

Christine

This podcast is produced on the ancestral homeland of the Nooksack and Lummi people. They have been its stewards since time immemorial, respecting the land, river and ocean with the understanding that everything is connected, related and alive. We acknowledge the elders and their collective and individual plights and achievements. We consider the legacies of violence, displacement, migration and settlement that bring us together today. And we pursue ongoing action to build lasting relationships and grow together so that all may prosper.

(Interlude music plays)

Neil

WCLS in Whatcom County presents Library Stories, a podcast to open your eyes to all the ways your local public libraries matter. Join us as we reveal the power of sharing at the library. I'm your host, Neil McKay, Online Experience Coordinator for the Whatcom County Library System and today...

Well, here we are once again, I'm here with my boss, Mary Vermillion.

Mary

Hi, Neil and you're laughing because it's not just the two of us today, yeah.

Neil

It's not. We have a special guest. Do you want to introduce her?

Mary

I would love to introduce our colleague, Claire McElroy. Claire, welcome to the podcast.

Claire

Hello. It's a pleasure to be here.

Mary

She's here under duress. She's a little private. She's, so, we're trying to relax her a bit. We've been talking a bit about.

Claire

I keep fidgeting. I keep like wanting to tap or like drill my fingers on the table.

Mary

And we're like "don't tap things."

Neil

Don't tap.

Mary

So, but we're really glad to have you here, Claire and have you here today and join us to talk a little bit about what you do for the library system, and we're going to talk a little bit about Whatcom Reads, but first, do you have a place you wanted to start, Neil? Yeah.

Neil

I just wanted to establish what you do around here because I work across the aisle from you, literally and you know, it doesn't look like you're working.

Claire

It usually looks like I'm not doing anything at all.

Neil

You're kind of, you know.

Mary

So we've called you here to discuss.

Claire

Just sitting quietly, looking off into space, OK.

Neil

No, that's not true. It does look like you're doing a lot of work, but let's start with like the what's your title?

Claire

My official title is Adult Programming Coordinator for Whatcom County Library System.

Neil

OK. So, I mean let's mention here that you're still fairly new. You've been here for a year?

Claire

Ohh no, not even a year. Let's see, I came in mid-May, is when I started so I still feel very new, so I haven't even been through a full, you know, year cycle of events here, of programming so.

Mary

And some people may know you from where you were before. Folks listening to this podcast to be like "Claire!"

Claire

It's true, prior to this job, I was the Event Coordinator at Village books and Paper Dreams for six years. So, yeah, so. I definitely have some background of event programming.

Neil

Yeah, you came well recommended and with a lot of experience and it shows.

Claire

Shucks. Thanks.

Mary

So, what's different though here? Like, so you were planning all the author events and doing, you know, hosting events at Village Books. Now you're here on the library side of things. What's different? Are there different opportunities?

Claire

What's different? Well, right off the bat, the thing that comes to mind is just the number of branches in the Whatcom County Library System. You know, there's 10 branches. Before there, you know, where I worked there were two locations, with most events primarily happening at one of those two locations.

So, the library system is vast, really. And so, I see it as there's just a lot of potential. There's so many different places that I can, you know, line up programming. A lot of the branches already, in fact, most of the branches are very adept at coming up with robust programming and I'm kind of here to I think facilitate that or help in any way that I can or bring new ideas for programming to all of them. But I would say that that's kind of the biggest shift for me is just how many different venues there are.

Mary

And is it the venues? Is it also, I would think, it would also be the different communities, right?

Claire

Absolutely. Each branch has its own, of course, its own unique community, and each community has its own personality and things that their communities are interested in, which is just really exciting to me. So.

Neil

Can you think of anything off the top of your head for..

Claire

Oh, gosh.

Neil

...That, an example of that?

Claire

Oh, absolutely. Let's see, the Blaine community, they love their gardening programming up at that branch. Lots and lots of gardening. Which is lovely, and of course, the Everson and Sumas branches are local history is their-that's their jam for sure, as and the Lynden Library too, with their history series.

