**Elizabeth Woody Oregon Poet Laureate 2016-2018**

**Overview:**

Elizabeth Woody is a poet and educator of Navajo, Wasco, and Yakama descent and is an enrolled tribal member of the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs. Woody’s writing focuses on the histories of her ancestors, the rich Pacific Northwest landscape, and the experience of being a tribal member, an American, and a woman in contemporary society. Woody is the winner of the American Book Award. In 2016, she was named the eighth poet laureate of Oregon—the first person of American Indian heritage to hold that honor. Oregon poets laureate are appointed by the governor and serve a two-year term as cultural ambassadors, traveling around the state to share the power of reading and writing poetry.

In this lesson, students will explore and analyze Woody’s poetry. Students will have the opportunity to listen to Woody speak about her work and her relationship with language and the landscape. They will reflect on and discuss her perspective and the process by which she writes. Students will also learn a structured strategy for analyzing poetic text and recognizing key themes. Finally, students will demonstrate what they have learned by creating a group analysis and presentation of one of Woody’s poems.

**Background for teachers:**

ELIZABETH WOODY Teachers should become very familiar with Elizabeth Woody and her poetry. Woody is an enrolled member of the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, Oregon, is of Yakama Nation descent, and is “born for” the Tódích’íinii (Bitter Water clan) of the Navajo Nation. Her paternal grandfather’s clan is Mą‘ii deeshgiizhinii (Coyote Pass – Jemez clan). She received the American Book Award in 1990 and the William Stafford Memorial Award for Poetry and was a finalist for an Oregon Book Award in 1995. In 2017, she was named the eighth poet laureate of Oregon. Woody has published three books of poetry. She also writes short fiction, essays, and is a visual artist.

**Books of poetry**

• Luminaries of the Humble, (Sun Tracks, Vol 30), University of Arizona Press.

• Seven Hands Seven Hearts, Eighth Mountain Press.

• Hand into Stone: Poems, Contact II Publications.

**Resources about Elizabeth Woody Bend Magazine**

“Elizabeth Woody’s Unusual Path to Poet Laureate” <https://bendmagazine.com/elizabeth-woodys-unusual-path-poet-laureate/>

**Oregon Public Broadcasting Presentation (Video)**

“Elizabeth Woody: Transcending Chaos Through Art” https://www.opb.org/television/programs/ artbeat/segment/oregon-poet-laureate-elizabeth-woody-warm-springs-poetry/

**Oregon Poetic Voices (Video)**

<http://oregonpoeticvoices.org/poet/303/>

**Milwaukee Poetry Series (Video)**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PKa3gK7X-iA>

**Poetry Reading and Talk by Elizabeth Woody (Video)**

<https://vimeo.com/215695541>

**Oregon Humanities Center (Video)**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=atn_Wn8yJJI>

**Cultural Trust (Website)**

<https://culturaltrust.org/oregon-poet-laureate/elizabeth-woody/>

**Poetry Foundation (Website)**

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/elizabeth-woody>

--Teachers should also familiarize themselves with the history of Celilo Falls, the ancient petroglyph/ pictograph called Tsagaglalal (She Who Watches), and the activism of David Sohappy, all of which play an important role in one of the Elizabeth Woody poems included in this lesson.

**CELILO FALLS**

Celilo Falls (or Wy-am, meaning “echo of falling water” or “sound of water upon the rocks,” in several American Indian languages) was one of history’s great marketplaces. Tribes from across the Pacific Northwest came to the Celilo Falls area on the Columbia River Gorge to fish for salmon, trade, feast, and participate in games and religious ceremonies. It is estimated that more than 5,000 Indigenous people would gather at the falls each year, and more than a half-dozen tribes had permanent villages between the falls and the present-day town of The Dalles. In 1957, the Army Corps of Engineers completed the Dalles Dam, just downstream from the site of Celilo Falls. On the morning of March 10, 1957, the dam was opened and the resulting lake that formed behind it flooded the ancient site of Celilo Falls in a matter of hours. Today, only Celilo Village, a small Native American fishing community, exists near the former site of the falls.

