved Arthur's life. The bullet drove it into his leg.

Arthur crawled to a Czech village and found a farmhouse. The Nazis hunted him, poking pitchforks into the hay where he

“I found it difficult to let him know I was Jewish.”



Co-workers Bernhard Kohlmeier and Victor Poznanski on the bench at the Microsoft campus in Redmond, where they first learned what they had in common.

Photo by Daniel Berman, '12, B.A., visual journalism



hid, but he managed to escape. As soon as he recovered from his gunshot wound, he tracked down Jerzy in a temporary camp at the end of the war. The brothers reunited and traveled to England as two of “The Boys,” a group of 732 orphaned child survivors of Nazi concentration camps who were flown to England after the war.

SILENCE COULDN'T BE JUSTIFIED

Kohlmeier stopped cold. He recognized many pieces of Poznanski's story: the generational silencing of the war, the shame that passes to the children and grandchildren, the horrible indoctrination of Kohlmeier's own parents. For Poznanski, it had been a risky thing to open up. “I found it difficult to let him know I

was Jewish,” Poznanski says. “It can be dangerous to let people know that, and I had to find the right time.”

Kohlmeier encouraged Poznanski to speak publicly about not only about his father's death-defying, courageous escape but also the weight of history on

subsequent generations, and how to end the kinds of oppression that leads to fascism. Soon, Poznanski was standing in front of

a crowd, sharing his father's story for the first time at a public forum on the Holocaust.

“I was worried people would be angry, or wouldn't take it well,” Poznanski says. But with the renewal of antisemitic attacks in the U.S. and elsewhere in recent years, he decided the time was right. “In the past two years there's been an awareness of growing racism,” he says, “and I decided that my silence in this period couldn't be justified anymore.”

The silence. Both men experienced a silencing shame and grief that threaded its way through their own lived experiences. They both agreed that the keys to stopping harm in our culture—ending that grief—are storytelling and education.

“If you have a generation who aren't critical about their circumstances, they pass it on,” Kohlmeier says.

THE WOLPOW INSTITUTE

When Kohlmeier and his wife Lisa Ann Mikulencak, a mental health therapist in Seattle, sought a place to make a difference, they chose Western's Wolpov Institute for the Study of the Holocaust, Genocide, and Crimes Against Humanity. Professor Sandra Alferts, the center's director, had worked with Kohlmeier's daughter **Katharina**, '09, B.A., German, and other students to stage a play about the Holocaust, “Letters from Theresienstadt.” Kohlmeier was duly impressed with the performance, and with Alferts.

“If you have a generation who aren't critical about their circumstances, they pass it on”

Arthur and his friends used spoons to pry open the train window to escape

“I wasn’t sure what I was expecting,” Kohlmeier remembers. “Nothing like what it was. It was so well done, I was blown away.”

Later, Kohlmeier and Mikulencak learned about the Ray Wolpov Institute. One of the few programs of its kind in the U.S., the Wolpov Institute not only addresses Holocaust education, but on the prevention of genocide around the globe. The institute hosts a symposium on Holocaust education, a lecture series, and other educational and cultural programs. The Wolpov Institute was also a force behind Western’s new minor in Holocaust and genocide studies; the first such minor at a public university in Washington.

Moved by the Wolpov Institute’s mission, the couple established the Kohlmeier-Mikulencak Scholarship in Honor of Arthur Poznanski. The scholarship is awarded to a student who not only makes a difference in their community, but does so in the face of great opposition.

The 2018-2019 recipient, **Hoku Rivera**, a third-year double-major in English and anthropology, helped organize and lead the March for Our Lives rally in Bellingham for gun safety. Fears of pro-gun activists showing up (as they had at other such rallies around the country) haunted Rivera, but she persevered, and after she marched she sang “We Shall Overcome” solo to the crowd of 3,000 parents, friends, high school students, fellow Western students, and community leaders.

The scholarship helped Rivera travel to Senegal on a WWU Global Study Program. She immersed herself in post-colonial authors such as Ken Bugul, Mariama Bâ and Ngugi wa Thiong’o, whose work aims to reclaim their cultural narratives. She met Senegalese people and listened to their own stories, learning how the forces of religion, migration and colonialism have affected their lives and shaped West Africa. And living in a place where most people didn’t speak English, “gave me the humbling opportunity to be removed from the center of my world,” she says.

“As an indigenous person to a sea-locked place, it was also incredibly meaningful to see the ways the indigenous Senegalese people interact with their environment, and specifically the ocean,” says Rivera, who grew up in Hawaii. “I noticed a lot of cultural artifacts held undeniable similarities to the tools and even musical implements that my people (and a good portion of other Pacific Island groups) use, which was beyond inspiring.”

Today, Arthur Poznanski’s spoon has become a cultural artifact, too, and is housed at Yad Vashem, The World Holocaust Remembrance Center in Jerusalem, which receives about 1 million visitors a year.

According to the Department of Justice, 8,437 hate crimes were committed in the U.S. in 2018. Western is not immune: The Jewish literature collection in Wilson Library was attacked

last year with antisemitic symbols and words. Donors responded by replacing the books, adding many additional volumes to the collection. Earlier this year, a student was expelled from Western for spray-painting racist words on a campus sculpture. Elsewhere in the world, genocide has been occurring in the Congo and Myanmar. These incidents, small and large, underscore the urgency of the work the Ray Wolpov Institute is doing, and the need for the support of people like Bernhard Kohlmeier and Lisa Ann Mikulencak, and the voices of people like Victor Poznanski, because in the words of author Margaret Atwood, “Powerlessness and silence go together.”

Frances Badgett is a novelist, poet, fiction editor and the assistant director of marketing and communications for Advancement at Western.



The Kohlmeier-Mikulencak Scholarship in Honor of Arthur Poznanski enabled third-year student Hoku Rivera, above, to travel to Senegal, “a humbling opportunity to be removed from the center of my world,” she says. The trip included a visit to the West African Research Center in Dakar.

Photo courtesy of Hoku Rivera

Degree of Honor

James Okubo's family returns to Western to accept the degree he was denied the opportunity to complete

By Ron C. Judd



In the realm of honorary gestures, it might seem minor—particularly for a man already awarded a posthumous Medal of Honor. But to the family of former Western student **James K. Okubo**—and the current community of Whatcom County Japanese Americans—the June granting of the university's first posthumous degree to a once-forgotten war hero was a landmark event.

Okubo was a promising sophomore, an aspiring dentist, at Bellingham's Western Washington College of Education in 1942 when he and his family were ripped from well-established Bellingham lives during the wartime incarceration of citizens of Japanese descent. Seventy-seven years later, Okubo's family, at a June graduation ceremony, gratefully received the degree he never had a chance to complete.

"I thought it was a very kind gesture, making reparations for the past," says Anne Okubo, 64, daughter of James Okubo, who died in 1967. "That's not really the responsibility of the current generation. But the current generation needs to understand the history, so we don't repeat it."

A star athlete at Bellingham High School and the son of Kenzo and Fuyu Okubo, who operated the Sunrise Café on Holly Street, Jim Okubo was denied the chance to fulfill his dream of graduating from his hometown college. After spending 11 months at the Tule Lake camp in California, Okubo enlisted in the U.S. Army, where he earned multiple medals for valor while serving as a medic.