Neil

It is really interesting. So, 10 branches all over the county and focusing, you know, each one kind of has some focus that they know their community likes, but you also do some community, some county-wide events as well.

Mary

Yeah, yeah. System wide things that you plan for the...

Claire

Oh, you mean like events that happen like at multiple branches and so forth?

Neil

Yeah.

Claire

We have upcoming, you know, the sound bathing events that are programming that's going to happen.

Mary

That's a new one, right? That's, yeah.

Claire

Yeah, that is a brand new one, at least as far as I'm aware. So, I think that's going to happen at four different branches. People can learn about sound bathing and actually experience what that means, there's.

Neil

What *does* that mean?

Claire

It's, it has to do with, like, meditation and using sound.

Mary

Right here in Explorations it says...

Claire

Oh, Mary has it, she can reference for us.

Mary

“Immerse yourself in a relaxing and restorative sound bath experience.” So, and it's at 4 branches starting February 17th and the last one is May 18th and then it's at Deming, Ferndale, South Whatcom and Lynden libraries.

Claire

And I think that the person who's presenting that brings devices like soothing sound, things like bowls, and maybe some chimes. Maybe some music, I'm not sure.

Mary

Guess we'll all have to go.

Claire

I believe it's supposed to be a very soothing and meditative kind of experience.

Neil

It sounds like just the thing. So, what time of day is that? I'm just curious, OK.

Mary

They're all different times, but one's at 4:00, one's at 6:30 too, they're kind of different times, so you can see all that in Explorations on our online calendar. I'm also just on the adjacent page, it's the Salish Sea Guild gardening classes. So, you also were doing, yes, Blaine has a really great ongoing gardening series, but you've got some great classes coming up here with the Salish Seed Guild as well at lots of different branches. So yeah, that's another cool one.

Claire

That's with Celt Schira with the Salish Seed Guild is going to be presenting on medicinal gardening, traditional preservation methods, winter gardening. Yeah. So that's an example.

Mary

Are you seeing some trends developing like, are there certain interests that either you're hearing bubbling up from the communities or from the branches, or are you kind of identifying things like, “oh, we could really do a program about.” I don't know. You know, write your own book or you know, author events or are there some new ideas that you're hoping to launch?

Claire

I see and sound bathing is kind of is one of them. I definitely see a trend towards practices like, you know, I know that when I first started here, there was the Tai Chi at the branches and yoga at the branch, at some of the branches and now the sound bathing. I feel like there's definitely a mindfulness, wellness trend that's happening that people are eager to take part in and I think it's maybe it has to do

with the times in which we live, I don't know, but I, it seems that people are looking for ways to not only be more mindful, but also connect, have an opportunity to connect with other people in that process.

Mary

That's what the library can do so well, right? I mean, you know, mindfulness and the whole self-care is definitely a nationwide trend. So, you might come to the library to find books or other materials if you're exploring that in your life, and we can also present events where you can come together with other people and actually do the activity. So, it's just one, that's why I think the events, the programs that you and the Youth Services team and the branches create is just part of that, just the power of the library, right? Find so many good things and explore ideas and concepts, on your own or with others.

Claire

Yeah, this is what I'm learning here, is that how much libraries are gathering spaces for people? And you know, they're accessible. They're free and they're welcoming, you know, to all. So yeah, that's what something that I'm just very appreciative of.

Neil

Yeah. Well, and not only that, but in your role, you sometimes go to other organizations events. I'm thinking about this weekend. Tell me what you did this weekend.

Claire

Ohh, this weekend was fun. I went to the Pickford Film Center for the Treaty Day Film Festival that was organized by Children of the Setting Sun Productions, and I believe this was the 6th annual film festival and the event at the Pickford was the final event of the of the film festival. And so, I set up a table in the lobby and was there to talk to folks about our current Whatcom Reads title and author. Of course, *Red Paint* by Sasha Taq^wšəblu Lapointe, and it was great fun. I got to just be in the lobby and hang out and talk to folks about Whatcom Reads. And also I got to view a few of the shorts which were just wonderful. The films were just great, but it was a lovely community event for sure.

