

Meeting the Man Who Pursued the Importance of a Name

Alderwood Elementary



What an honor it was to have [Dr. Bert Webber](#), retired professor emeritus of geography and environmental social studies from Huxley College at Western Washington University, and his wife Sue come with us on the 2017 field trip with Alderwood Elementary. Why was this so special? Dr. Webber is the visionary who understood the importance of having a name that connects the parts of a watershed ecosystem across political boundaries to strengthen the ability to protect it. He started promoting the name “Salish Sea” in 1989 but was not able to get it officially adopted by the U.S. and Canada until 2009.

He began to realize the importance of a name when he started teaching at Huxley College and saw how all these different places in Canada and the US are one ecosystem. In his 2017 interview with [Bellamy Pailthorp on KNKX Radio](#), Dr. Webber said, “If you see something, a place that doesn’t have a name, there’s that old kind of rule of thumb that you can’t know something that doesn’t have a name, so this ecosystem needed a name.” He came up with the term Salish to honor the common roots of the languages of the 60 tribes of indigenous people in the US and Canada that have lived by the Salish Sea for the last 5,000 years.



Sue Webber is very active in supporting the Alderwood Community and enjoyed sharing her strong marine biology background with students.



Now that it has a name, it makes it easier for each of us to identify with this international ecosystem. The more we learn about it, the more we care and realize how our everyday choices impact the health of the watershed of Salish Sea that surrounds us. When this awareness starts young, it can help build healthy lifelong habits.

Dr. Webber encourages us to take ownership of the Salish Sea and treat it like the home we live in – because that is what it is. That is what the Salish Sea Experience hopes to inspire in the next generation of stewards.

Dr. Webber, your vision and passion inspires us! Thank you for joining us!