Gatherers Project

Honoring Tribal Gatherers and Connection to First Foods through Time

First Foods Policy Program, CTUIR Dept of Natural Resources

Cover Photo: Tribal Gatherers have an ancestral connection with the First Foods they harvest, and relationships to lands that reflect generations of knowledge. *Photo by Brosnan Spencer and Naknuwithlama Tiichamna (Caretakers of the Land).*

Gatherers Project, September 2024 by the CTUIR Department of Natural Resources, First Foods Policy Program. Althea Huesties-Wolf; Colleen Sanders; Ermia Butler; Carl Merkle; Chris Marks; and Eric Quaempts.

In celebration of work made possible by a generous grant from Meyer Memorial Trust

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Xaws flowers peek out amid rocky soils at a Gatherers feast harvest site. *Photo by CTUIR DNR FFPP 2023*

THANK YOU TO MEYER MEMORIAL TRUST

We want to thank Meyer Memorial Trust for their generous support of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR) climate adaptation efforts.

CTUIR Department of Natural Resources has built a strong connection with Meyer Memorial Trust's "Healthy Environments" granting portfolio, with two large project grants originating in 2018 and remains in place today.

With CTUIR's "Preparing for Fire" Project granted $176,037 in 2019 to conduct air quality education, engagement, and preparedness with the Tribal community over two years. This project was interrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic and extended to 2023 to meet organizational capacity needs.

We also thank MMT for the Closing the CAP grant for $140,759 from 2021-2023 which allowed us the additional necessary capacity to complete our CTUIR Climate Adaptation Plan.

Both of these grant projects are centered around Tribal climate adaptation, especially with the intention of preserving and strengthening Tribal connection to culturally important First Foods and the lands and waters that support them. Climate crisis impacts to First Foods and Tribal community ability to access them safely and readily, especially in the face of increasing challenges from climate impacts and other anthropogenic barriers to First Foods.

We are grateful for MMT's support and generosity in implementing these projects. This book doubles as a grant report for these two projects and the activities funded by Meyer Memorial Trust.

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The Gatherers of the Wáylatpuuma (Cayuse), Imatalamłáma Umatilla, and Walawalałáma (Walla Walla) Peoples make a life-long commitment to keep the promise of the First Foods. It is a promise that generations of Gatherers have kept, still keep, and will continue to keep into an uncertain future. This book is to honor that promise, and that commitment. This book's intent is to take a snapshot of tribal gatherers and the land that provides so much nourishment to them, their families and Nixyáawii community. The book highlights current projects out of the Department of Natural Resources that are meant to enhance and restore the land so the First Foods can return. This book is also brings forward how tribal gatherers have responded to climate change.

We would also like to thank Meyer Memorial Trust for support of this and many other CTUIR projects.

Gatherers and other ceremonial practitioners taking part in the Latítlatit ká?uyit Celery Feast pose for a group portrait in the Nixyáawii Longhouse *Photo by Annie Warren, Northwest Public Broadcasting 2023.*

Gatherer Lands: Reserving Rights

In the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR) Peace Treaty of 1855, it states about changing to a reservation life and adds,

> "tribes and bands agree to remove to and settle upon the same within one year after the ratification of this treaty…the said bands shall be permitted to occupy and reside upon the tracts now possessed by them, guaranteeing to all citizen[s] of the United States, the right to enter upon and occupy as settlers any lands not actually enclosed by said Indians: Provided, also, That the **exclusive right** of taking fish in the streams running through and bordering said reservation is hereby secured to said Indians, and at all other usual and accustomed stations in common with citizens of the United States, and of erecting suitable buildings for curing the same; the privilege of hunting, gathering roots and berries and pasturing their stock **on unclaimed lands in common with citizens,** is also secured to them."

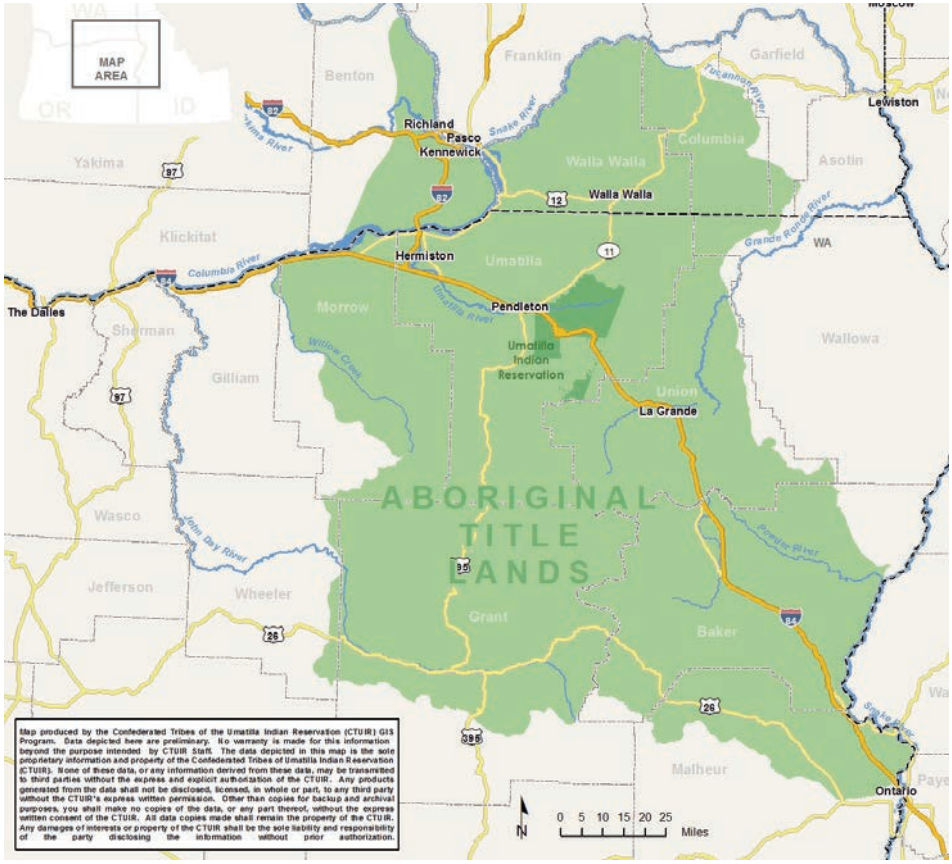
"Aboriginal title" is a legal term in Federal Indian Law that refers to the rights Indigenous Tribes have to land we have lived on and used long before any federal or state government was established. Aboriginal title is recognized when a Tribe has continuously and exclusively used and occupied the land for a very long time and is different from other types of land ownership, such as land owned in fee by a Tribe or land held in trust for a Tribe.

"Traditional Use Areas" are areas of land where the CTUIR visited for fishing, hunting, gathering, trading, ceremonial and religious activities, and other activities long before settlement occurred and continues to this day. What is referred to as bison/buffalo country in the Peace Treaty of 1855 minutes today is known as Montana and Wyoming. "Traditional Use Areas" may include places that are homelands to another Tribe, but access to these areas by CTUIR ancestors were not hindered. Traditional Use Areas harken to a time when ancestors of the CTUIR were migratory and stayed in areas for years at a time and then returned to the CTUIR homeland with goods and food.

"Usual and Accustomed" stations are lands that were, and are, traditionally used by the CTUIR for fishing and are specifically identified in Article I of the 1855 CTUIR Treaty as being reserved by the CTUIR for "the exclusive right… in common with citizens of the United States.

Following text has been excerpted from the First Foods Upland Vision (2019).

The CTUIR negotiated for the Umatilla Indian Reservation (UIR) and its ceded lands of 6.4 million acres in the Walla Walla Treaty of 1855 with the United States. On these Ceded lands, the CTUIR retains rights to access and harvest treaty-reserved resources on open and unclaimed federal lands. Beyond these Ceded lands is an extensive aboriginal use area that has been documented through oral histories and published literature.