Mary

That was sold out.

Claire

It was sold out. Yes. Both showings, the shorts and the feature length film were sold out, you know, and it started at 10:00 AM, I mean, on a Saturday. That's pretty rare, I have to say, you know, two sold out movie screenings right early in the middle of the day. Yeah, like on Saturday, it was great.

Neil

On a Saturday, that was the tail end of a pretty severe snow.

Claire

Snow event. Yeah, exactly and there were not any empty seats. I mean, people, they all, everybody showed up who bought tickets and that was wonderful. I had brought the big book of treaties, from,

they were treaties from 1778 to 1883. And so, in that book was the Point Elliott Treaty, that we're celebrating today, in fact.

Everyone

Today is Treaty Day.

Claire

So that was interesting. I had a lot of interested people coming by to take a look at that book and see the actual language that's in the Treaty, so. And it was fun.

Mary

And you had those books there, so you were there primarily for Whatcom Reads, but you had lots of because I dropped by to say "hey" and take some pictures and you had terrific books that people could check out, as well as some free copies of *Red Paint*, our Whatcom Reads book. But, those, we call them pop-up libraries, right? With Claire or other branch, you know, branch staff will go out and just, you know, be at community events, set up tables, have books for people to check out. Tell us what you do with those pop-up library events. I know you like them. Yeah.

Claire

Oh, the pop-ups are so fun. Yeah, the, let's see. I got to, the one I did before that was back in the summer. It was the Run with the Chums and that was a great pop-up.

Neil

Run with the Chums.

Claire

Run with the Chums.

Neil

Not Run with the chums?

Claire

Run.

Neil

Run with the chums.

Claire

Like running with the chums. That was out of Birch Bay, and I did run, so I participate fully and when I do pop-up I'm all in.

Neil

OK.

Mary

Well, I guess, yeah. And so, if you're listening to this and you're like "oh, the library could come to our event," yes, the Whatcom County Library System would love to come to your county-wide event or Whatcom Reads would like to come out and do a pop-up at your event and tell people about what we're doing. Let's talk about Whatcom Reads because we're kind of right in the season.

Claire

We are right about to. We're in the thick of it. My favorite season of the year.

Mary

Yeah.

Claire

One of them. So, Whatcom Reads. Let's see. Since 2009, right? I believe.

Mary

This is our 16th year. Yeah.

Claire

I believe it's 2009.

Mary

Do the math from that.

Claire

So, this is the all-county read, all-county book discussion of a one title and of course, this year it's *Red Paint: the Ancestral Autobiography of the Coast Salish Punk* by Sasha Taqʷšəblu Lapointe and Sasha is Nooksack and Upper Skagit, poet, essayist, writer. She is going to be here for events in mid-March, March 14th through 16th. And her book is a memoir and it, of course, was the winner in creative nonfiction and memoir of the Washington State Book Award.

Neil

Wow.

Claire

So.

Mary

And you had her here, Village Books had Sasha here when the book first came out.

Claire

Yes, yes we did.

Mary

And I went to that event, which was great. It was at the Firehouse. And so, we know she's a really engaging speaker.

Claire

Yes.

Mary

A lot of power. That was a really memorable evening. And so, it's exciting if you missed, listeners, if you missed her the first time she was here in Whatcom County or even if you saw her like, come back out again because there's five different ways to engage with her.

Claire

Exactly. Yeah. She's going, we're gonna do the book discussion in Deming, there's going, she's going to do the radio hour again, although if you attended the radio hour the first time she was here, I encourage you to attend it again because this one's going to be all different. It'll be at the Hotel Leo. It's gonna be a larger venue. She'll have a different person who's interviewing her. Different musical guest. It'll be an entirely new and different kind of show.