**TSAGAGLALAL (SHE WHO WATCHES)**

Tsagaglalal (pronounced “sa-ga-gla-la”), or She Who Watches, is an ancient Native America petroglyph/pictograph located on a basalt cliff on the north bank of the Columbia River, approximately 16 miles downriver from the former site of Celilo Falls. In the oral tradition of several Columbia River tribes, She Who Watches was a female chief who was turned into stone by Coyote in order to watch over the people for all eternity. For many people, She Who Watches is a powerful figure who bears silent witness to the ancient history of the Indigenous people of the region, their inseparable connection to the river and surrounding landscape, their continued presence, and the promise of renewal.

**DAVID SOHAPPY**

David Sohappy (1925–1991) was a member of the Wanapum band of the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation. Sohappy was a religious leader and political activist who led the fight to restore fishing rights to Native American tribes along the Columbia River. For two decades, beginning in the 1960s, Sohappy and others participated in direct actions and legal cases that sought to restore off-reservation tribal fishing rights that were established in the Yakama Treaty of 1855. In the 1980s, Sohappy was arrested and imprisoned for nearly two years for refusing to comply with U.S. government fishing regulations. Sohappy’s struggle gained both regional and national attention and he became—and remains—a hero to many tribal activists and environmentalists.

**Resources on Celilo Falls**

**Columbia River | Celilo Falls history (Webpage)** https://www.critfc.org/salmon-culture/tribal-salmon-culture/celilo-falls/

**Bock-Schroeder Foundation: Celilo Falls (Webpage)** <http://bock-schroeder.com/celilo-falls>

**Oregon Live:** **Celilo’s success might be path forward for Columbia River tribal housing — but it wasn’t easy (Article)** https://www.oregonlive.com/politics/2016/05/celilos\_success\_might\_be\_path.html

**The Story of Celilo Falls (Video)** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=on4tE78ed0A>

**Resources on Tsagaglalal (She-Who-Watches)** [https://www.docsteach.org/documents/document/tsagaglalal-she-whowatches-along-the-columbia-river-before-relocation-prior-to-flooding-of-thearea-by-the-dalles-dam](https://www.docsteach.org/documents/document/tsagaglalal-she-whowatches-along-the-columbia-river-before-relocation-prior-to-flooding-of-thearea-by-the-dalles-dam%20) (Image)

<https://www.columbian.com/news/2014/aug/16/she-who-watches-horsethieflake-aboriginal-art/> (Article)

**Resources on David Sohappy**

**River People: Behind the Case of David Sohappy. 1981. Produced by Michal Conford and Michele Zaccheo (Film)** https://www.youtube.com/ watch?v=wvvnC3fZDDY&feature=youtu.be

**Indian Fishing Activist David Sohappy Sr. Dies. 1991. Seattle Times. (Article)** http://community.seattletimes.nwsource.com/archive/?- date=19910507&slug=1281735

**Yakima Rebel Stands Ground for Fishing Rights: Indians David Sohappy believes in tradition and an 1855 treaty guaranteeing an unlimited salmon and steelhead harvest. Dec. 30., 1990. Los Angeles Times. Associated Press. (Article)** <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1990-12-30-mn-10145-story.html>

**Resources for Teaching Poetry**

**Poets.org (Website)** <https://poets.org>

**Academy of American Poets (Website)** <https://poets.org/academy-american-poets>

**National Poetry Month (Website)** <https://poets.org/national-poetry-month>

**Poetry Resources For Teachers | from Poetry Foundation** <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/articles/69415/nurturing-the-omnivore-approaches-to-teaching-poetry>

**Standards**

**Oregon English standards**

9-10. RL.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze word choice and the impact on meaning.

9-10.RL.6 Analyze a perspective, points of view, or cultural experience in works that draw on a wide range of world literature across time and location, including consideration of which perspectives are represented and which are absent.

9-10.SL.1 Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9-10 topics, texts, and issues, building on other’s ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.