His wartime exploits were rediscovered in the late 1990s, thanks to a review of military records of Asian American veterans. Okubo was posthumously granted the Medal of Honor by President Clinton in 2000 for "conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty."

His story has taken on new life, amidst a flurry of remembrance of the incarceration of Japanese American citizens nearly eight decades ago, and caught the eye of members of Western's campus community. Fittingly, the 2011 Washington legislation enabling regional universities to grant honorary degrees (nine have since been granted) also authorized degrees for students removed from college during the incarceration of Japanese Americans, notes Paul Dunn, Western's chief of staff and secretary to the Board of Trustees.

Two Western employees of Japanese descent, **Carole Teshima**, '94, B.A., Fairhaven interdisciplinary concentration, and **Mark Okinaka**, '15, MBA, nominated Okubo for the honorary degree. Okinaka



Lt. Gen. Lucian Truscott shakes Okubo's hand after presenting Okubo with a Silver Star in May 1945. "Boy, my knees were shaking then, too," Okubo wrote on the back of the photo. "He's the commander of the 5th Army."

Opposite page: After the Army, James Okubo graduated from Wayne State University and received his dental degree from the University of Detroit.

Photos courtesy of Anne Okubo



Left: Bellingham resident Nolene "Pat" Shima sits on the porch of the Okubo family's H Street Home on June 3, 1942, surrounded by the belongings of the city's Japanese Americans.

Right: The bus pulled up in front of the Okubos' home to take Bellingham's Japanese American residents on the first leg of their journey to the Tule Lake camp June 3, 1942.

Credits: Bellingham Herald photos from the Whatcom Museum

Below: James Okubo's children Bill and Anne, along with Anne's daughter Alison, view a display in Wilson Library about James.



had reviewed the hand-typed books of enrollment records from that era, searching for students who may have faced incarceration in 1942. Okubo appeared to be the only fulltime student forced to leave Western after President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the now-infamous Order 9066, authorizing the incarceration of West Coast citizens of Japanese, German, and Italian descent, on Feb. 19, 1942.

Okinaka's own father, uncle and grandparents were incarcerated at the Manzanar and Tule Lake camps. His father and brother both went on to serve in the military, his father in the U.S. Army for 30 years, including time in the Vietnam War, and his uncle in the U.S. Air Force.

Mark Okinaka followed in the family tradition and served in the U.S. Army during the Persian Gulf War. Last year, he told Okubo's story at Western's Veteran's Day assembly.

Teshima's heart leapt when she received word that the degree application for Okubo had been approved. Helping

bring honor to Okubo and other Japanese Americans imprisoned in camps during World War II, she says, "is one of the great thrills of my life."

Teshima, a former Bellingham Herald news librarian, has become Whatcom County's go-to historian of local citizens of Japanese ancestry. She's a member of a local group of about two dozen *Sansei*, or third-generation Japanese Americans, many of whom had parents and or grandparents incarcerated during the war. (U.S. immigrants born in Japan are referred to as *Issei*; second-generation family members, such as James Okubo, are *Nisei*, based on Japanese numerals.)

Her father, George M. Teshima, served in a separate company of James Okubo's WWII Army regiment, fighting in Italy and France and earning a Purple Heart. Her great aunt and her family were sent to a Canadian incarceration camp in British Columbia.

Acceptance, then feverish suspicion
Starting with data on Northwest Wash-

ington Asian immigrants compiled in 1982 by University of Washington anthropology researcher **Margaret Willson**, '79, B.A., '82, M.A., anthropology, Teshima has fleshed out the lives of most of the Japanese American families in Bellingham leading up to the war.

The first recorded instance of a Japanese person immigrating to Washington state was in 1880 in Walla Walla. A decade later, 81 Japanese immigrants had settled in Whatcom County, most arriving via British Columbia, Willson found.

By that time, Teshima notes, most earlier Asian immigrants, from China, had already been driven out of Whatcom by a torrent of racist sentiment. Many Japanese and East Indian immigrants filled their place in the local labor market. The first Japanese residents in Whatcom were mostly educated members of the Japanese upper working class, Teshima notes. Most sought to swiftly integrate, learn English, run their own businesses, and generally fit in.

In spite of ongoing anti-Asian senti-



Bellingham City Council approved a resolution calling for “the removal of all alien enemies, including American born Japanese, to concentration camps far removed from the Pacific coast.”

ment in Whatcom County, Japanese immigrants for many years were more accepted, largely because they became active in the Bellingham business community. But latent racism resurfaced with the outbreak of war.

Teshima’s files are filled with government records and browning clips from local newspapers, documenting the stark transition from begrudging acceptance of local Japanese immigrants to feverish suspicion after the attacks on Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941.

Most of this sprang from unfounded fears that citizens of Japanese descent were poised to commit acts of sabotage. Random arrests of “suspicious” local Japanese American citizens by Bellingham police occurred during the period, and drew little public backlash.

By the time of Roosevelt’s order, Japanese “internment” already enjoyed broad political support in the region. Gov. Arthur Langlie encouraged it, as did local elected officials. On Feb. 25, 1942, the Bellingham City Council approved a

resolution calling for “the removal of all alien enemies, including American born Japanese, to concentration camps far removed from the Pacific coast.”

On June 3, 1942, the bus arriving to remove Whatcom’s Japanese Americans opened its doors at the Okubo residence at 1406 H Street, where family patriarch Kenzo Okubo had posted a “for sale” sign on the wall of the family home.

A story marking the event played on inside pages of the newspaper and was decidedly humdrum:

“Whatcom County was without persons of Japanese extraction Wednesday afternoon,” the Bellingham Herald reported on June 3, 1942. “All resident Japanese here—thirty-three of them—left Bellingham Wednesday morning for the Tule Lake assembly center south of the California-Oregon border. Taking only their personal belongings, most of the

departing Japanese traveled by chartered bus to Burlington. There they boarded a train for the Tule Lake center.”

In all, 97 residents of Whatcom, Skagit, San Juan and Island counties were incarcerated, most initially sent to the large Tule Lake camp, according to news accounts at the time. Another 57 were picked up by buses in Everett, hundreds more in Seattle and around Puget Sound.

None of the families removed from Whatcom County would ever return. Most were admirably gracious in their introduction to captivity, The Herald noted:

“A majority of those ordered to the California assembly center from Whatcom County were born and reared



President Sabah Randhawa and Provost Brent Carbajal present an honorary bachelor's degree to James Okubo's children Anne and Bill Okubo at Commencement in June.

Photo by Dan Levine

in Bellingham and are citizens of the United States,” the newspaper noted. “They left their homes behind without complaint, one graduate of Bellingham high school declaring just before the bus departed: ‘Bellingham is the finest place in all the world.’”

Walled-off family histories

Okubo put on a brave public face, even making light of the pending incarceration. In an event memorialized by the campus newspaper, *The WWC Collegian*, Okubo was feted with an “evacuation party” by some of his Western classmates, at which he handed out gifts—leftovers, he said, from the family packing up for departure—including a Japanese newspaper and blackout paint.