She'll do her Art and Craft of Writing workshop, which will be out at Northwest Indian College in the Log Building on Friday the 15th and I encourage you to go out to that event because it's always fascinating to hear how the authors, what their process is, how they do what they do, and the Log Building out at the Indian College is a great venue. She'll do her main event at Mount Baker Theatre that Friday and then we will finish with a virtual event on Saturday morning, the 16th, at 11:00 AM. She's going to be in conversation with fellow writer Kristen Millares Young. And yeah, we have a wonderful lineup for her, and she's excited, she tells me she's excited. We're excited.

Mary

She's engaging with us on social. I tagged her the other day on that thing, so I know she's excited to come to Whatcom County, and I'll just encourage everyone who's listening to go to whatcomreads.org and look at the calendar of events because some of those author events you do have to register for.

We have limited seating at Deming, and at the Art and Craft of Writing there's limited seats. You also, of course, need tickets for the Chuckanut Radio Hour, and while, you know, there's lots of great, beautiful seating at the Mount Baker Theatre, they do ask that people have tickets beforehand, so it's free, but you do want to just get a ticket so, they know you're coming so they can plan for that. Then of course, you have to register for virtual conversation so you can get the link. But those are the author events, the March 14th through the 16th, but you've got a whole slate. Yeah.

Claire

Oh, gosh. Well, we've already started, yeah. We've already started with the lead up programming. We had our first event in the lead up programming last week.

Mary

In the middle of the snowstorm.

Claire

Middle of snowstorm, but fortunately we were able to pivot, of course there's that word, we were able to pivot to virtual and it occurred to me that our first events and our last events in the Whatcom Reads series were with Kristen Millares Young.

Mary

Yeah. Yeah, nice little bookends.

Claire

Yeah, she's our bookend, Kristen. That was great. It was a writing workshop on how to write your family portrait. Neil, you were there.

Neil

I was there. It was great. I mean, I was really looking forward to attending in person at Whatcom Community College, but then of course, the snow hit and we're never ready for the snow when it hits in Whatcom County, right? So. But, I was amazed that that we were able to shift it so quickly, get the word out and it was a full house online where it would have been a full house at the community college. Everyone seemed to show up.

Mary

We just had a little ghost in the machine here.

Claire

The lights are flickering. Oh no.

Neil

Yeah, lights are flickering here.

Claire

The spirits are restless.

Neil

But it was a great event and she walked us through some exercises, some writing prompts that you know, I wasn't expecting the way that the direction that it went.

Claire

Me neither.

Neil

But if you go all in, it's like.

(Distant owl hooting noise)

Mary

Our owl.

Neil

So that was, was that just rebooting?

Mary

There it's either rebooting or turning it off.

Claire

Or turning on.

Neil

So for the audience, I don't know if I'm going to cut this out or not, but for our audience, we just heard what sounded like a little owl because we have this video conferencing device called an Owl that allows us to do zoom conferences or other video conferencing in this, in the room that we're, in the conference room and the lights just flickered. The power kind of jumped for a second, and then the Owl hooted.

Mary

You didn't see it, its eyes lighting up too.

Neil

Did his eyes light up? Oh man.

Mary

His, hers, their eyes lighting up. But Neil, maybe if this does stick, stay in the podcast, you'll have to take a picture because it kind of, sort of, kind of looks like an owl.

Neil

I mean it, you know, it's kind of relevant because we would, several years ago pre-COVID, we would not have even had this kind of equipment here and when COVID hit and we pivoted again, Whatcom Reads also pivoted those first years.

Claire

Yes.

Neil

We were all online.

Claire

Yep.

Neil

And it's taken several years till we, you know, now we're mostly in person events.

Mary

Yeah. And I think that the, that year the, well so 2020. Eowyn Ivey was here and COVID was just rumblings we're just starting, like should we? Should we? Yes, let's do it. And it was really, like, dicey. And people were, we were, remember, people were like either touching toes or bumping elbows. Nobody was shaking hands. And so, we got through and then COVID just like hit for sure and everything got cancelled. The next year with *Washington Black*

Claire

With Esi Edugyan.

Mary

With Esi, we were fully online and it, that experience demonstrated the power Whatcom Reads to me, the community that comes around Whatcom Reads and is built around reading one book together because the attendance was so strong at those virtual programs.

