



## Chemistry, Ecology, Drama! Puget Sound 2050

Peter Donaldson

### ***Welcome Students and Parents!***

Mark your calendars for Friday July 29 at 1:30. During the last hour of the last day of class, we will perform our play called ***Salmon Boy***. It is a traditional teaching story from the native cultures of Northwest Coast. I wrote the script with parts for many young actors in mind so it should be a good workout for everybody. We will use this ancient story to anchor our exploration of historical patterns and future trends in the Puget Sound bioregion. We are all citizens of this place.

The BIG IDEA of this class is to use the ***old stories*** of traditional ecological wisdom to consider the ***new patterns*** of behavior that people are adopting to bring the human species into sustainable relationship with the Earth's resources. The ***Puget Sound Partnership*** has been given the task by the Governor to repair the health of Puget Sound by 2020. You can learn more here: <http://www.psp.wa.gov/>

In our class, however, we will go well beyond 2020, analyzing all of the systems that we will need to adapt to achieve full sustainability in our region by 2050. Our inquiry about the year 2050 is not a whimsical exercise in science fiction but a science-based study of how systems work. We will explore water systems, food systems, materials flow and nutrient cycling, energy systems, transportation systems and green building strategies in order to articulate a realistic vision for life in our bioregion in the year 2050.

Perhaps the most significant outcome from our three short weeks together will be not only new knowledge in our minds and new friends in our circle, but a new sense of stewardship in our hearts. What is our responsibility in being part of the whole system? How do systems work? Chemistry, ecology, drama!

I look forward to learning together.

***Peter Donaldson***

### **About your Instructor**

***Peter Donaldson*** works as a strategic storyteller, educator, and community facilitator with 26 years of experience in supporting learning communities, managing non-profits, designing curriculum, building partnerships and promoting new forms of organizational learning.

Peter was recently appointed as Visiting Scholar to the Dan Evans Chair for the Liberal Arts at The Evergreen State College. He is a veteran facilitator of group process supporting learning communities across disciplines and across the nation. Peter has taught at all levels from kindergarten to college, teenagers to teachers, and has created numerous school partnerships integrating sustainability, history, ecology, and excellence in writing, drawing, and theatre. He received the national award for Youth

Theater Director of the Year from the American Alliance for Theater and Education in 1991. He has authored seventeen plays, produced some sixty others and tours nationally with two one-man shows, *SALMONPEOPLE* and *The Life and Times of Leonardo da Vinci*. Visit [www.peterdonaldson.net](http://www.peterdonaldson.net)

## **Class Description**

In this fast-paced, fun-filled course we integrate chemistry, ecology and drama to understand the past and analyze the future of the Puget Sound bioregion where salmon and people have lived together for thousands of years. Scientists say that Puget Sound is not healthy. The Governor has set up a new agency called the Puget Sound Partnership with a tall order to bring the ecological health of Puget Sound back into balance within the next couple of decades. How can we get there? What will life be like in this region in the year 2050? Fifth graders will be 52 years old. 6th graders will be 53. That's the same age as your teacher is now! In this course we dissect, analyze and synthesize EVERYTHING! We dissect salmon to understand their body chemistry, the features and functions that make them an indicator species of our bioregion. We explore chemistry to learn the basic ecological building blocks of Puget Sound. We analyze a Northwest Coast Indian salmon legend to produce a professional play with lights and sound on a real stage. Finally, we analyze patterns from the past and build scenarios for the future to create a blue print for our lives in the Puget Sound bioregion in the year 2050.

## **Daily Rhythm**

The daily rhythm will include drama skill building, scientific inquiry, and small group reading, writing and research. Tuesday and Thursday will be rehearsal days. Daily scientific inquiries will be on integrated themes selected from chemistry, energy, hydrology, salmon biology, stream ecology, nutrient cycling, and the science behind technological innovations for a sustainable future.

## **Learning Objectives**

You will apply systems thinking to solve systems challenges.

You will learn the sweeping history of Puget Sound and research the intriguing choices for our future. You will apply your writing skills to produce the program for the play which will feature your research on life in the Puget Sound bioregion in the year 2050.

You will learn the basics of chemistry to understand how future technologies will be based on the principles of natural ecosystems like Puget Sound.

You will develop your acting skills to produce a Northwest Coast Indian salmon legend.