Five months into his incarceration, Okubo reported back to the newspaper from his “relocation center” that the place was “nice,” but he longed for “some good Washington rain.”

That sort of outwardly understated response to a cataclysmic event was typical

of incarcerated families, particularly the *Nisei*, Teshima and Anne Okubo agreed. It carried over to the post-war era, when most Japanese Americans, stung by the perceptions that they were not loyal Americans, endeavored to push the ugly incident into the past and move on.

The Japanese phrase, *Shikata ga nai*, translating to “it cannot be helped” or “nothing can be done about it,” sums up the sentiment of that generation, Teshima says.

The reaction from that generation was understandable, but proved unintentionally devastating to many of their children, Anne Okubo noted.

“That’s what the current generation needs to understand,” she says. “The story of internment, why it happened, and what it did to the Japanese community. It absolutely destroyed Japanese American culture,” particularly for the immediate next generation, she says.

Memories of the pre-war and war years were so thoroughly walled off by her parents that Anne Okubo realized

only recently, through news stories, that her father had ever attended Western.

Singled out for valor

James Okubo, born May 30, 1920, in Anacortes, grew up as a member of a large extended Bellingham family that included six siblings, along with four cousins after the death of Fuyu Okubo’s sister.

An athlete and avid skier, James graduated from Bellingham High School in 1938, later enrolling at Western, which he attended until his family’s forced removal from Bellingham. He ended his stay at Tule Lake by joining the Army on May 20, 1943.

After basic training at Camp Shelby, Mississippi, Okubo, then 22, was assigned as a medic to the soon-to-be-legendary 442nd Regimental Combat Team, a segregated squad of Japanese Americans. Committing to the war effort was a full family affair: Also enlisting were James’ two brothers, Hiram and Sumi, and cousins Isamu and Saburo



Carole Teshima, '94, here with Anne and Bill Okubo, helped nominate James Okubo for the honorary degree.

Photo by Mary Gallagher

“People lost everything. It erased their whole heritage.”

exposed to broader Asian communities that she realized what a hole that had left in her self-image—and how much ill-advised policies, such as the fear-based incarceration of her forebears, had contributed.

“It was something people were ashamed of, being Japanese,” she says. “It was a painful experience. People lost everything. It erased their whole heritage. The whole experience emotionally scarred them, making them risk-averse about being Japanese. That’s why my generation, the *Sansei*, was totally Americanized. We were discouraged from being Japanese. I grew up thinking I was white. It bore a large emotional toll on entire generations.”

As an adult, working in public health administration in the Bay Area, the mother of two adult children, and grandmother to one, she understands. People, loved ones, come and go too soon. But their stories—assuming they are shared—live on. They have meaning.

Had he lived, James Okubo would have turned 99 shortly before the June graduation ceremony honoring him on Western’s campus. His story, his family believes, has meaning. Especially now that the university he once loved and called home has officially embraced it.

“I think it’s a pretty big deal,” says Anne Okubo, who looked forward to meeting members of Whatcom County’s reestablished Japanese American community for the first time. “It’s an honorary degree from a large university. People don’t get those every day. There have been other things, like buildings, named after my father. This is something different.”

For them, and for Western.

Ron C. Judd, '85, B.A., journalism, is a writer and columnist for the Seattle Times and an adjunct faculty member at Western. His last story for Window magazine explored the university’s relationship with Mount Baker.

Kunimatsu. (Isamu “Eke” Kunimatsu, also of the 442nd, was killed in Italy on July 12, 1944.)

The 442nd regiment earned fame in a daring October 1944 rescue of the U.S. Army’s “Lost Battalion,” trapped behind enemy lines in eastern France.

Okubo was singled out for valor: In a crucial battle, Okubo, dodging grenades and heavy fire, crawled 150 yards, to within 40 yards of enemy lines, to carry wounded men to safety, and personally treated 17 fellow soldiers. Days later, he ran through machine gun fire to rescue a comrade from a burning tank, saving his life.

In 1945, Okubo’s superiors nominated him for a Medal of Honor, but he received a Silver Star, perhaps because of a mistaken belief that it was the highest honor for enlisted medics at the time.

Okubo rarely spoke about his war experience, his daughter recalled. After the war, he reconnected in Detroit with surviving family members (his father had died at Tule Lake from pneumonia;

other family members had been moved to a camp at Heart Mountain, Wyoming). Okubo enrolled in Wayne State University, where he met his future wife, Noboyu Miyaya. The couple had three children, and Okubo finished dental school at the University of Detroit.

From then on, he practiced dentistry, including much pro bono work, taught at his alma mater, and conducted research, including early studies of links between tobacco and oral cancer.

“We didn’t see him much,” Anne Okubo recalls.

James Okubo, 46, was killed in car accident on a family ski trip near Flint, Michigan, in 1967. Daughter Anne was in the backseat of a car driven by her father. She recalls only occasional stories, mostly from her aunts, about the “camp” days, with little indication that it was forced incarceration.

Growing up in Detroit, her own generation was still struggling to suppress its Asian identity, she recalls. It wasn’t until she moved to Hawaii and became





HOMETOWN LOVE

Death Cab for Cutie and ODESZA came home to rock the town they got their start.

Lights and imagery are just as much a part of ODESZA's shows as their music.

As the editor of What's Up! magazine, I've chronicled Bellingham's music scene for more than two decades, watching this town nurture many exciting, young bands.

The most famous acts from Bellingham, Death Cab for Cutie and ODESZA, came home to perform at Civic Field May 18 in Double Major, the biggest show in the city's history.

The bands are so different, you probably wouldn't find this line-up on very many stages anywhere else in the world. But in Bellingham it makes perfect sense. Both bands are tightly woven into the city's music history, and Bellingham is a part of their history, too.

'I felt like I was a part of something'

Death Cab for Cutie had something special right from the start. In 1997, Western student **Ben Gibbard**, '98, B.S., environmental science, released the demo tape "You Can Play These Songs With Chords," under the name Death Cab for Cutie, recorded by Chris Walla at Gibbard's rented house on Ellis Street. The tape created a buzz around town, so Gibbard assembled a band with Walla on guitar, **Nick Harmer**, '98, B.A., English, on bass (at the time he was in another band with future DCFC drummer Jason McGerr), and Nathan Good on drums.

"From the moment we first played together, it was like no other band I'd been in," Gibbard says. "We sounded good and were on the same page right from the beginning."

For Gibbard, Bellingham's music scene was an incredible source of inspiration. "For the first time in my life, I felt like I was part of something. I felt like I was part of a real scene." He added, "When I moved to Bellingham in 1994, I moved to Bellingham knowing that the Mono Men were from there. The Posies were from there. Bands that people cared about in the world that had started or lived in that town. You can never underestimate the motivational power of that."

Death Cab's local and regional following grew. Seattle quickly fell in love with the band, especially after the release of "Something About Airplanes" in August 1998. Within a year, the band moved to Seattle and soon saw stardom. But Ben's love of Western and Bellingham has never diminished. "I have nothing but wonderful memories of our formative years there," he says.