Claire

Yes, it was.

Mary

And you know, it evolved our Friends, it evolved one of their themed dinners and people had to, you know, go down there and pick it up. And, you know, it was sold out and you're picking up your stuff and then going and listening online and. The, you know, again, the everybody, the attendance was so fantastic. We created a beautiful video that was downloaded - oh gosh, you know, thousands of times. It was really incredible to just see the discussion happening even though we were all apart. We were coming together around this book and I think that speaks to the strength of this program, and so tell me, you know, you've been on, you've been a participant in Whatcom Reads, you know, as a reader yourself, and then at Village Books and now to be here kind of steering the ship, basically. This is one of the major things you do is guide Whatcom Reads through the season. What? How do you about it? Are you enjoying it?

Claire

Oh gosh, I feel like I'm feeling very big shoes and that I feel very honored that this is a real, the importance of this program that's happening every year is not lost on me, you know, it's a real, it's a real significant thing in our community and I love it. I love, I mean I am a book group leader. I've been a book

group leader for 12 years at least. And gathering and talking about a book is one of my favorite things in the world to do and the idea of an entire community doing that, it's just it's like a dream for me so.

Mary

Yeah, and Whatcom Reads is powerful too, because with the programs that you're developing in before you, Ann McAllen was developing and you know, it looks beyond the book, it gives you a chance to really dive deeply into themes.

Claire

Yes.

Mary

In the book.

Claire

Yes.

Mary

It adds another level.

Claire

Yep, I enjoyed so much thinking about *Red Paint* because I've already read it a couple times before I got this job because I am a fan of Sasha's. And thing, getting to think about the book in a really much more creative way of beyond just the story itself, but all of the things that it connects to and is tied to and.

Mary

Walk us through your process.

Claire

Oh, gosh.

Mary

So, you've read the book a couple times and I've read it and then listened to it. So if you haven't, listeners, if you haven't yet listened to the audio book or haven't read the book yet, that's a great way to, Sasha reads it. And so, it's really great. And she also has a really great playlist that you can look at cause music's such a big part of this book, but walk us through your process, so you read it a couple times and you're like alright, how do I bring this book to life?

Claire

Well, I just started writing, making a list. Think of components of the book like themes and I, so I started writing down. I wrote down home. And what does home mean? And I wrote down language because language is such an important part, I wrote down motherhood and birth and I wrote down love and

tradition, like family. There was so much in this book that then and then from looking at that list I then started to think about how I could incorporate a program with each of those or any of those components. I didn't, there aren't programs necessarily for all those things that I just said.

Mary

The love part will come from the love of reading and the love of Whatcom Reads. But talk about like the first one you said was home, so you definitely have a program based on that.

Claire

Yes, I am really well, I went to Humanities Washington. Humanities Washington is a wonderful organization. They have a speakers bureau, Whatcom County Libraries has a long history of partnering with Humanities Washington and their speakers bureau and bringing their speakers to Whatcom County. And when I looked at the current list lineup of speakers, I saw Josephine Ensign's name and she is doing a program called *Homelessness and the Meaning of Home*, and that was one that immediately jumped out for me because it's not, it is about what it is to be homeless, but it's also about what we consider home and that's a huge part of *Red Paint*. In *Red Paint* for Sasha's, I believe it's either her grandmother or her great grandmother, home is a piece of linoleum that she takes with her to each place that they live. Wherever she puts down that piece of linoleum, that is home. And so anything can, I mean it doesn't take necessarily a big house with four walls and a, you know, a place that you've lived for generations for it to be home. Home, it can be, you know, wherever you make it so that one really spoke to me. That's an example.

Mary

That's a great example. And then your connections with knowing local authors too. You're bringing Janet Yoder in.

