



The Work of Inclusion

Since our beginning in 1910, Camp Fire has always been committed to inclusion and equity. Through over 110 years of existence, we have strived to create safe and inclusive places for all children to connect to nature, to each other, and to themselves. Our current statement of inclusion reads:

Camp Fire believes in the dignity and the intrinsic worth of every human being. We strive to create safe and inclusive environments that celebrate diversity and foster positive relationships.

Because we value safety and inclusion, we must also be willing to recognize practices and traditions that are no longer helpful to the youth we serve, and in some cases might actually be harmful. In recent years Camp Fire has been taking steps to address our long history of cultural appropriation of native and indigenous peoples. We have long used names, practices, and images that were not ours to use, and were culturally insensitive. While we recognize that these were originally meant to honor and respect indigenous peoples, we now see that their continued use is no longer proper or helpful.

To address this history and begin on a new path, we are committed to no longer using indigenous or native names, practices, and images at Camp Fire Samish & Camp Kirby. This is a way to live out our values of inclusivity, safety, and equity.

At Camp Fire Samish & Camp Kirby, we have taken the following actions to address this history of cultural appropriation:

- We have stopped the use of the Name Book, Symbol Book, Gowns, and Ceremonial Costumes. These practices were stopped several years ago.
- We are renaming certain cabins, areas of camp, and camper units where appropriative language was being used. [Click on this link for a list of these new names.](#)
- We will be removing the Story Pole and the Upper Totem Pole.
 - We have done extensive research on both poles, and neither was carved by a native or indigenous carver. The Story Pole also has extreme dry rot and presents a safety concern to our campers.

Camp Fire Samish

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- We plan to remove these poles on March 16, 2024, the day of our Spring Work Party at camp. You will be invited on that day to come help do some cleanup at camp, and say goodbye to the story pole and totem on the hill. The poles will be removed after the Work Party and re-naturalized into the woods of Camp Kirby.
- We will be removing shields in the Main Lodge that have appropriative symbols and names on them. These shields will be put into storage while we make efforts to connect them with the people who originally made them.

We hope that these actions will make Camp Fire Samish & Camp Kirby a safe, welcoming, and inclusive place for ALL young people for many years to come.

We also recognize that these changes come with a sense of loss. For many of our alumni, these names, practices, and images were a meaningful and important part of their Camp Kirby experience. We in no way want to diminish the importance or significance of anyone's experience of camp. These changes are geared towards serving the youth of today and the years to come.

While names, practices, and images at Camp Kirby might change – the core experience of campers remains the same. We remain completely committed to creating safe, inclusive spaces for young people to connect to the outdoors, to others, and to themselves. The same magic that you experienced at Camp Kirby remains today, even if some of the building names are different.

If you have questions about any of these changes, please reach out to Marcus or Kathryn, and we would be happy to talk with you.

Thank you for your continued commitment to Camp Fire Samish & Camp Kirby, and to creating an inclusive, welcoming, and bright future for all campers!

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