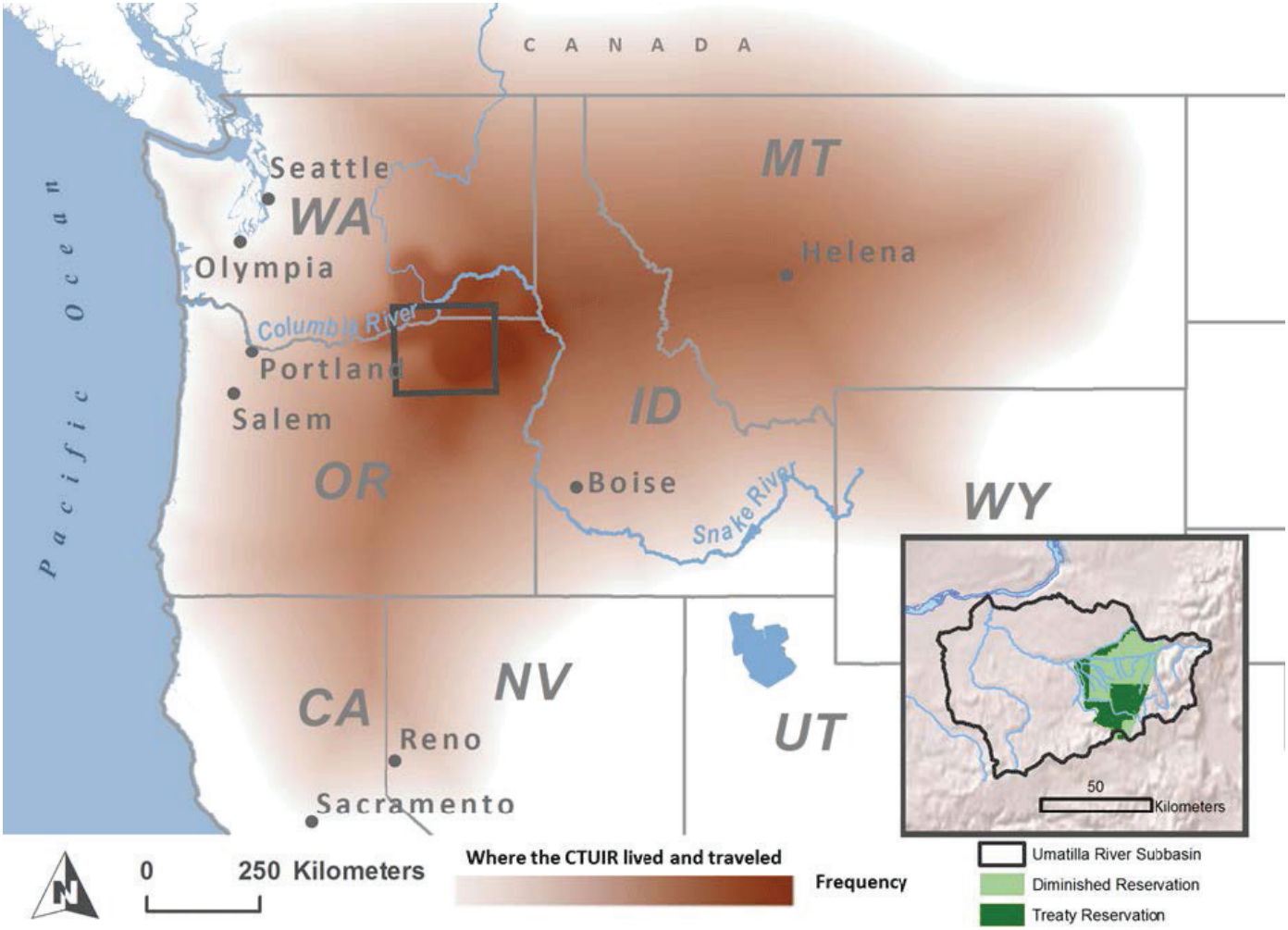
CTUIR's Ceded lands, also known as Aboriginal Title Lands (light green shading), are the lands for which access was negotiated as part of the Treaty of 1855, which secured the right of Tribal people to fish, hunt, gather, and graze livestock across the 6.4 million acres.

Photo courtesy of CTUIR Office of Information Technology (OIT) Geographic Information Systems (GIS) program, 2023.

Áwtni Tkʷátat (First Foods): Waykáanaš (Fish), ɬwínat (Big Game), Xnít Roots, and Tamaanít (Berries), are served in the order in which these foods promised to care for the Tanánma (Indian people) according to the CTUIR creation belief. In the creation belief, "the Creator asked [of the creatures of the Earth], "Who will take care of the people?"

Núsux (Salmon) said "I will" and all the other fish lined up behind him, next was (Yamash) Deer and all the animals made a promise, and so on down to the berries." Water, is the First of all the First Foods and recognized before and after the call of order of the First Food represented, in recognition of the fact that water is singularly essential, nourishing all other First Foods, people, and the landscape. Without water, none of the other First Foods can exist. The community celebrates First Foods when harvesting foods for feasts, everyday use after feasts, and honoring a Tribal member's first harvest of a First Food.

Prior to colonization, CTUIR Tribes traveled great distances and established complex trade routes to secure the foods and cultural resources essential to Tribal life. Tribal people managed lands "from buffalo to sea lion," traveling as far as the Rocky Mountains and Great Plains to harvest bison, to the Pacific Ocean coast to harvest sea lion and other marine resources, and down to the Great Basin for salts and shrub-steppe Foods. Historical documentation provides evidence for this historic expanse, as shown in this resource use density map, and Tribal members have rights to access open and unclaimed lands for continued cultural preservation.



Usual and Accustomed Lands Map for CTUIR.
Photo courtesy of CTUIR OIT GIS 2023.

Part 1

Gatherers Past

Historically, Gatherers would camp for weeks to months while harvesting and processing First Foods. Huckleberries were slow dried over a low intensity fire for many days to preserve them for traveling and winter food sources.

Photos courtesy of Tamástslikt Cultural Institute.

CTUIR First Foods: Moccs on the Ground

"From this land in which the people lived and its incumbent seasons came the diet, the languages, and the customs that are distinctly appropriate and associated with the homeland. The traditional diet of fishes, meats, roots, greens, and fruits defined when and where the people traveled to harvest and process foods."
(Conner and Lang, 2006)

First Foods have sustained Tribal people since time immemorial and the relationship between First Foods and the Tribes is essential to the ongoing culture of the CTUIR. The First Foods serve a fundamental role in the health, well-being and cultural identity of the Tribes.

First Foods are the culturally significant plant and animal species that have existed in a reciprocal relationship with Tribal people since time immemorial.
Photos courtesy of CTUIR Dept. of Natural Resources (DNR).

Creator asked them to take care of us; feed us to give us life, as the youngest of creation, and in return we would take care of them and their children. It is our light that is the conduit back to Creator, but the First Foods add to our light.

