

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Greetings,

Here we are. In a new place. While we continue to do great work, we are being stretched in various ways. We have faced new challenges, adaptations, and lessons. (Pedagogical pun intended.)

One lesson that I have deeply been changed by was being able to host Dr. Margo Hill for November's *Native American Heritage Month* at Spokane Community College. Dr. Hill presented on Native American topics including the Spokane Tribe, Indian federal law, and Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women. I learned deeply how important land acknowledgements are and want to start my letter this way. If you have time, I hope can view her video, [Margo Hill](#), on YouTube. For me, being in Spokane and working at Spokane Community College, and part-time at Gonzaga University, I want to honor the traditional and sacred lands of Spokane Indian Tribe. Please see our [Land Acknowledgement at Spokane Community College](#) and the [Land Acknowledgement for Gonzaga University](#). I hope you can take a moment to honor the sacred lands and tribes where you work and reside before continuing your day.

One of our biggest challenges has been navigating the waves of the pandemic as professionals. As teachers, we continue to juggle the requirements of teaching online, hybrid, and face-to-face. We are engaged in providing what is necessary to educate current and future generations. COVID is difficult and loss has happened. It is important to recognize the loss of loved ones from COVID, especially teachers and those working within our school systems who have dedicated time to generations of students. In this grief, may we carry on their wisdom and light. May we all stay connected and thoughtful as we continue to work through the next wave of the pandemic.

We had another successful online annual WAESOL Conference in October 2021, *Exploring New Horizons*. Many professionals expressed gratitude in hearing our keynote speakers, Dr. Suhanthie Motha, a professor at University of Washington, and Susan Peterson from the Office of Refugee and Immigrant Assistance. Dr. Motha's presentation allowed us to reflect upon our role as educators and what we can do to engage in antiracist teaching, and how important it is to create classrooms of trust and equity. Teaching English requires internal and external reflection within our pedagogy to help sustain diverse communities and lessen marginalization. What I loved about Dr. Motha's presentation was her reminder that we need love and compassion to create change: love towards each other and love towards our students. Let's remember this as we deal with the complexity of teaching language.

Our other great speaker was Sarah Petersen from the Office of Refugee and Immigrant Assistance. She reminded us that Washington state is a place with an historical attitude of being open and welcoming to refugee communities. Currently, Washington continues to receive even more refugees. Ms. Peterson helped us identify strengths and resources that can be beneficial as we walk towards this new terrain with understanding and more expertise. Be proud to be a Washingtonian!

Both keynote speakers shared knowledge that will assist us in our paths. Afterwards, we had the opportunity to see a variety of presentations filled with ideas for new online techniques, creative teaching practices, literacy, mindfulness, and more. We hope next year's conference maintains a similar momentum and we look forward to your participation as a presenter or participant. We will cross our fingers it will be a face-to-face reunion.

I hope that the start of 2022 will be uplifting as you navigate through new horizons.

Blessings,

Christina Mitma Momono

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2022 WAESOL President

Christina Mitma Momono has been teaching at the Community Colleges of Spokane and Gonzaga University for 15 years working with international students, immigrant, and refugee students. She is currently full time in the ABE ESL Division at Spokane Community College.