Iron Street summer

ODESZA began when **Harrison Mills**, '12, B.A., design, and **Clayton Knight**, '12, B.S., physics, were introduced by a mutual friend, **Sean Kusanagi**, '12, B.A., English – creative writing, in the later part of their Western education.

They immediately connected over their love of weird electronic music. After graduation they decided to spend the summer in Bellingham making music together. "We spent that summer on Iron Street, inside that house, hanging out drinking, enjoying the sun and making music," Mills says.

That summer's creative burst would change their lives. In the fall, the duo self-released "Summer's Gone," a light and intriguing electronic album using real instruments as often as possible. Within days, hundreds were listening online through Soundcloud, then thousands. Mills and Knight had not even played their first show; that would come later in November at the Wild Buffalo.

Western and the Bellingham music scene were huge inspirations. "Being surrounded by folk music, the indie scene really played a large role in what we were listening to," Mills says. "The music environment here—I got introduced to so many weird and cool things from people in that school."

Nine months after graduation, the duo moved to Seattle, keeping their key Western connections that would continue to help shape ODESZA. Their friend who introduced them, Kusanagi, has played guitar for all three albums and works on creative/video direction. **Michelle Gadeken**, '11, B.A., design, helps with album and packaging design, while **Luke Tanaka**, '11, B.A., design, produces video for live shows.

"They've been part of our success," Mills says. "We've worked with these people every day since college."

Before the show, Harrison expressed excitement about coming back "home." "Honestly, I haven't been more nervous in a while," he said with a laugh, "I'm just really excited because we've wanted to do this for so long."





DEATH CAB FOR CUTIE

The band played many fan favorites from their 20-year career, including a spine-chilling version of "Transatlanticism."



'We're Death Cab for Cutie from 1138 Ellis'

Bellingham was really excited, too. Fans began arriving hours early in hopes of getting a spot close to the stage.

Bellingham's LipStitch, playing only their fifth show, kicked things off with their energetic guitar pop sound. They cranked through five songs for the sparse but growing crowd, making the most of their 20-minute set. Montreal's Robotaki followed, weaving through electronic waves and uplifting beats.

Then Seattle's Chong the Nomad played a thrilling 30-minute set, with quirky, interesting songs featuring some non-electronic instruments such as ukulele and harmonica.

Two hours and 15 minutes into the show, it was go time for Death Cab. With no fanfare, the band came out and went right into "I Dreamt We Spoke Again" off their latest release "Thank You For Today." The energy in Civic Field turned from excited to euphoric as the band that got its start all those years ago in Bellingham had come back home to celebrate. The excitement flowed through the band as they played with an extra spark in their sound. The crowd danced, sang and cheered throughout the set, reciprocating the love and excitement.

Over the next 90 minutes, the band played songs from their

20-year career, mixing in historically loved numbers and more recent songs. The crowd sang their hearts out to all of them. Early set highlights included "Gold Rush," their first single off the most recent album, as well as "Pictures in an Exhibition" from "Something About Airplanes," and "Crooked Teeth" of 2005's "Plans."

At one point Gibbard announced, "We're Death Cab for Cutie from 1138 Ellis Street!" The crowd cheered. The band also played "Movie Script Ending," which Gibbard described as a love letter to Bellingham. Written soon after the band moved to Seattle, the song professed how much Gibbard missed the town and everyone in it.

Ultimate fan favorites included "What Sarah Said" and a beautiful solo acoustic version of "I Will Follow You Into the Dark," followed by the full eight-minute version of "I Will Possess Your Heart." The crowd was filled with joy as Death Cab played "Expo '86," "Northern Lights," "Cath," and "Soul Meets Body." They ended with a spine-chilling version of "Transatlanticism," a perfect moment for a band that's meant so much to Bellingham's music history.

Perfection in music and lights

As the sun set, the ODESZA experience began. The music is only part of their live set; lights and imagery are as much of the show, with every note and light driven to perfection. The crowd played their part, screaming their excitement.

A space theme—featured throughout their recent tour—including images of satellites and planets was projected on the

**See more of Double Major
at window.wvu.edu**

ODESZA

A performance of “Always This Late x How Did I Get Here” featured **Sean Kusanagi**, '12, playing a guitar with a string bow.



massive screen at the back of the stage. On the risers stood two digital instrument stands with kick drums, mirroring each other.

A recorded snippet about a Russian cosmonaut built the tension, only to slowly fade two minutes in as ODESZA's music perfectly met the imagery. Then, a trombone player on one side and a trumpet player on another appeared on the risers, and a sublime horn wave layered through the building music. Lights danced across the stage and into the audience, and Harrison and Clayton came out slowly, hands raised in the air holding drum sticks. The lights quickly cut and ODESZA began playing an intense rhythm on the drums with stage lights perfectly synched to the edgy electronic beats. As more lights hit the stage, a six-person drum line slowly appeared on the main stage. The tension continued to rise with more music and beats flowing through the speakers. A thrilling three and a half minutes from the start, the sound dropped out for a second, then blasted into a sensory overload with a majestic blue background, lights peering everywhere as “Bloom” kicked into full dance mode.

Over the next two hours, ODESZA played songs from their three albums, often remixing from the originals. The visual experience of the show enhanced every sound and every beat. There was not a wasted moment; every note, light, image and sound worked together for an amazing and unforgettable performance.

It was a surreal experience. The crowd was in a frenzy—people danced, screamed, smiled, and loved the band, purely. ODESZA took that energy and put it into their performance, several times calling out to the crowd and professing their love for them, the town, and their excitement at being back.

Highlights were many, and a few stuck out above the rest. Naomi Wild, singer and songwriter for their hit “Higher Ground,” flew up from Los Angeles to perform the song. “Across the Room” featured the soulful vocals of Leon Bridges (though he wasn't in attendance). My favorite moment, though, was when Kusanagi used a bow to play guitar on “Always this Late x How Did I Get Here.”

With an encore of “Don't Stop” and “Falls,” the final sound reverberated throughout Civic Field—and much of Bellingham. The nearly 12,000 attendees filed out of the stadium, full of joy and pride in what Bellingham music can do.

Bellingham buzz

The emotion was not lost on the bands.

“We looked at each other on stage and I was flooded with memories of Bellingham. It was really humbling and really satisfying, in a really deep way. I wasn't expecting that, it was really emotional getting off stage,” Death Cab for Cutie's Harmer says. “We kept telling ourselves it's just going to be another show.”

But, they knew it was so much more. On the way to the show, Harmer passed by 1138 Ellis. “You drive around the corner and you're at Civic Field. It's hard to get my head wrapped around it. It felt very surreal.”

Brent Cole, '96, B.A., sociology, is the publisher of What's Up!, Bellingham's music newspaper, and a 2013 recipient of the Mayor's Arts Award. Getting a shout-out on stage from Ben Gibbard before “Pictures in an Exhibition” was also a career highlight.

2019 WWU Alumni Awards

Meet fellow alumni who are making a difference



Michael Christopher Brown took this photo on Oct. 28, 2011, of people in Misrata, Libya, celebrating the capture of Muammar Gaddafi and the end of the war. The photo is included in Brown's book, "Libyan Sugar."



