



October 11, 2021

Hello, SBCTC colleagues:

Today, and every day, we stand in solidarity with President Biden's recent [Proclamation on Indigenous Peoples' Day](#), to recognize and honor the original inhabitants of the United States of America. We celebrate by centering and amplifying the Indigenous First Peoples - their contributions, joy, resilience, strength, power, and leadership – and stand with our Indigenous relatives around the world who are protecting their rights, ancestral lands, and way of life.

And with this acknowledgement, I encourage you, my esteemed colleagues, to consider honoring our Indigenous family by engaging in the practice of remembering. In an exercise prompted by [Luis Ortega](#), he asks us to consider how the practice of remembering can be a powerful tool in both celebrating and honoring the power and joy of the Indigenous First Peoples, and for recognizing the history of their displacement, and the violent trauma of colonization and enduring violence inflicted by virtue of policies and practices that sought to eradicate and/or assimilate them for generations.

So, today, consider all the ways you remember whether it be on your own, or with your friends, colleagues, family, and communities. Think on how we practice the art of remembering by engaging in conversations, rituals, and gatherings that involve bringing to the present a specific memory. We remember by telling stories over dinner, through national and state holidays, by returning to places we've visited, by gathering in places of worship. We keep alive the memories of our loved ones we've lost. The act of remembering is how we individually and collectively create, strengthen, and sustain a memory over time. And our memories have a voice, a positionality, an agenda, and a way of influencing what and whom we recognize and honor. For far too long, our country's memories have been devoid of an accurate recounting of the history of our nation, and this has, in turn, systematically erased the footprints of our Indigenous ancestors.

As a collective, we have the power to shift the future and transform our system by being radically intentional with our work in restoring our state's memory bank. I see it happening every day. It occurs through our system's practice of land acknowledgements; the scaling of antiracist curriculum; our efforts to create places of belonging; the growth of our system's affinity groups; the expansion of our [WA's American Indian Indigenous Studies programs](#). There is a groundswell of work underway to uplift the voices of our state's First Peoples by so many across our system. May our work rightfully honor and celebrate their lives, and may it be remembered well into the future.

With much respect and admiration,
The Equity, Diversity and Inclusion department

Please see the additional poem on the next page.

*Remember the sky that you were born under,
know each of the star's stories.
Remember the moon, know who she is.
Remember the sun's birth at dawn, that is the
strongest point of time. Remember sundown
and the giving away to night.
Remember your birth, how your mother struggled
to give you form and breath. You are evidence of
her life, and her mother's, and hers.
Remember your father. He is your life, also.
Remember the earth whose skin you are:
red earth, black earth, yellow earth, white earth
brown earth, we are earth.
Remember the plants, trees, animal life who all have their
tribes, their families, their histories, too. Talk to them,
listen to them. They are alive poems.
Remember the wind. Remember her voice. She knows the
origin of this universe.
Remember you are all people and all people
are you.
Remember you are this universe and this
universe is you.
Remember all is in motion, is growing, is you.
Remember language comes from this.
Remember the dance language is, that life is.
Remember.*

—Joy Harjo, Member of the Muscogee Creek Nation and the first Native American United States Poet
Laureate