

# URGE

## Unlearning Racism in Geoscience



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### URGE Policies for Working with Communities of Color for University/Organization

The NW5C+ URGE pod at Lewis & Clark College, Luther College, Whitman College, and Willamette University reflected upon our collective experiences working with communities of color. This document summarizes our reflections and possible actions for improvement. It is composed of a series of reflections of our different experiences at our different institutions.

#### **Whitman College geoscience outreach to Communities of Color**

At Whitman College, we held a summer science program in 2019 for middle school through high school students of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR), those with Walla Walla, Cayuse, and Umatilla tribal heritage. Individual outreach classes typically lasted 2 hours and spanned the following disciplines: **physics** (general), **astronomy** (planetarium visit), **biophysics** (materials not easily classified as solid, liquid, or gas), **chemistry** (solar cell activity), **biology** (pollen microscopy and microbiology), **geology** (6 hour field trip to a location of indigenous significance and review of local geology). Although this program was intended to continue in 2020, both the elimination of our half-time *science outreach coordinator* position and the pandemic intervened. The CTUIR is eager for this science summer outreach program to occur in 2021, yet the biggest barrier is the lack of the *science outreach coordinator* support from the college to undertake the communication and logistical challenges. The summer 2021 program is in discussion.

Two Whitman colleagues, ecologist Tim Parker and environmental geoscientist Nicholas Bader have worked with the local Blue Mountain Land Trust non-profit organization to teach a week-long summer field science program for 9-12th grade students. This program occurred in June of 2019. Full scholarships were available to cover participation costs for underrepresented students; ~45% of the public school student population identify as Latinx, BIPOC, or more than one race. 2019 was the first year of this program so initiatives were planned to reach out to the entire community more effectively, but the pandemic will prevent this program from occurring in 2020 (governor's orders) and in 2021 (vaccination uncertainty). We hope this program will occur in the future, yet the science outreach coordinator would aid this science outreach to our underserved community of color.

Since 1992 and primarily since 2006, Nicolaysen has informed herself about the prehistory and history, including colonial devastation, of the Unangan (Aleut) people of the Aleutian



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archipelago. Her engagement includes giving science outreach talks when possible, attending the Alaska Anthropological Association conference, writing an essay for a book whose proceeds support a culture and language camp on Unalaska, speaking with tribal elders, volunteering for the community's cultural exploration of an archaeological site led by MOTA. Since 2017, Nicolaysen has given land acknowledgements at the start of each semester's courses and at the start of scientific and public presentations related to her Aleutian work.

Nicolaysen is in the process of formulating a science communication project with the staff of the Museum of the Aleutians (MOTA) on Unalaska Island. This would seek to engage with archaeological heritage questions designated by the Unangan (Aleut) Qawalangin Tribe, partly as represented by members serving at the Ounalashka Corporation which has a sponsor relationship with MOTA. The incredibly diverse community of Unalaska has many with Pacific Islander and Filipino heritage who also benefit from the MOTA educational programs. Nicolaysen is invested long-term in supporting the Unalaska and Nikolski communities and creating closer ties with the Unangan people.

### **Lewis & Clark College field trip on the housing crisis in Portland, OR**

As part of the Lewis & Clark College Environmental Studies Symposium in spring 2019, a one-day field trip to downtown Portland was available to any interested student. The field trip aimed to explore the causes, experiences, and realities of homelessness in Portland. The houseless population contains greater rates of BIPOC than the housed population, and so the planning and execution of our field trip included extensive interaction with BIPOC communities. As a note, the field trip included the following visits:

- The Right 2 Dream too Tiny Village, a space that provides refuge and a safe space to rest or sleep undisturbed for Portland's unhoused community who cannot access affordable housing or shelter.
- Union Gospel Mission, that provides meals, shelter, and a recovery program to unhoused people.
- Discussions with the equity manager of Multnomah County's Joint Office of Homeless Services (JOHS), and the Executive Director of the Central Eastside Industrial Council (CEIC), that drives the development of inner neighborhoods for business revitalization.
- Street Roots, an alternative newspaper sold by people experiencing homelessness and poverty to earn an income.
- Portland Police Neighborhood Response Team Officers