Michael Christopher Brown

Photojournalist

Distinguished Alumnus, College of Humanities and Social Sciences

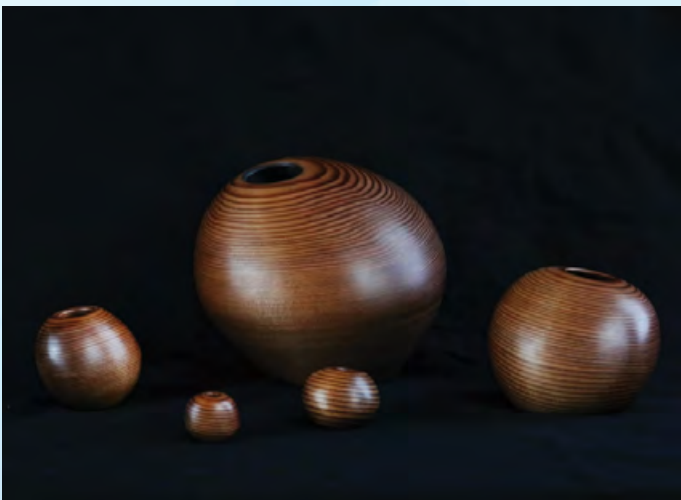
Brown's photography beautifully marries international adventure with images of human intimacy and beauty, studies in contrast between the ugliness of war and the beauty of those caught within wars. After completing his bachelor's degree in psychology in 2000 at WWU, Brown completed a master's degree in documentary photography at Ohio University and interned at National Geographic Magazine. He has become known for bringing under-reported international stories to mass audiences with work in Libya, Egypt, China, Congo, Central African Republic, Cuba and Palestine, often capturing images with an iPhone. Follow his work on Instagram @michaelchristopherbrown.

Andrew Vallee

Co-founder, Smith and Vallee Cabinet Makers and Smith and Vallee Gallery

Distinguished Alumnus, College of Fine and Performing Arts

Vallee, '96, B.A., art, teamed up after graduation with Wesley Smith, '95, and founded Smith & Vallee Cabinet Makers of Edison, which creates hand-crafted cabinetry for homes and businesses throughout the region. In 2007, they opened Smith & Vallee Gallery in a restored schoolhouse nearby to showcase new and established artists. Vallee is an artist in his own right whose work has been exhibited at Smith & Vallee as well as the Whatcom Museum of History and Art, Bainbridge Island Museum of Art and Museum of Northwest Art.





Douglas W. and Latonya G. Leek

Young Philanthropists of the Year

The Leeks both earned bachelor's degrees at Western, Douglas in English in '98 and Latonya in general studies in '00. Douglas returned to Western for a master's in student personnel administration in '99, and later completed a doctorate at Seattle University. They strongly value education and understand the role finances play in students' persistence and success. So they helped fund the endowment of five Ethnic Student Center Scholarships. Next, they created the **Cora D. Hill** Memorial Scholarship Endowment for Transfer Students, in honor of a dear friend and 1999 Western alumna. And their Leek Family Job Preparation and Networking Award provides two annual \$1,000 awards to graduating students of color to purchase professional clothing for job interviews. Then last year, the Leeks decided to create the Leek Family Scholarship for undocumented students, which funds two two-year tuition and book awards to high achieving students.



Christy Johnson

Founder and CEO, Artemis Connection

Distinguished Alumna, College of Business and Economics

Johnson, '01, B.A., economics, is an innovator who believes human capital is the key to corporate success. After teaching at Bellingham High School, Johnson earned master's degrees in education and business at Stanford University. She then joined McKinsey & Co. and worked with executives in the U.S. and Europe. But when her newborn twins needed postnatal care, she realized the structure of corporate culture keeps caregivers from living full lives without the good graces of an understanding manager—not a given in the workplace. So she got the idea for Artemis Connection, "a consultancy that focuses on strategic solutions, with data and design thinking, plus provides a flexible working model for our own talent." Her work can be a challenge—telling hard truths to powerful executives. But when they listen (and they often do) she sees them succeed.

Ben Gibbard and Nick Harmer

Musicians, Death Cab for Cutie

Young Alumni of the Year

In 1997, WWU student Gibbard, '98, B.S., environmental science, sat down in the living room of his rental house and recorded "You Can Play These Songs Without Chords" on a cassette, which generated buzz from Bellingham to Seattle. He gathered some friends, including Harmer, '98, B.A., English, to record some more. In 1998 they recorded "Something About Airplanes" followed quickly by "We Have the Facts and We're Voting Yes." Now immersed in success, Death Cab for Cutie is critically acclaimed and internationally recognized with six Grammy nominations. They recently made a tour stop in Bellingham for Double Major, alongside fellow alumni ODESZA, a concert benefiting WWU scholarships.



Nick Harmer and Ben Gibbard, with Deborah DeWees, executive director of the WWU Alumni Association.



Karen Symms Gallagher

Dean, Rossier School of Education, University of Southern California

Distinguished Alumna, Woodring College of Education

Gallagher, '67, B.A., political science, has dedicated her career to education, championing students who,

like her, depended on scholarships and financial aid to attend college. At USC, she has been an innovative leader in creating opportunities for students of diverse backgrounds.



Hoyt Gier

Head of Western Region – North, Citi Private Bank

Lifetime Achievement Award

A longtime member of the Western Foundation board, Gier, '80, B.A., business administration, helped lead the \$60 million Western Stands for Washington campaign. Hoyt and his wife Donita have also

given to the Goodrich/Dolfo Fund for Women's Basketball and to a scholarship endowment for cross country.



Ronald L. Heimark

Pharmaceutical Innovator and Cancer Researcher

Distinguished Alumnus, College of Science and Engineering

Heimark, '70, B.S., biology, was part of a small team at the Seattle biotechnology company ICOS working on what they thought would be

a new hypertension drug. It turned out to be Cialis, a very successful treatment for erectile dysfunction. Today, Heimark is a cancer researcher at the University of Arizona Cancer Center and professor in Arizona's College of Medicine.



Michael West Cox

Retired EPA Climate Adviser, Whistleblower

Distinguished Alumnus, Huxley College of the Environment

Cox, '81, B.S., environmental science, served under six presidents at the Environmental Protection Agency, dedicated to such

issues as drinking water rules and climate change policy. When he retired in 2017, Cox penned a now-famous letter to incoming EPA chief Scott Pruitt, blasting budget cuts, denial of climate science, and open hostility to environmental protection.



Lisa Wolff Swanson

**Larry “Go Vikings!” Taylor
Alumni Service Award**

Scan the crowd at a men’s soccer game at Western, and you’re likely to see Swanson, ’95, cheering on the Vikings. Swanson is the consummate Viking—fan, supporter, and friend to the Athletics Department, student-athletes, and the community.



Rod Roth

**R&D Plastics
Community Volunteer Award**

Roth and his Portland-based company R&D Plastics are longtime supporters of Western’s plastics engineering program, providing internships, guest lecturers, scholarships, materials and industry tours for countless students over the years—not to mention employment for about 24 Western grads.



