

----- "RE: Why is it so important to exonerate Chief Leschi?" -----

FROM:

<http://www.theolympian.com/home/news/20040305/opinion/8000.shtml>

CYNTHIA IYALL

Why is it so important to exonerate Chief Leschi?

This is the question I get asked the most from people throughout the Northwest and beyond.

It really pleases me to have an opportunity to share the rich history of the Nisqually Indian Tribe, mainly because it includes the history of my own ancestors. Even more exciting is the interest from such a variety of people including Indian and pioneer descendants, individuals and organizations from the historical community and those who enjoy knowing the history of this beautiful land they call home.

The reason it is so important to exonerate Chief Leschi is for the multiple generations of tribal ancestors who have lived a lifetime with the frustration and anger of knowing what happened to the last Chief of Nisqually.

They lived during a time that wouldn't cater to considering exoneration. Many of them lived during a time that would not assist or recognize the good in Native Americans at all.

The treaty descendants lived with great pride in their heritage and did not forget the tragedy of Leschi and his brother Quiemuth. They kept the story alive by telling their children and their grandchildren, as Leschi requested in his last speech. His descendants carried his name with great honor and respect. They have carried it very well.

It is out of respect and honor that we continue the effort to exonerate Leschi. It is the respect for our grandparents, great aunts and uncles and great-grandparents and the culture and traditions they worked to keep alive. It is to honor the work they did to continue the development of the tribe. It is to honor the legacy they have left for future generations and ours.

We also work toward exoneration for today's children and the future children of the tribe.

Chief Leschi is our historical icon. We want him to be portrayed honestly and correctly. Having a man of such importance portrayed as a murderer is not fair to the descendants of Medicine Creek.

They descend from a great man -- a man who was known for his intelligence, his ability to reason, being a good father and husband and being a man of great leadership.

It is important to have Leschi portrayed correctly so that the future, our children, have a true sense of where they come from -- so that they can inherit and feel the strength, pride, tenacity and intelligence that

Leschi left us.

The request to exonerate Chief Leschi has been very well published by the media, including newspapers, radio and television. This has brought inquiries from all over the country. I have had descendants of Lt. Kautz, Ezra Meeker, Leschi and many other pioneers and Indians of that time contact me to express their interest and support in clearing Leschi's name.

I greatly appreciate the support from this and so many other communities. We will continue to work this honorable task until it is complete. We do this so the spirit of Leschi can finally be free.

Cynthia Iyall, a descendant of Chief Leschi and member of the Nisqually Tribe, is a member of The Olympian's Diversity Panel. She can be reached at ciyall@netzero.net.

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