**Press Release**

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*or include name, address, and phone number of organization at top of release*}

**For Immediate Release**

# THE [SPONSORING ORGANIZATION] HOSTS MONTANA CONVERSATION “SQELIXʷ ‘SALISH’ STORYTELLING” WITH ASPEN AND CAMERON DECKER

[City–date]

The [sponsoring organization] hosts Montana Conversation “**Sqelixʷ ‘Salish’ Storytelling** ” with Aspen and Cameron Decker on [date of program]. The program is at [location and time of program]. The presentation is free and open to the public. Funding for the Montana Conversations program is provided by Humanities Montana through grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities, Montana’s Cultural Trust, and private donations.

“**Sqelixʷ ‘Salish’ Storytelling** ” incorporates Salish Language, Plains Indian Sign Language, and cedar bark basket making to discuss Salish cultural identity and values. This presentation teaches holistic Indigenous understandings about native plants, and connection with the land and local ecosystems. Aspen and Cameron Decker focus on creating traditional folded cedar bark baskets as a tool to create an appropriate, authentic, and engaging course on regional native culture. This presentation was developed as an Indian Education for All program to meet the needs of teachers throughout the state of Montana.

During the course of “**Sqelixʷ ‘Salish’ Storytelling**”, Aspen and Cameron Decker speak about the process of making the basket, the issues that it brings up in regards to making the object (environment, sustainability, culture), and what that reveals about the place we are in as contemporary Native American people. This presentation also introduces the science behind both basket making and cedar bark as a material, as well as various contemporary Native American artists who influence the work of Aspen and Cameron Decker. Together both speakers incorporate and speak Salish Language and Plains Sign Language associated with the making of the basket with students, during their program.

Aspen Decker is an enrolled member of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (Tatay̓áqn, Qlis:p̓é & Ksanka) and a speaker of her tribal language, Nsélišcn ‘Salish language’. She graduated with a master’s degree in linguistics from the University of Montana and earned a bachelor’s degree in Tribal Historic Preservation from Salish Kootenai College. She has a Montana Class 7 Native American Language and Culture Educator License and has taught Salish for many years. Her passion for Salish language began as a child, learning from her elders, primarily, Patlik Pierre. Who taught her about the importance of perpetuating Salish language and culture. Raising her children in the language as first language Salish speakers has been one of the ways that she honors their teachings.

Cameron Decker is Diné, an enrolled member of the Navajo Nation, and a descendant of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai tribes. He served as a faculty member at Salish Kootenai College in the Fine Arts department, serving as program Chair of the department for 4 years. Cameron recently worked at the Missoula Art Museum as an Educator and Outreach Coordinator. He holds a Masters in Arts M.A. in Fine Arts in Integrated Arts in Education and is interested in ways to support our Montana education system with authentic, appropriate, and engaging lessons that teach about Indigenous values, contributions and innovations. He and his partner Aspen have been a part of many annual teacher trainings and have been delivering presentations for the CSKT Tribal Education Department for the past 5 years. Together they have over 20 years combined experience in Tribal education.