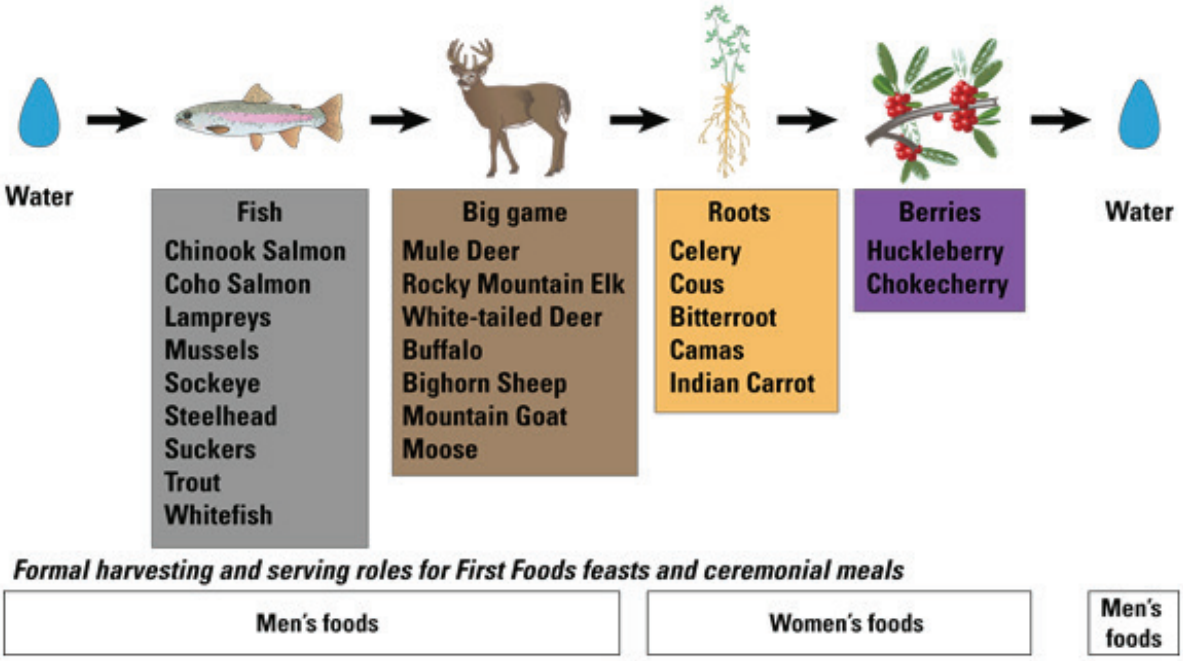
The presence of First Foods in our being is testimony that we, the Natityt, have kept our promise to the unwritten law. Deer do not have the capacity to thank the grass, berries, and trees, but people do with our ceremonies and practices like sweathouse and seasonal Feasts. Hunters and Gatherers are taught how to hunt and gather so they collect respectfully and not harm future generations of the First Foods, which is why ceremony is so important. Ceremony is when a Tribal harvester receives praise, lessons, lectures, and expectations, relayed by the people who are present, and the ancestors to guide and protect you in a good way. It's all cyclical. It all returns to ceremony, and why perpetuation of the culture is part of our management plans.

Pictured are some of the CTUIR plant species First Foods. From top to bottom: Latit Latit, or "Indian Celery," is one of the first plants to arrive in the early spring seasons; Xaws and Piyaxi, root species dug with kupin tools, are a later spring harvest; these roots can be dried for long term preservation; Wiwinu, or the huckleberry, is one of the last First Foods to arrive on the land, and are eaten fresh or heat dried for preservation and use into winter months.

Top photo courtesy of Annie Warren, Northwest Public Broadcasting 2023. Middle and bottom photos courtesy of CTUIR DNR CRPP.

Dept of Natural Resources First Foods Mission

In 2007, to convey the important role of First Foods to the Tribes, the CTUIR's Department of Natural Resources (DNR) adopted a mission based on Áwtni Tk^{w}átat (First Foods) Tamánwit (traditional law) demonstrated by the ritualistically first foods ceremonial feast. The CTUIR DNR considers First Foods to constitute the minimum ecological products necessary to sustain CTUIR subsistence and cultural needs. The mission was developed in response to long-standing and continuing community expressions of First Foods traditions and community member requests that all First Foods be restored for their respectful use, now and in the future."



The archetypal First Foods represent diverse species within each category. Within our Núsux (Salmon) category are also other regionally important species like Pacific Lamprey, as well as non-fish species of aquatic organisms like Freshwater Mussels. Yamas (deer) also represent other grazing wildlife species. Xáwš represents root and tuber plant species like Camas and Latit Latítlatit, and Wíwnu stands for fruiting First Foods. *Photo courtesy of the Umatilla River Vision, 2011.*

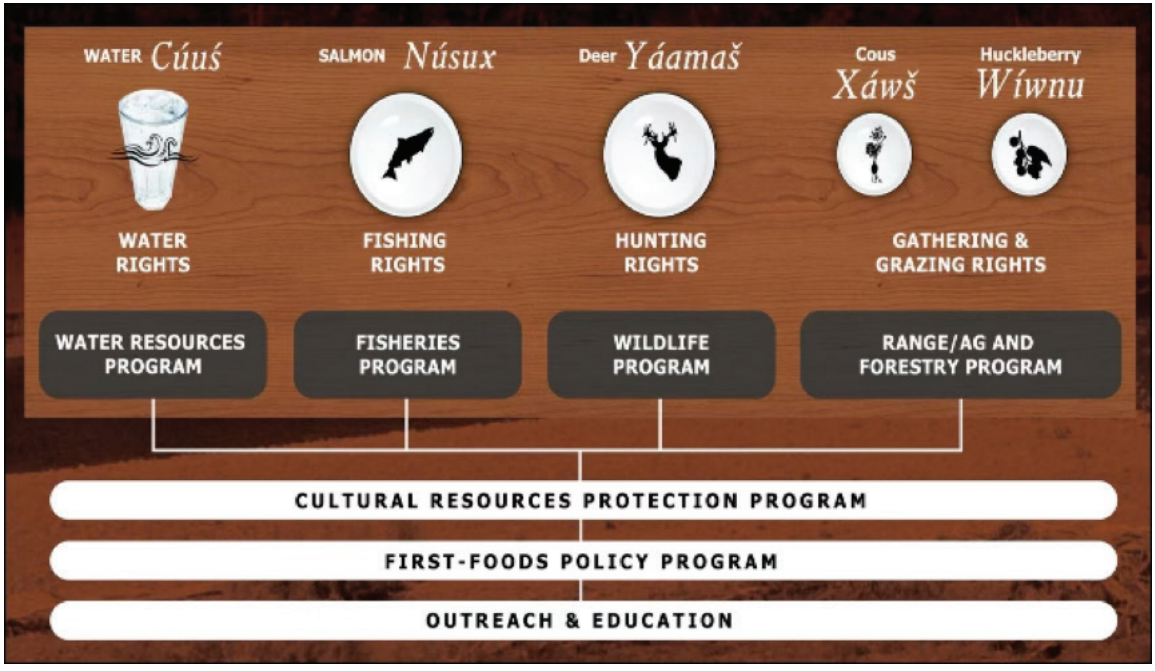
First Foods Mission Statement

To protect, restore, and enhance the first foods čúuš water, núsux salmon, yamash deer, cous, and huckleberry - for the perpetual cultural, economic, and sovereign benefit of the CTUIR. We will accomplish this utilizing traditional ecological and cultural knowledge and science to inform:

1) population and habitat management goals and actions; and

2) natural resource policies and regulatory mechanisms.

DNR programs organized around the First Foods to maintain cultural relevancy of work. These species are not just "resources" but relatives in a reciprocal relationship as old as time. That way our work is recognizable and accountable to the Tribal community.