Claire

Yes, Janet Yoder, who wrote *Where the Language Lives*. Who was also a nominee for the creative nonfiction and memoir Washington State Book Award. *Where the Language Lives*, is about Sasha's great grandmother Vi Hilbert and her life's work of preserving the Lushootseed language and so Vi Hilbert was Nooksack, of the Nooksack tribe. And so, we're going to host Janet Yoder at the Nooksack Community Building, which is really close to where Vi Hilbert lived and spent a lot of time. So, that was one sort of obvious program that jumped out at me. It was "Oh, well, we need to bring Janet."

Mary

and Vi is Sasha's great grandmother. So yeah, the powerful matrilineal line of their family. Really cool to explore. Yeah, those are two just great and again, I'll just encourage people to go to whatcomreads.org and you can see the full list of events or our website, you can see the events on our website too so.

Claire

Yeah, I, the thing that one of the things I love about *Red Paint* is it as, it's one of the few Whatcom Reads books that's really hyper local. I mean it takes place you know from Tacoma all the way up, you know, to Whatcom County with all kinds of really, you know, familiar points. People are going to, as you read *Red Paint*, you're like "Oh. She went to the Ranch Room. Ohh, Teddy Bear Cove.

Mary

Yeah, well, Neil, I remember when you read it, you said “Ohh gosh. This just really strikes me that up and down I-5.

Neil

It's so familiar, you know, I grew up in West Seattle, basically and there's, you know, she is in West Seattle for a period of time there and, you know, and living up here and it just really resonated. Also the, the part about linoleum, how her great grandmother carried this linoleum from her first house to every house that they lived in, and I have a, I have my grandmother's kitchen table. Little folding, you know, white and black. 1950s.

Claire

Like Formica kind of thing, yeah.

Neil

Formica, Formica table that I've carried to every house I've lived in in the past 40 years. And I can just, it's just like, reading about the linoleum, I'm there. I'm with you. I know what you're talking about.

Mary

We're really getting a powerful response to this book. I've heard from so many people. They're just like, “it's such a great book” or, but the thing about Whatcom Reads is we know not everyone is gonna love the book that's selected, right? But you're gonna find something, or you're gonna hear from someone else who does, did connect with the book and go “Ohh. Well, that's interesting.” So you're reading a book. You're also getting to understand your community in some ways.

Claire

Right. Yeah. That's what you know. It is interesting because people, I have, you know, heard from people who, when they go to discuss this book, you know it's a hard book. It's a hard, there's hard.

Mary

There's a lot of trauma.

Claire

You know, there's hard stuff in it. And people respond to that differently and I think that that's just really interesting. That's why I love talking about books. For me, when my book group reads a book and we discuss it, if everybody, if we all just sit around and say how much we love the book, well, that makes for a pretty short and not terribly interesting discussion, you know, we can go on and on about all the different ways that we love a book, but it's when there's differing opinions. You know when you know actually, I didn't love this book really well. Tell me why. Mm-hmm. You know, why didn't you love this book or why? What did you find challenging about this book? Yeah, that's where it's really interesting to me. So I think you find that with *Red Paint*.

Mary

Yeah, absolutely and I think that's part of the power of what you do in your job. So you're, you know, certainly Whatcom Reads is a big part of what you do, but creating programs all year long for the Whatcom County Library System as well. As we said this earlier, but you know introducing neighbors to neighbors and having great conversations or having a shared experience together, it's just one of the great things the library can do.

Claire

Mhm. Yes, I feel very, very blessed indeed.

Mary

Well, since you love to talk about books, I kind of teed this up.

Claire

Oh boy.

Mary

All right. So give us 3 great books or books do you think you'd like to recommend, or a theme? Or?

Claire

Theme. Well, I tend to like a little bit weird, slightly dark books that are based in our reality but maybe can be a little off kilter. I love books by Amy Bender because they are strange, but rooted in our reality. So, if anybody knows me, they're not going to be surprised at all that I'm going to say *The Particular Sadness of Lemon Cake*.

Mary

Oh, yes.

Claire

By Amy Bender. It's just strange and lovely. And the young woman in that book is one of the best female characters I feel like I've ever read. I love me some Appalachian books too. I am a champion of all things Appalachian writers, so Silas House is right up there for one of my top favorites.

