



SUQUAMISH MUSEUM

PRESS RELEASE

Media Contact: Janet Smoak
Phone: (360) 394-8495
jsmoak@suquamish.nsn.us

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Dr. Melanie Cheung to present Research at Suquamish Museum, Oct. 30 at 5:30 pm

SUQUAMISH, WA – September 30, 2014 The Suquamish Museum hosts Dr. Melanie Cheung, Thursday, Oct 30 at 5:30 pm for a presentation of her research, “***Taking Tikanga (ceremony) into the Laboratory and Clinic***”. Dr. Cheung, a Fullbright New Zealand Scholar at the Brain Plasticity Institute, Posit Science, San Francisco, CA, is from Ngati Rangitihī, Te Arawa (Maori). Her work with Professor Michael Merzenich at the Brain Plasticity Institute, Posit Science develops a culturally-responsive brain plasticity-based training program as a therapy for Huntington’s disease. Huntington’s disease is a genetic brain disorder characterized by progressive impairments in movement, thinking and emotions.

Dr. Cheung’s research integrates Western scientific and Maori ways of knowing and being to study brain diseases. The Maori believe the head is extremely tapu (sacred/with restriction). After consulting with Ngati Rangitihī elders they advised the researchers develop tikanga (ceremonies) to use in the laboratory environment to honor the sacred nature of the brain and to acknowledge the person. Her subsequent research practices integrated tikanga (ceremony) into the cutting-edge scientific methods for growing human brain-derived cells used to study neurodegenerative diseases and develop treatments. As an extension of this research, culturally-responsive clinical practices in nursing, psychiatry and psychology resulted for those who treat Maori people with Huntington’s disease.

“We are honored to host Dr. Cheung,” said Museum Director Janet Smoak. “Her significant research and progress treating indigenous people is impressive. And, Melanie, as a friend to many Suquamish families and who joins the annual canoe journey, is always mentioned with the greatest affection and excitement when she is able to visit Suquamish.”

The Suquamish Museum is open year round. Currently, Winter hours begin October 1 through April 30, Wednesday through Sunday, 10 am to 5 pm and by appointment on Monday and Tuesday.

For more information on the Suquamish Museum visit www.suquamishmuseum.org. For more information about the Brain Plasticity Institute, Posit Science (San Francisco, CA) visit www.brainiq.com.

###