The serving order of the First Foods on the Longhouse table is a recognition of these species' reciprocal relationships with Tribal people. With the First Foods Mission, the activities and outcomes of CTUIR's Department of Natural Resources (DNR) becomes both recognizable and accountable to the Tribal community and lifeways. Programs within DNR focus directly on these Foods, as well as other programs that protect cultural connection and ecosystem function. *Photo courtesy of CTUIR DNR Cultural Resources Protection Program (CRPP).*

Umatilla River Vision

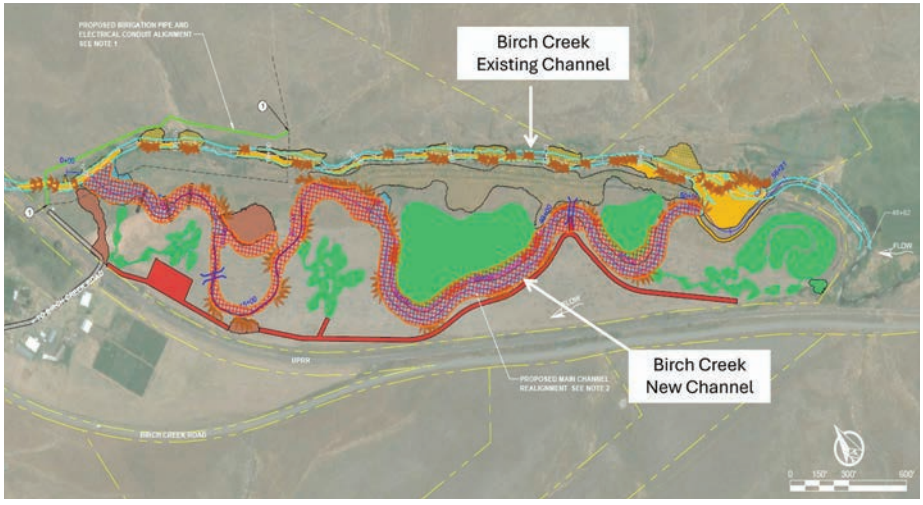
"[The Umatilla River Vision] framework for natural resource management seeks to reflect the unique Tribal values associated with natural resources and to emphasize ecological processes and services that are undervalued by westernized Euro-American natural resource strategies. The First Foods framework prioritizes efforts to renaturalize processes that sustain First Foods and provides a direct and culturally appropriate means for monitoring and reporting restoration progress to the tribal community (Jones et al 2011)."

"The First Foods-focused mission highlights direct linkages between the ecological health of the Umatilla River and the health and well-being of Umatilla Tribal members. Degradation of the river, water quality, and associated ecological processes results in the loss of traditional tribal foods. This loss of food resources is linked to increasing occurrences of health issues (e.g., poor fitness, diabetes). In additional to providing a clean and healthy natural environment for tribal members and other residents of the Umatilla Basin, improving the availability of First Foods can contribute to sustaining Tribal ceremonies, knowledge, and traditions that promote the physical health of tribal members.

Finally, the First-focused mission provides resource managers in the basin with a framework for involving tribal members in management dialogues. Within such a framework, monitoring and restoration efforts can concentrate on improving the ecological functionality of the Umatilla River, which ultimately sustains First Foods."

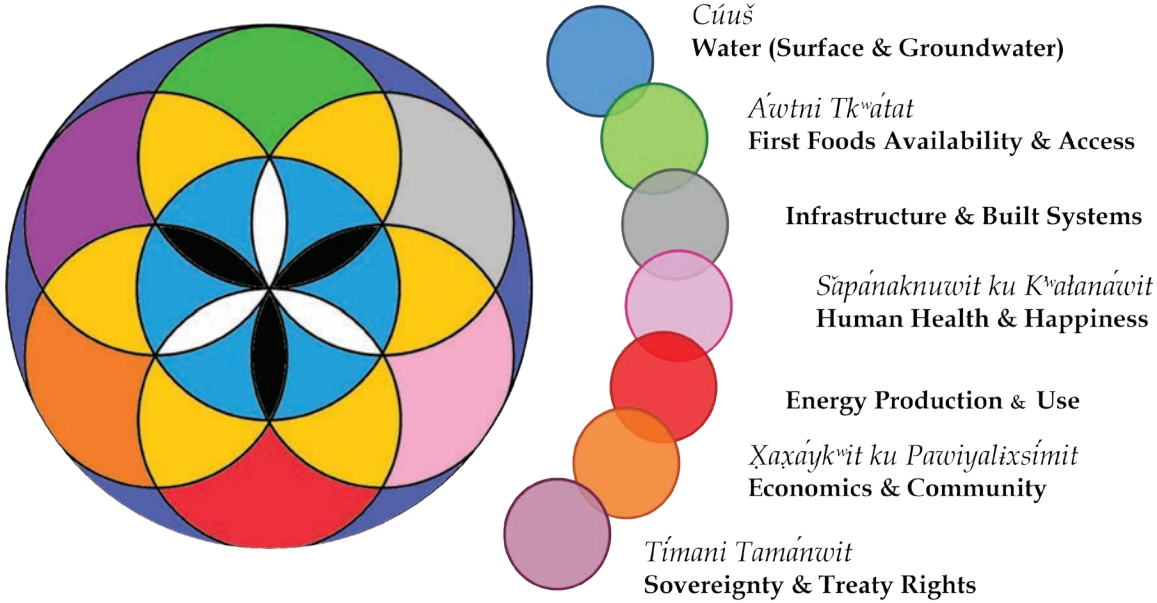
Riparian health and floodplain connection are the foundation for First Foods. The touchstones in the Umatilla River Vision braid scientific and Indigenous knowledge to form technical guidance for land managers wanting to improve their lands for First Foods health and success. The new Birch Creek Restoration site pictured is a living example of these touchstones in practice.

Photo courtesy of CTUIR DNR Fisheries Program.



CTUIR Climate Adaptation

"Climate adaptation" is a new phrase for something Tribal people have done since time immemorial: change along with the weather conditions and the seasons through time. From 2019 to 2022, CTUIR DNR led the Tribal government's initiative to develop and implement a Climate Adaptation Plan (CAP), supported by funding from Meyer Memorial Trust. As illustrated by this visualization, CTUIR's climate adaptation planning work does not attempt to separate Tribal priorities, but instead focuses on where efforts can overlap and work collaboratively to address shared challenges as they emerge. This approach was inspired by a quote by átway Louie Dick, "that which is connected cannot be separated." As with the DNR First Foods Mission, this climate adaptation planning approach centers the First Foods and Tribal peoples' relationship to these plant and animal species, and to the land itself. The CTUIR CAP centers these relationships and expands this concept of interconnectedness out to other ways we are accountable to our First Foods within the Tribal community and government. In this way, we see that our efforts are interdependent, and reinforce the idea that to protect our connection to First Foods into an uncertain future, we must work together.



This Adaptation Wheel is a visual representation of the holistic and interdisciplinary approach to developing the Climate Adaptation Plan that CTUIR has taken.
Photo courtesy of CTUIR DNR FFPP.

First Foods Uplands Vision

The First Foods Upland Vision outlines a vision for desired characteristics of upland ecosystems that facilitate the production of First Foods and serve as a foundation for natural resource management and restoration activities to ensure healthy, resilient and dynamic upland ecosystems. These characteristics are founded on four fundamental "touchstones." These are:

- Soil Stability
- Hydrologic Function
- Landscape Pattern
- Biotic Integrity

These touchstones and the interconnections between them, are central to the proper functioning of upland ecosystems and their ability to provide a range of ecosystem services, including First Foods. Our framework adopts a broad definition of healthy ecosystems and incorporates environmental, biological, ecological, and cultural dimensions. It is based on the premise that healthy upland ecosystems are dynamic and resilient and will continue to produce the full range of First Foods into the future.

In addition to provide a framework for managers to help ensure current and future management activities are aligned with and account for the protection and enhancement of the CTUIR's First Foods. This vision document can be used to guide management plans and help inform policy." (FFUV 2019). The CTUIR manages first foods, via the Department of Natural Resources management plans which are guided by the River Vision and Upland Vision. These documents can ideally be applied to any watershed, ridge top to ridge top, or upland zone.