Mary

And why Appalachia? What's your tie?

Claire

Oh, I don't know. Oh because that's where I'm from.

Mary

Do I have to tell ya?

Claire

Yeah, I'm from West Virginia and if anybody knows me, they know that about me and they know that it's really can be tiresome listening to me talk about Appalachia and how much I love it. So, I consider myself an Ambassador for Appalachia out here on the West Coast since 1994. But yeah, Silas House is just a, he's the current Poet Laureate of Kentucky, and his novels are wonderful. His poetry is wonderful, and his novels are wonderful. I just finished Ross Gay's *Inciting Joy* for the second time because I had the pleasure of hosting him for a virtual book group yesterday, which was such an honor, such a privilege to be able to do. And so anything by Ross Gay, *Book of Delights*, *Inciting Joy*, *Book of More Delights* is his most recent one. And boy, if ever you feel like you need, I don't know, just a little lift or some perspective to kind of help you through maybe a tough time, Ross Gay's books are just the right medicine.

Mary

Or find him online and listen to him read his work because his.

Claire

Yes, yes.

Mary

Narration, his voice as he reads his work, is just so, it'll fill your heart with joy. It's just what you need. So.

Claire

And it's a really good balance. It's not, it's not all, it's not all joyful. As we talked about yesterday, joy is, goes hand in hand with pain. So, his books are very, very, very profound and kind of thought provoking and feeling provoking.

Mary

Yeah, that's a great list, Claire. Thank you. That's fantastic. Is there anything you want to say that we haven't asked you?

Claire

Gosh, I mean the first thing that comes to mind is I just wanted to, would love to say how grateful I am to be here. I mean, this really does feel like a privilege to be in this position. I and I, one that I never ever anticipated being in, I mean really, you know me, Mary, and you know that this was quite a surprise and a and a big whopping beautiful change for me, so I'm just very grateful to be here.

Mary

Yeah, and so folks, if you see Claire out at events, make sure you go up and say hi to her and.

Claire

Yes, please do.

Mary

And suggest program ideas. We sure are grateful you're here, Claire. And we're right here with you during Whatcom Reads season. Right, Neil?

Neil

That's right, yeah.

Claire

Yeah, Whatcom Reads.

Neil

All right. So I mean, this has been great. Claire, thank you for being a part of this and...

Claire

My pleasure.

Neil

...Everybody go out and visit the Whatcom Reads website at whatcomeads.org and pick up the Whatcom County Library System Explorations. You can probably still find hard copies of it at the branches.

Mary

At the branches. Yep. Or you can find it online as well.

Neil

At our at our website wcls.org, look for events in the menu and we just look forward to more and more fun and exciting events coordinated by Claire McElroy.

Mary

Yeah. And if you have program ideas like, you know, we were talking earlier about, you know, people wanting to explore Wellness or whatever it may be.

Claire

Yes, please. I would love to hear.

Mary

Yeah, e-mail. You either e-mail Claire or you can just send a note to Neil cause you know we love for people to e-mail Neil and tell, you can say "hey, Neil, I listen to the podcast and tell Claire I want a program about X," that would be a great.

Neil

Yeah, I will relay the message.

Claire

Not to be confused with formerly Twitter.

Mary

No, no, no, no. Yeah. No.

Claire

Not that X.

Mary

No, not that X.

Neil

No, just let us know, let us know if you if you have questions, if you have ideas. Talk to us, come into a branch and send, say tell Claire I said this. We'll get the word to her.

Mary

This is a great conversation. Thanks, Claire, for joining us.

Claire

Thank you. This was just super fun.

Neil

All right, that's our show. I'd like to thank our guest, Claire McElroy. And of course, my boss, Mary Vermillion. "Friendship is unnecessary, like philosophy, like art, like the universe itself. It has no survival value. Rather, it is one of those things which give value to survival." And thank you, dear listener, for tuning in to our show. Our hope is that if someone were to ask you why libraries? What is the purpose? This show will provide you with 100 responses to that question. Until next time, this is Neil McKay for the Whatcom County Library System.