Edwin Love

**WWU Marketing Department
Chair**

Campus Volunteer Award

In addition to his work as professor of marketing, Love gives a great deal of his time and energy to ensuring that Western students succeed. He’s a leader in Western Engaged and WWU Give Day, and works with marketing faculty to hold twice-yearly alumni meet-ups in Seattle.



Jeffrey Roy Hammarlund

**Leader in Sustainable Energy
Policy and Education**

**Distinguished Alumnus,
Fairhaven College of
Interdisciplinary Studies**

A 1972 graduate of both Fairhaven and Huxley College of the Environment, Hammarlund has dedicated his entire career to promoting sustainable energy policy and addressing climate change in the U.S. and abroad. After work in the public and private sector, Hammarlund taught at Lewis & Clark College, Portland State University and Western.

Stephan Aarstol

Founder and CEO of Tower Paddle Boards

Young Entrepreneur of the Year

All summer, Tower Paddle Boards founder and CEO Stephan Aarstol wakes up, goes to his dream office on the beach in San Diego and, along with his team, clocks out at 1:30 p.m. to go surfing, play volleyball, relax on the beach—whatever is fun.

The idea: Disrupt the round-the-clock work hours of start-up culture with a true investment in work-life balance. Employees are still expected to meet their goals, but Aarstol and others who have adopted shorter workdays report that leaving out the downtime of lunch breaks and the afternoon slump makes the day more productive, the employees happier, and the culture more in tune with the company's mission.

"We're a paddle board company and we never had a chance to go out and actually paddle board," Aarstol says.

A year into Tower's workday experiment, Aarstol pub-

lished "The Five Hour Workday," which got press in more than 20 countries.

Aarstol graduated from Western in 1996 and got an MBA from the University of San Diego. He worked for an internet start-up for five years, paying attention to industry trends and new ideas that could feed his entrepreneurial streak. He founded buypokerchips.com in 2003, and rode the upswing of poker in the early 2000s. As the poker trend waned, a friend took him paddle boarding, and he got the idea to manufacture, market, and ship paddle boards.

Within a year, the television show "Shark Tank" called. He went on the show with Tower Paddle Boards and gave "the worst pitch in the history of Shark Tank that still landed a deal," Aarstol remembers. "I completely blanked. It was terrible." But it was good television, not to mention a good product and business model. Aarstol's direct-to-consumer paddle boards company has lower overhead, more profit, and better prices for customers.

Celebrity investor Mark Cuban put up \$150,000 for 30 percent of Tower Paddle Boards, which has become one of the most successful businesses ever profiled on the show. It made Inc. Magazine's list of America's fastest growing companies in 2015.

But Aarstol, true to form, is moving into new territory, expanding Tower into electric bikes with TowerElectricBikes.com and launching a new business, NoMiddleman.com, a website that offers hundreds of direct-to-consumer brands in one spot.

Stephan Aarstol and son Alex on Mission Beach in San Diego.



ALUMNI CONVERSATIONS

By Shawn Kemp, '98
WWU Alumni Association Board President

GETTING YOU ENGAGED

As the new incoming WWU Alumni Association board president, I have a personal mission to help other alumni reconnect to Western. It's been 20 years since I graduated, and for my first 10 years out of Western, I had no connection to the university—I got my degree and moved on. The university didn't provide opportunities for me to engage as a new alumnus, and when they did call, they only wanted me to donate. Sound familiar?

In the past 10 years, I've moved back to Bellingham, spent time on campus, and reconnected with the faculty, students, and WWU Alumni Board. It's been amazing to share my industry skills and experience with students and faculty, which, in turn, has allowed me to learn about new research and expand my professional knowledge.

I regret not getting involved sooner. If I had to do it over, I would have stayed more actively involved immediately after I graduated. I can assure you, as someone who was disconnected and came back, that the WWU Alumni board is a passionate group of alumni volunteers who are seeking ways to make your alumni experience awesome. We wish we could wave a magic wand that would get 100 percent of alumni reconnected; but we don't have one.

One of the tools we do have is Western Engaged, a program that brings a new focus and investment by the university to get alumni more connected through college and departmental alumni events, alumni mentoring programs, Facebook groups, more frequent email updates from the faculty, and yes, even more awesome things like the Double Major: Death Cab for Cutie and ODESZA concert—the largest live event in the history of Bellingham which raised \$27,000 for the WWU Alumni Association Scholarship Fund. Yes, more of that.

And while financial support of the university is really important, there are so many additional ways to support Western students as an alum. We need alumni to be our legislative champions in Olympia, advocating for higher education funding. We need more established alumni to employ young alumni and offer internships to students and recent graduates. We need professionals to help faculty stay current with industry trends, and so much more.

I really want to hear from you about what programs or initiatives you believe the WWU Alumni Association should focus on. Please email alumni@wwu.edu and tell us what matters most to you.



1971 – John Doherty, B.A., political science, recently retired as Clallam County District Court Judge.

1972 – David Swanson, B.A., sociology, was recently appointed by the University of New Mexico Dean for Research to serve on the External Advisory Committee of the Center for Geospatial and Population Studies. Swanson is a regional affiliate for the University of Washington's Center for Studies in Demography and Ecology.

1976 – John MacKinnon, B.S., environmental toxicology and nutrition, recently became commissioner of the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities. Most recently, MacKinnon was executive director of the Associated General Contractors of Alaska.

1983 – Donna Chieppo, B.S. environmental education, was recently recognized as the 2018-19 Employee of the Year at Northwest Indian College, where she has worked as a human resources specialist since 2014. She previously worked at Western for more than 25 years.

1984 – Sally Ann Schneider, B.A., psychology, recently became CEO of Smokey Point Behavioral Hospital in Marysville. Previously, Schneider was CEO of LifeCare Behavioral Health Hospital in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. **Mary Arnold**, B.A., psychology, is a professor and youth development specialist at Oregon State University's College of Public Health and Human Services, where she developed the 4-H Thriving Model, an evidence-based approach to youth development.

1990 – Mari Leavitt, B.A., political science, and '95, M.Ed., student personnel administration, represents the 28th district in the Washington State House of Representatives and is vice chair of the College & Work Force Development Committee. She was recently named a distinguished alumna of Tacoma Community College.

1992 – Ted Morris, B.A., recreation, retired last year as head ranger at Birch Bay and Peace Arch state parks, and after 43 years with Washington State Parks. **Anne-Marie Diouf**, B.A., sociology, was recently appointed senior vice president and chief human resources officer for Symetra Life Insurance Co. in Bellevue.

1993 – Angela Sheffey-Bogan, B.A., English, is principal of Sartori Elementary School in Renton and was recently named a Distinguished Alumna of Highline College. Sheffey-Bogan has spent more than 20 years in elementary education.

1996 – Thomas Gallagher, M.S., computer science, recently became dean of the University of Montana's Missoula College, where he's been a faculty member since 2001 and has served in several administrative roles. **Trinity Parker**, B.A., political science, recently joined Symetra Life Insurance Co. as senior vice president for marketing, communication and public affairs. Most recently, Parker was regional manager of government and community relations for Sound Transit. **Orlando Steinauer**, B.A., sociology, head coach for the Hamilton Tiger-Cats in the Canadian Football League, was recently inducted into the Snohomish County Sports Hall of Fame.