Improving Access to First Foods

Dispossession of ancestral lands coupled with the effects of habitat degradation and migration threaten not only First Foods themselves, but the ability for Tribal cultural practitioners to maintain connection to them. Part of Tribal climate adaptation is to be proactive in addressing this restriction in access. As First Foods and their suitable habitat ranges and conditions migrate due to changing climatic factors, they will be located in different and expanded areas than they have been historically. To be ready, Tribal harvesters need to build relationships with diverse land owners and managers in new areas.

CTUIR Dept. of Natural Resources has been working to support land and First Foods access for Gatherers and other Tribal harvesters. These efforts have taken many different forms, including:

- Working with Wallowa Land Trust on returning access to ancestral gathering lands in private ownership,
- Preserving oral history and traditions through Elder and community member interviews,
- Exploring policy and economic frameworks that recognize skills and labor of harvesters as valuable, and
- Through First Foods habitat restoration that makes it possible to return these foods to the Longhouse table.

CTUIR's Cultural Resource Protection Program (CRPP) within DNR is working with other Tribal cultural knowledge keepers and entities that manage ancestral lands to improve access. This way, Tribal Gatherers will have access to new and ancestral lands as species migrate.

The Wallowa Gathering hosted by the Wallowa Land Trust brings together Tribal Gatherers from several Tribes with ancestral connections to these gathering lands. *Photo credit: Jill-Marie Gavin, Cayuse*

Part 2

Gatherers Present

After a cold, long day, happiness is always at the forefront. *Photo courtesy of Annie Warren, Northwest Public Broadcasting 2023.*

CTUIR Gatherers Portraits

To be a Tribal Gatherer is to answer a call. Sometimes the call happens when mom and grandma are packing to head to the hills, sometimes the call comes from the Longhouse long after grandma is gone. Sometimes the mountains make the call and draw your spirit up to them. The call for Gatherers can occur when you are a child, or as an adult. To answer the call, is to accept a life of service, not only to yourself and your community, but to the land.

Every spring a lady-ceremony occurs in a happy and sacred place called Nixyáawii. It starts with the sisters. The sisters are the roots; Pyaxí, Luuks, and Xáwš and they poke up out of the ground after their long sleep to share about the land and spirits. These sisters are greeted by our ladies; grandmas, moms, aunts and wives, who then tell the menfolk, "It's time for Root Feast."

Tribal projects tend to work to preserve and protect aspects of Tribal life and governance, and this project is no different. Project activities, generously funded and supported by Meyer Memorial Trust, address different facets of Gatherer life, and work proactively to protect and enhance these essential relationships to land and place. Thank you to MMT for their support of CTUIR Gatherers.

As part of this effort, Gatherers were interviewed about their experiences and memories, mentors and process, and agreed to sit for portraits. The following section is a showcase of those portraits, and interviews. Portraits in this book are organized in a similar manner as Gatherers line up at the Longhouse, eldest to youngest. These portraits are by no means the full extent of CTUIR Gatherers, but an attempt to honor those who have been keeping the promise.

Nixyáawii Longhouse Gatherers make a lifelong commitment to Tribal culture and ways of life. Gatherers circa 1970's are shown harvesting for Feast in the same way Gatherers today do.

Photo courtesy of the Grandma Butch Collection.

Root Feast 2023

Interview with
Trinette "Tut" Minthorn

"We have 52 weeks out of the year, so we can imagine how much food we need, just to sustain us until next Feast, and the next gathering season. That's a lot. And so it's our responsibility as Gatherers once we have our Feast, that gives us the release to go dig for our homes and for the Longhouse. That that's a lot of time. A lot of women.

Listening to my aunts and my grandma, they would always say if each of the Gatherers gathers a bag -- a bag full of Roots -- that would last us until the next gathering season.

With the spiritual aspect, it's being connected to the land. We're doing the work Creator intended us to do, you know. These Foods came to us, for us to use them, use their bodies, Use everything, and then in turn, if we took care of them, they would continue to come back. So it feels good.

We're truly blessed to be able to practice our cultural ways, you know, because a lot of people have lost their culture. So I think just having that connection. They say the people that passed before us come back as our Foods, and I strongly believe that absolutely it is. Just having that connection and just doing the work, doing my part to continue being Indian."

Top photo: Nixyáawii Longhouse Gatherer Trinette Minthorn collects bags of Roots dug by many Gatherers as part of the preparation for Root Feast.

Bottom photo: Wápus (bags) are filled with Roots to be welcomed in ceremony at Root Feast.

Left: Wápus full of Roots sit lined up on the tail gate of a Gatherer's truck as the group takes a break before heading to the next gathering site. Middle photo: Twila Jones (farthest left) peels Roots with other Gatherers at the Mission Longhouse. Right photo: CTUIR youth dig deep Roots in rocky soils at one of traditional gathering sites.

All photo credits: CTUIR DNR FFPP 2023.

Interview with Twyla Jones

"Everything has a story and everything has a purpose and everything has a prayer and a song to it. So I guess learning all that and then teaching these guys right now, it's crucial.

I feel like it's crucial because we're losing a lot of our Elders that have those stories. So spending that time and getting the opportunity to come out, and to listen, to learn, and to learn to listen. It's a big part for these young ones that way. I have those stories from my grandmas and the Elders, and all people that we've gone out with.

We pick our teachers and right now we have really good teachers, and so these guys are able to come out and they get to learn. It's excellent, we gonna teach them well, yes!

We went sweat, our own little ceremony before we come out, and we wash ourselves off and we get rid of any bad vibes or anything that is going on from the city life or whatever. For me, that from work, and for the young ones that's like school or whatever they've got going on. Just kind of leave it at the fire. And then we came up. It's like a preparation to come up here and a part of be connected.

The whole time will be singing and just kind of stay within that. We're going through a lot within like the city world. It's about keeping our spirits up as we're gathering. So we're all being mindful of what we're doing and how we're acting, how we're speaking, and putting all that good energy into the Food because it is healing. I've witnessed it heal. I've witnessed it. Be that medicine for our Elders. I'm a believer of this work, absolutely."

Historic photos of Gatherers circa 1970s

Photos courtesy of Grandma Butch Collection

This is a historic photo of Butch and her familiy; from left to right: átway Louie, Butch, átway Arleta, Dallas, and Lance Dick.

Marie "Butch" Dick

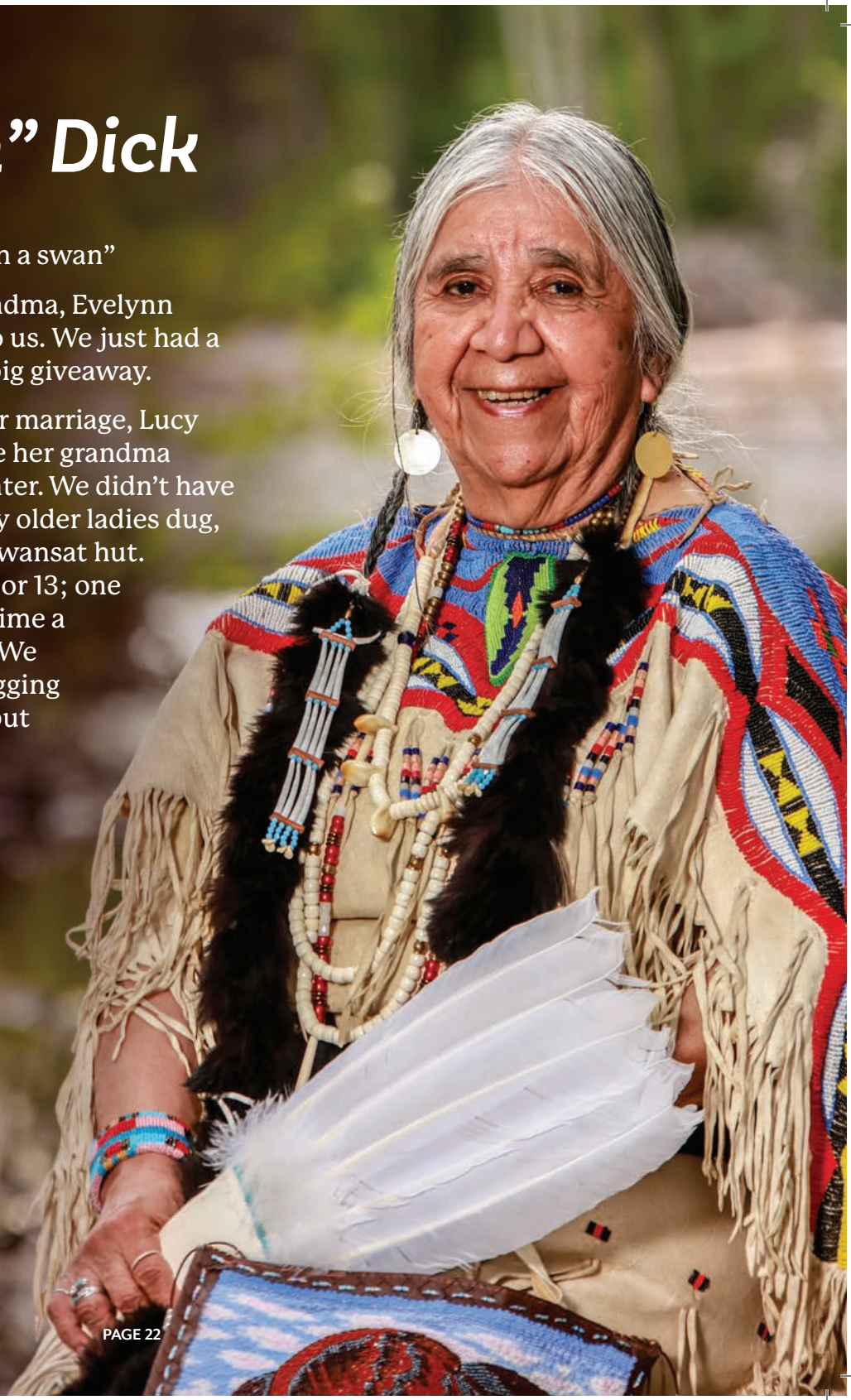
Iwatstnonan "Something to do with a swan"

When we were 12 years old our grandma, Evelynn Alexander, just gave these names to us. We just had a dinner at our grandma's house, no big giveaway.

For my first Roots giveway it was for marriage, Lucy Minthorn gave away for her because her grandma passed. We mostly gathered for winter. We didn't have big feasts until the 60's. Before, only older ladies dug, teenagers served at a big tent and kwansat hut. I have been gathering since I was 12 or 13; one time a bull chased us, and another time a lady threatened us with a shotgun. We had the police called on us while digging Luuks near Heppner in the 1960's, but the police said we were fine.

My mentors were my Grandma and Milly Ezekeal. We used to go down to Condon, for family not for feast. Other influential Gatherers for me are Lonnie Selam's grandma Mary Gibson, and lately Mary Keith.

One lesson that I have for other Gatherers: don't gather in one place all the time- rotate- you'll leave more roots. I worry about children's feast.



Portrait by Robert McLean, 2023

Linda Jones

Yayáxwatson'may My sisters and brothers decided I should have our mother's name. So, approximately eight years ago, we did the Naming ceremony where I took her name, Yayaxwatson'may. This name was given to our mother by her father. Before this name, I was called Ayaxnit (accent over A). My mother said this name was given to me by one of my father's aunts. We never knew the interpretation as our Dad's Aunts were already passed.

For our ceremony, my sisters and I performed our Gathering ceremony long ago with my mother, she did it for all of us sisters because she believed and lived this tradition. When girls come out as Food Gatherers, it was customary to give your first Roots to an Elder who isn't able to go out and dig anymore. So I am sure that is likely what happened with our first roots. Since it was long ago, I don't remember to whom our roots were given.

For my mentors, I want to thank my mother, all of my aunts and grandmothers on both sides who practiced and lived with these beliefs. Growing up years ago, families lived together. We lived with our grandmother who would get ready and take us out Root digging when we were young. To us it was a game, and our grandmother always encouraged us and would have treats ready to give to us to encourage us to continue to practice this way of life.

Being a Gatherer has always meant we carry on these teachings from our mothers, aunts, and grandmothers. When you come out as a Gatherer, Elders in the community may ask you "will you go get me some Roots?" and you can't say no. Once you have your ceremony to gather our foods, this is your job for the rest of your life. It's not a one time event. Its not done to 'show off'. In some ways, this teaching has been lost with current generations. I say that because gathering our foods is not an easy task. It is hard work - you go get the roots, then you have to clean the roots, and them dry them or put them up the way you were taught. It's a process and it's time consuming.

Alvina Huesties

Kakyapam. I received my Indian name in 1975 as an adult, before my name was Yíp̓íy̓íc̓ínmay. My name was given to me by Ada Jones Patrick, one of my grandmas who stayed with us at McKay. It was held in the gym.

I didn't have a First Roots ceremony until my daughter's dance with Grandma Smitty. Her Roots were given to Grandmother Lucy. I gave my first Huckleberries to my Grandma Ada, and my first beadwork to my Gramps.

My mentors are my Grandma Ada, and other influential mentors are Grandma Lucy, my Mom Velma, Aunt Smitty, Grandma's sisters are who went out with us all and worked with a "Longhouse" building by the agency that is torn down now. I have been gathering since I was 5 years old. Our family used to go to Johnson Creek, John Day, and Baker for Roots.

I used to harvest Xáwš, Piyaki, Huckleberries, and Chokecherries, and we used to trade for them too. We were always trading. As we got older, we only use them for ceremony. I was able to be out there, so now it would be nice to have my daughter and granddaughters go more. We need to have families together for all seasons.

Lynn Sue Jones

My Indian name is *'Axatinsh* (my Mom's Mother's name). I'm not sure what the meaning of my Indian name is. All I was told was I followed in my Grandmother's footsteps as "fast diggers."

My First Roots ceremony was held at my Grandma Matilda's house next to Susie Williams home on Lavadour Lane. It was a small ceremony with only a few family members in attendance.

My Gatherer teachers have been My Grandmother 'Axatinsh and my Uncle Henry White.

Now with climate change our roots are getting scarce; either with the changing weather or the cattle, wild horses, deer, etc. eating the tops of the root. I don't think we ever had any problems with not having access to the fields back then.

Jennifer Mesteth

My Indian name is *Mickoytawkin*; the meaning is “warrior chipmunk”

My gathering journey began with Mary Waeneko Lawyer, who was my ex-husband’s foster mother. These were given to me at Tamkalikts Celebration by my cousin Roberta Conner. I gave my first Roots, Xáwš, to Mary, but gathered for Root Feast for the first time in 2022 with my granddaughters, Manaia and Stella. I find my granddaughters to be inspiring and wonderful teachers.

One thing I would like to impress on others is the importance of not only teaching our children the right way to gather and pay respect to the land, but to also keep the cultural practices fun.

Michelle Thompson

My Indian name is *Takspalatway*

For my first Roots ceremony, it was my first camping to gather at Indian Lake when I was five or six years old. I performed the Root dance and gave my "first" Roots to Lillian Hoptowit during a Children's Feast with my grandchildren. My first weaving I gave to my sister Jeanine.

My Gathering mentors were Rose Sohappy, Lydia Wilson, Carrie Sampson, and Augustine Bill. My mentors in preserving techniques and newer plant knowledge for medicine and fiber arts is Mary Keith. My hide tanning and smoking and weaving teachers were Rosa Thompson and Lovella Guyer.