1998 – After a serving a two-year federal district court clerkship in the Middle District of Pennsylvania and a 14-year career as a commercial litigator at a law firm in eastern Pennsylvania, **Todd Cook**, B.A., communication, recently returned to Snohomish County to work as a litigator at Beresford Booth PLLC in his hometown of Edmonds.

1999 – Kelly Liske, B. A., accounting, is the chief banking officer for First Federal in Port Townsend and is involved in several community organizations as president of the non-profit Christmas for Children, vice president and treasurer of Big Blue Boosters of Chimacum and a board member of the Jefferson County Healthcare Foundation. Liske recently received a 2019 Jefferson County Heart of Service Award, sponsored by the Peninsula Daily News and area Rotary Clubs. **Heather Hinsley**, B.A., interdisciplinary concentration, is a chef and baker in Durango, Colorado, who recently became the culinary manager at Manna soup kitchen, where she teaches culinary and food handling skills to students hoping to gain employment and move out of homelessness.

2000 – Charles Hightower, B.A., psychology, is an orthopedic surgeon in Alaska and recently opened his own practice, Enhance Orthopedic Surgery, in Juneau.

2002 – Sierra Grden, B.A., industrial design, recently became the corporate chef for Precept Wine, whose wines include Waterbrook, Canoe Ridge, Browne Family Vineyards and Ste. Chapelle. **Allison Schei Pringle**, B.A., human services, completed her first Ironman competition, in Santa Rosa, California, on May 11. That's a total of 140.6 miles: a 2.4-mile swim, a 112-mile bike ride, and 26.2-mile run, all in one really long day. **Cape Powers**, MBA, recently became the director of the Peoria Water Services Department in Arizona.

2004 – Niki (Behymer) Nelson, B.A., anthropology, is a judicial assistant for the state of Oregon's Department of Consumer Business Services, Workers' Compensation Board, Hearings Division. **Michael Farmer**, M.Ed., school administration, '05, was recently selected as the superintendent of the Dieringer School District. Most recently, he was executive director of innovation and learning at the Eatonville School District.

2008 – PGA Professional **Cathy Kim**, B.A., political science, recently became a golf teacher at the 1757 Golf Club in Dulles, Virginia. Before that, Kim was director of player development at TPC Summerlin in Las Vegas. **Darcy Schab**, B.A., business administration – management information systems, recently became CEO of Alliance Enterprises, a software and services company in Dupont.

2011 – Hannah Knowles, B.A., business administration - marketing and international business, is assistant director of marketing and communications for the Oregon State University College of Public Health and Human Services.

2012 – Jason Smith, initial superintendent's certificate, is principal of Rogers High School in Puyallup and was recently named the Jostens Renaissance Educator of the Year. **Becky Gottlieb**, B.S., environmental science - terrestrial ecology, is a student affairs manager for the School for Field Studies in Kenya and plans this fall to enroll in the EU's Erasmus Mundus master of science program in environmental science, policy and management. Gottlieb and her cohort will study in several locations throughout Europe, including Hungary, Greece and the U.K.

2014 – Michelle Ross-Cybula, initial superintendent's certificate, was recently selected as the superintendent of the Cle Elum-Roslyn School District. **Evie Tatara**, B.S., kinesiology - pre-physical therapy, graduated from Lynchburg College in Virginia with a Doctor of Physical Therapy degree and recently became a physical therapist in Maryland.

2016 – Tyler Voight, communication studies, is a rehabilitation counselor for Sound Vocational Services.

2017 – Katie Voight, BAE, language, literature and cultural studies, teaches second grade at Vernice Vossbeck Elementary School in Lynden.

Marriages

Larry Hanson and **Brenda Horat**, '85, B.A., interior design and merchandising, on Sept. 16, 2017.

Breanna Carlson, '11, B.A., history, and Adam Decker on Oct. 20, 2018, in Yakima.

William Beyer, '12, B.A., creative writing, and **Kristina Poffenroth**, '12, B.A., creative writing, on May 11, 2019, in Spokane.

Katie VandenBos, '17, BAE, language, literature and cultural studies, and **Tyler Voight**, '16, communication studies, on June 24, 2018, in Whatcom County.

Obituaries

1938 – Leota Ruth "Odey" Hunter Copstead, 98, a retired school nurse, on March 28, 2018.

1950 – Deryl K. Sleigh, 93, a U.S. Navy veteran, on April 5, 2019. **Bessie B. Dvorachek**, 90, on May 28, 2019.

1952 – Theodore Rogers, 86, a U.S. Army veteran who retired from Lockheed Missiles and Space Co., where he made many contributions to the Polaris, Poseidon and Trident weapon systems, on Oct. 3, 2017, in Mendocino, California.

1954 – Gordon Ronald "Pat" Young, 94, a U.S. Army veteran and retired teacher, principal and district administrator, on March 29, 2019.

1955 – Alan K. Swanberg, 89, a retired teacher in the Anacortes School District who helped in the formation of Whatcom County Water District No. 10 and the South Lake Whatcom Fire Department, on June 2, 2019.

1956 – Sharon Rose Gordon Greer, 84, on May 11, 2019, in San Rafael, California. **Glenn C. LaFave**, 88, a Korean War veteran who had a long career in banking, most recently in Vancouver, Washington, on April 18, 2019.

1957 – Ruth Ann Poynter, 83, retired from the King County Library System, on May 2, 2019.

1959 – Kirby R. Cleveland, 81, a retired teacher and administrator in the North Thurston School District who later taught at St. Martin's College, The Evergreen State College and Western and served as a special education consultant, on Feb. 23, 2019. **Patty M. Norman**, 93, a retired teacher, on May 29, 2019, in Edmonds.

1960 – Darrell “Coach” Pearson, a Korean War veteran and long-time teacher and coach at Mount Vernon High School, on March 21, 2019. **Gary Warren Phillips**, 81, a retired middle school teacher in Port Angeles, on May 10, 2018, in Lebanon, Oregon.

1961 – Gary Eugene Mose, 80, a retired high school teacher and basketball coach and real estate broker, on May 8, 2019, in Arlington. **Charles Wetzel**, 80, a retired teacher, counselor and elementary school principal, on May 17, 2019.

1963 – Gregory Thomas Francis Pitsch Sr., 85, on April 16, 2019, in Bellingham.

1964 – LeRoy “Bert” Brooke, 100, a U.S. Navy veteran and retired teacher at Bremerton High School, on April 12, 2019. **Melvyn Douglas Cowin**, 77, on April 1, 2019. **Marjorie June Jacobs Johnson**, 91, a retired elementary school teacher, on June 8, 2019, in Bellingham. **Margaret Anne “Margie” Lindhout**, 78, on April 17, 2019, in Rancho Mirage, California. **Gordon Thompson**, 80, on March 1, 2019.

1965 – H. Bruce Parker, 95, a retired woodshop teacher at Mount Vernon High School who went on to a career as a master wood craftsman, on March 18, 2019, in Seattle.