I want people to know more parents need to be involved for the entire Feast; it can't be just the staff. Parents need to be involved before Feast, not just the day of because gathering is a shared responsibility.

átway Lona Pond

Aug 25, 1963 – Dec 21, 2024

My Indian name is Naninma. It was given to me by Sam Kash Kash and Janie Pond when I was a little girl. Kayt, Les Minthorn, helped me define it. It is from the Nez Perce Battle of Bear Paw. Only the Wanapam called me by this name.

My first Gathering ceremony was when I was 5 yrs old. Delores Buck did it really fast, I barely remember it was so fast, we wanted to leave the center.

My gathering mentor was my Dad, Dr. Ronald Pond. Other influential gatherers mentioned are Helen and Leena Jim, who gave me the discipline that I needed. I am also grateful to Angela Buck, Susie White Lutin, Arlene Buck, Leila Buck, Inez Reeves. I have been gathering since I was 5 years old.

I would like others to know you need your sweathouse; you need your Hunt and Root boss, and to pray for them. Stop fighting over power and photos. Some are not doing it for the right reasons and are only showing up for the photos at Feast. Diggers are the proof of what's on the table in the winter. We need to make sure we honor the Roots before we dig, and balance in life is so important – this is true across nature.

LeAnn Alexander

My Indian name is *Tatswipa* "a good place", Tatswipa is family name from my great grandmother that was given to me by my uncle Louie Dick Jr. at my cousin Arleta's memorial in the spring of 2008 at Tamastlikst Cultural Institute. I received my name with my daughter Larissa as well.

For my first Gathering ceremony, Percilla made the outfit I gave away at my first gathering ceremony, as well as the kupin and wapas that I gave away to Rose. I remember, at the giveaway, Lillian Spino, Rose, and Ernestine Waters gave her new bags that she still uses to this day, and Inez gifted her a cupin.

My gatherer mentors were my aunt Butch (Marie Dick), Rose Sohappy, Elizabeth "Smitty" Jones, Inez Reeves and Percilla Craig. Other influential gatherers over the years include Linda and Lynn Sue Jones, Lonnie Alexander, Janie Pond, and Reanne Jones. I witnessed Reanne return from the fields with two large bags, full, as "goals," for gathering. Men were also influential and they include; Steve Sohappy, my uncle Louie, Fermore Craig, Pete Quaempts, and Ronald Pond

Gatherers are supposed to always be ready to serve and I get stressed that I don't ever gather enough. I want to remind future Gatherers to not take everything, leave some for the birds and animals and so the Roots and Berries can repopulate. Have a song in your heart while you are out gathering, and when Gatherers return, watermelon and frozen grapes help with rehydration.

Teara Farrow-Ferman

My Indian name is *Wapaytáwaat Kóomayn* 'helper or healer of the sick'. I received my name when I was 20 years old so 2003, and it was given to me by my grandmother Emma (Sheoships) Farrow and Lawrence "Ham" Patrick helped me with it.

The first Gathering ceremony was held at my grandmother's house. My uncle, Matt Farrow, Sr., also received his adult Indian name at the same time.

My first teacher was my aunt, Lou Farrow. Then it was my good friend Wenix Red Elk and then my stepmother Linda Sampson. Other influential gatherers that I admire and/or learn from include Judy Farrow, Alvina Huesties, Althea Huesties, Sandra Sampson, Michelle Thompson, Linda Jones, LynnSue Jones, Mildred Quaempts, Mona Yeager, Sadie Mildenberger, Syreeta Thompson, Keysha Ashley, Thomas MorningOwl, Fred Hill, Andrew Wildbill, and there are many others that have passed on such as Edith McCloud, Kathleen Gordon, Joan Burnside, Lillian Hoptowit. I'm sure I missed some people. We didn't do the Root Dance, but I have seen it done.

I know when my spring flowers start coming up in my flower beds at home that it is time to start checking the pyaki.

Althea Huesties—Wolf

Kimoynew
I received my Great grandmother, Ada Jones Patrick's name when I was 6 years old. I was age 8 when I completed my first Roots with The Diggers.

For the first Gathering ceremony, Grandma Smitty, or Elizabeth Jones, was my speaker and did I the Root Dance with her at the Nixyaawii Longhouse. Grandma Smitty received my bag and digger, while my Roots went to Lucy Minthorn.

My gathering mentors include my mom Alvina Huesties, Grandma Ada, Ma (Grandmother Velma Burke), Grandma Lucy, Grandma Butch (Marie Dick), Aunt Judy Farrow, Emma Farrow, Grandma Smitty, Grandma Janie Pond and Grandma Sheila Pond.

It is incredibly moving to step and harvest where the ancestors have for thousands of years. This acknowledgement helps be a better protector of it.

Cara Greene

For my Indian name, I have a little girl's name; however, I don't remember what it is, and I believe no one wrote it down for me. I believe I was between 11-12 years old when I received it, and I was named by Robert Taylor. The naming ceremony was held in Lapwai, ID at my grandma's home.

At my first gathering ceremony, I am not aware of us doing a root dance, but we are honored and stood up during Root Feast as new gathers. When we gave our roots away, I think I gave mine to Mitzie Rodriguez, it's been a while since my first gathering.

My teacher is Grandma Linda Jones, and she continues to teach my daughters Keyen, Diamond and myself all the time. She also continues to help my daughters and myself learn our traditional gathering spots, when we go out to gather and which roots (sister) we gather for. I would also like to recognize Trinette Minthorn as another great mentor who we started out with when we first joined the longhouse.

Climate change has impacted us greatly, sometimes we don't get enough snow or rain and our roots are not plentiful. I remember this one year we went out and the spring had turned into summer quickly, and it dried up the ground too fast. Unfortunately, we were only able to go a couple more times afterwards to gather more to put away for next winter. Then there are the fires, where the smoke is so bad, we have to wear scarves, so we don't get sick while gathering. The whirlwind of our weather patterns is just crazy and unpredictable for us Gatherers.

Feather Huesties

My Indian name is *Wuptasxixi Hilakawin*. I was able to remain active in the culture thanks to my mother, Susan Sams, beadworking and sewing skills.

My first gathering ceremony was completed when I was 20 years old. My speaker was Alvina Huesties, my mother-in-law. Inez Reeves received my first Roots.

My gathering mentors include Grandma Janie Pond, Alvina Huesties, Judy Farrow, Lillian Spino, Linda, and Lynn Sue Jones, and Auntie Jan Jones.

Because I didn't grow up with a family of traditional gatherers, I cherished being able to go out with these women. The bond I make with these women, there is nothing like it, especially when we are all working and we are all tired, but smiling and laughing.

Syreeta Thompson

My Indian name is *?Iistipitpum* “light shining from the sun” or “light shining from the abalone shell” (Cayuse or Nez Perce interpretation)

For my first gathering ceremony, I was four or five years old when I gathered my first Roots as part of Children’s Feast.

My primary gathering mentor was Rose Sohappy for Roots and Berries. Other influential gatherers are my mother Michelle, Erma Totus, Linda Sampson, Brosnan Spencer, and close friend Sadie Mildenberger.

I was told and I know that the plants need us, that gathering practices help spread seeds, prune trees and when we have a wašat song in our heart they will come back. I want the Tribe to support families gathering as units like we did before the work week was invented. Kids need to be present with their mom, dad, uncles, aunties, siblings, cousins, grandmas and grandpas, so they know THEIR family’s customs.

Sadie Mildenberger

My Indian name is *Ipnanik'awn* "shining day", named by my aunt Susan Sheoships in 2022, along with seven other family members at the Umatilla Tribal Longhouse.

I remember my family would also have ceremonies at my grandma Mable Sheoships' home, or a longtent in Thornhollow where most of my family is from.

My gathering mentors were my Grandma Mable, aunt Susan, and Grandma Auggy (Augstine Bill).