1966 – Carter French, 81, a retired middle school science teacher in the Everett School District, on May 9, 2019.

1967 – Kenneth E. Breer, 81, who retired from Seattle First National Bank and was a ski instructor, on May 19, 2019. **Edward J. Wahl**, 78, on March 13, 2019, in Bellingham.

1968 – Leon Charles Berthiaume, 78, a retired elementary and middle school teacher in Lakewood, on April 8, 2018, in Seattle. **Sharon L. (Burmark) Koch**, 70, on April 22, 2019. **Richard Gary Olson**, 72, a U.S. Navy veteran and retired accountant, on May 1, 2019, in Bellingham.

1969 – Charles Hill Kale, 72, a U.S. Army veteran and a retired probation officer, on May 8, 2019, in Bellingham.

1970 – Michael Richard Keefe, 75, a U.S. Army Vietnam War veteran who was awarded the Purple Heart and Army Commendation Medal for Heroism, retired from the U.S. Postal Service, on May 1, 2019.

1971 – Sharon Koch, 70, a retired teacher, on April 22, 2019. **Karim Alipour Fard**, who spent 30 years working at California’s State Council on Developmental Disabilities, on March 18, 2018.

1972 – John Ernest Hoggarth, a veteran of World War II and the Korean War who served in the U.S. Navy and Air Force, on April 14, 2019, in Bellingham. **Bill Omais**, 72, a U.S. Army veteran retired from the IRS and a forensic accounting investigator, on Aug. 11, 2018, on Bainbridge Island. **James Wilcox Sr.**, 72, a U.S. Army veteran who was a teacher and coach at Napavine High School, on March 31, 2018.

1973 – Tam Michael Frank Hutchinson, 69, a retired teacher, coach, and athletic director of the Oroville School District, on July 25, 2018, in Seattle.

1974 – Beryl Marjorie Kramer, 92, of Gig Harbor, on Aug. 1, 2018. **Irene Lawseth**, 99, a retired special education teacher, on March 30, 2019. **Bruce Craig Spencer**, 67, a retired senior vice president at both Bank of America and Financial Pacific Leasing, on April 13, 2017, in Lakewood.

1975 – John Hatzenbiler, on April 6, 2018, in Denver.

1976 – Niki Elofson-Gilbertson, 68, of the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe, who worked for Employment Security and the General Assistance program and was adept at river fishing, on May 13, 2019. **John McCartney**, 64, national and world news editor at the Daily Herald in Everett, on Sept. 25, 2018. **Michael Jon Rasmusson**, 73, a Vietnam War veteran who went on to have a 30-year career in banking and earn his pilot’s license, on March 23, 2019, in Seattle. **Paul Fritz Schorno**, 66, retired general manager for community organizations including Sudden Valley, on Aug. 19, 2018.

1978 – Sister Virginia Schroeder, 74, who taught in Catholic elementary schools in Oregon and later was director of admissions at Mt. Angel Seminary, on March 19, 2019, in Lake Oswego, Oregon.

1982 – Alan Michael Cote, 61, former president of the Inland Boatmen’s Union/Marine Division ILWU, on April 5, 2019. **Janet Mendel-Hartvig**, 58, on Feb. 8, 2018. **Molly Irene Mignon**, 83, an author and expert in the study of Mayan

culture who led tours of Mayan ruins in Central America, on Feb. 2, 2019.

1984 – James R. Holley, 63, on March 25, 2018. **Scott David Kimmel**, 57, who worked in the employee benefits industry, on April 3, 2019.

1985 – JoAnne A. Tripp, 80, a retired case manager for the state of Washington, on March 24, 2019, in Bellingham.

1986 – Sandra Lyn Abley-Salas, 65, on April 21, 2019, in Oak Harbor. **Raymond Joseph Schultz**, 62, who worked in computer science and built boats, furniture and musical instruments, on May 27, 2019.

1987 – Virginia “Ginny” McEvoy, 88, on June 3, 2019.

1988 – DeAnn Spratt, 59, on April 27, 2018, in Orlando, Florida.

1989 – Rini Ariani Sulaiman, 57, a longtime Shoreline resident and environmental toxicologist, on April 18, 2019, in Jakarta, Indonesia.

1990 – Joseph Clemens Finkbonner, 90, a fisher, merchant marine, purse seiner and a founder of the Lummi Aquaculture Project, on May 6, 2019.

1991 – Peggy M. Jones, 80, on Nov. 4, 2018, in Bellingham

1995 – Clinton Dean Crumley, 47, a medical records systems analyst, on May 12, 2019, in Graham.

1997 – Darren Nienaber, 47, an attorney, writer and environmentalist who worked for King and Mason counties and the city of Olympia and started a non-profit, People and Otters, focused on environmental preservation in the Pacific Northwest, on March 18, 2019.

1999 – Leslie J. Ward, 59, a special education teacher, on April 25, 2019, in Bellingham.

2000 – Nathan Erik Knudson, 40, on Dec. 16, 2017, in Seattle.

2002 – Michael Kramer, 40, a captain for San Juan Safaris, on March 26, 2019. **Melissa Nichole Scott-David**, 52, on March 26, 2018.

2009 – Carrie Lee Schmitz, 67, an early childhood educator, on May 7, 2019, in Vancouver, Washington.

Faculty, Staff and Friends

Noemi Ban, 96, a Holocaust survivor and former elementary school teacher who later in life became an outspoken advocate and educator on the horrors of the Holocaust and the enduring power of love and tolerance, on June 7, 2019, in Bellingham. Ban and other Holocaust survivors were a pivotal force in the founding of what is now Western’s Ray Wolpow Institute for the Study of the Holocaust, Genocide and Crimes Against Humanity.

Marie A. Christy, 98, who retired from Western in 1986, on April 3, 2019, in Mount Vernon.

Melvin Gordon Davidson, 81, a former physics professor and director of the WWU Computer Center, at WWU from 1967 to 2001, on May 12, 2019.

Richard Lee Francis, 89, a professor emeritus of English who taught from 1969 to 1992 and served as chair of WWU’s Art Acquisition Committee for 10 years, on May 10, 2019.

William Corbin Keep, 86, a writer, poet, traveler, house builder and fly fisher who taught English literature at Western for 30 years and was president of the Fourth Corner Fly Fishers, on March 5, 2019.

Irwin J. LeCocq, 94, a World War II veteran of the Army Air Corps, retired president of People’s Bank, and former member of the WWU Board of Trustees and the Western Foundation board, among many other community leadership roles, on March 14, 2019.

Dorothy Ann Lee, 81, who worked in the University Residences office for more than 20 years, on May 17, 2019.

Sharon Marie Miller, 71, who worked in administrative roles in the English and Music departments as well as the Western Foundation, on May 18, 2019.

Kathy Rae Wood, 74, a member of WWU’s class of 1989 and a talented artist who worked as a program manager at WWU, for the Faculty Senate and the Science, Math and Technology Education program, on Nov. 19, 2018, in Bellingham.



THANK YOU,
DEATH CAB FOR CUTIE AND ODESZA
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Photo by Rhys Logan, '11



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