Some observations I have made while out on the land are that the gathering seasons for each plant are generally shorter. Predicting when the plant will be ready is inconsistent due to weather changes, and those changes affect what the river does.

Nina Allen

My Indian name is *PY NY KOTE*- Always with an open hand

For my first Gathering ceremony, I did not perform the Root Dance, but I gave my first Roots to an Elder, Katie Blackwolf Bevis, and then to Judy Farrow and Linda Sampson. The first root I dug was Xáwš and I now dig that every year.

My Gatherer teacher is Linda Sampson, she took me in 6 years ago. She has taught me everything I know about digging.

We follow the wheel of traditional foods and every season we gather certain foods, and for roots we have a small window of opportunity to get. If we miss that window we have to wait until the following year.

Brosnan Spencer

My Indian name is *Wiweeletitpi* “many creeks and streams following” (place name: Cove, Oregon)

At age 20 I “committed” to being a Gatherer and I presented my first Roots to Lynn Sue Jones at the Longhouse when I went out with the women for the first time. Prior to this, I was part of the first Children’s Feast where I completed the Root dance and a first Roots giveaway.

My mentors for gathering foods would be various women from the Longhouse; Shawna Gavin, Trish McMichael, Pamela Shippentower and my friend Kaitlin Treloar. Beyond Longhouse lessons, Wiweeletitpi was taught about tule gathering and mat making from Lloyd Barkley. I have found books and non-Indian foragers have helped me expand my First Foods knowledge.

I want to help Gatherers and Tribal members learn to harvest plants in a sustainable way, like knowing what the plant looks like from seedling to when it is seeding and its various uses through its life cycle. To be a Gatherer is to have a deep connection with the land and the Foods you are tending to. When you know the plants and animals as your relatives and you commit to a relationship with them, your experience grows richer with every season. Your own Roots grow deeper as they have much to offer. To be able to share that with your family and community is truly a priceless gift.

Clarise Huesties

My Indian name is *Xitcxtciiyu*. I received my name when she was 4 years old by my grandmother, Velma Burke and it means Little Star. I was named alongside my uncle Jeremy Wolf as well at the Nixyaawii Longhouse.

I completed my first Digging with the women when I was 9 years old. I gave my first Roots to Lonnie Alexander and my speaker was my Allat, Alvina Huesties.

My gathering mentors are My Allat; Alvina Huesties, my Auntie E; Althea Wolf, and Auntie Feather.

Family, culture and tradition that all comes together nicely.

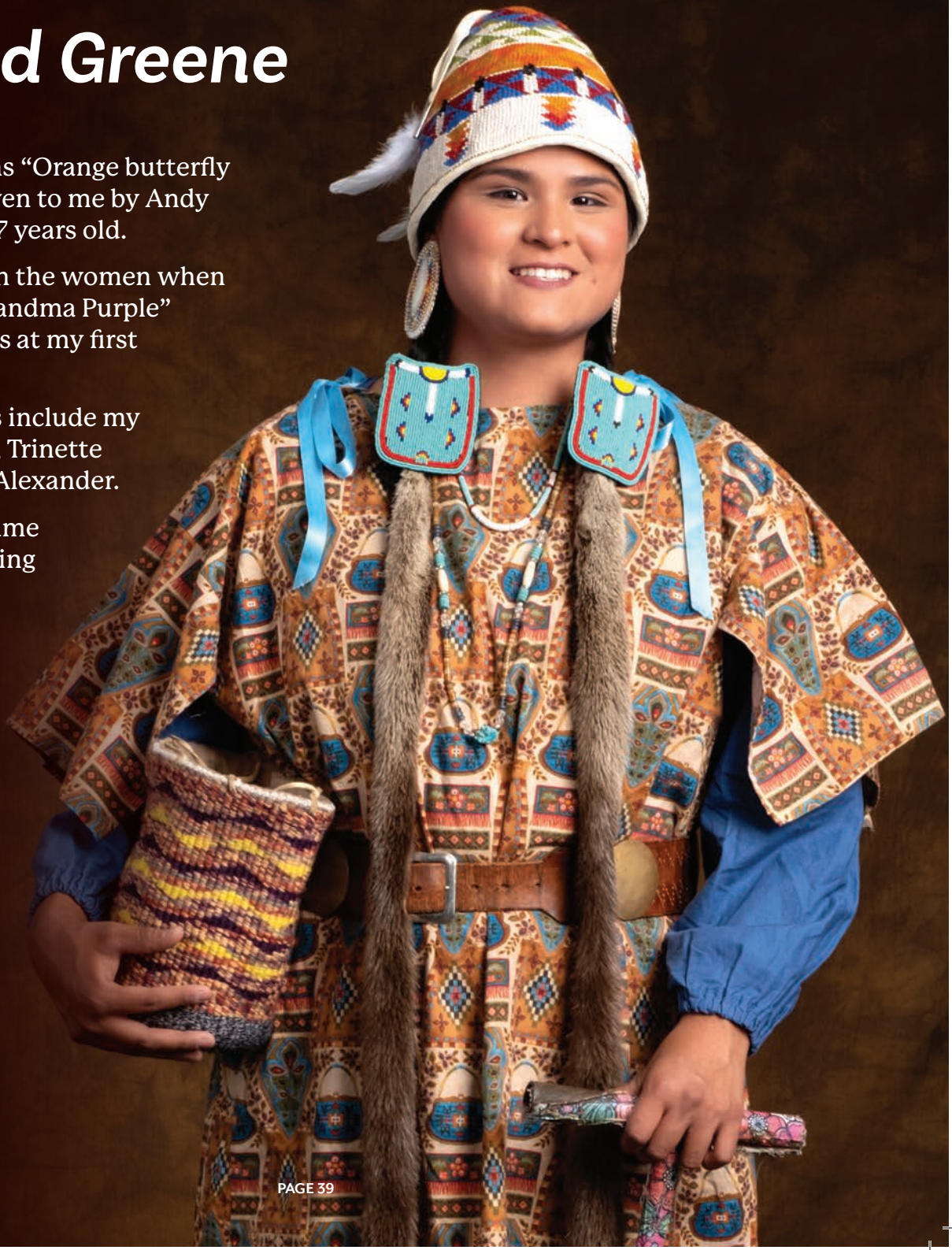
Diamond Greene

My Indian name means “Orange butterfly alighting” and was given to me by Andy Dumont when I was 17 years old.

I became a Digger with the women when I was 15 years old. “Grandma Purple” received my first Roots at my first Gathering ceremony.

My gathering mentors include my Grandma Linda Jones, Trinette Minthorn and LeAnn Alexander.

The reason I got my name was because I was eating the huckleberries while picking with the woman. The butterflies were landing and an orange one kept following me.



Lillian Watchman

My Indian name is *Hiimawacanmay-* Ahead of everything, and I received it when I was 12 years old.

At my first Gathering ceremony, I did not perform the Root Dance, but I gifted my first gathering of Xáwš to Linda Sampson, and my first gathering of Piyaxi to Katie Blackwolf Bevis.

My Gatherer mentor is Linda Sampson, and I would also like to thank my mom Nina Allen, Sadie Mildenburger, Syreeta Azure, and Dionne Bronson as other influential Gatherers who have taught me.

I have been gathering since I was four years old. I go out and gather every year with my mom and siblings and our elders. Gathering for kids feast is my favorite time of year.

Manaia Wolf

My Indian name is *Tínúwínínmay* and I was named by Andy Dumont after learning I was curious about the people around me. My name means Inquiring Maiden, and I received it at age 4.

I was 8 years old when I completed my first Dig with the women. I shared my giveaway ceremony with Rosa Arellones and Jackie Thompson. I gave my first Roots to my Kotsa, Alvina Huesties.

My gathering mentors include my Kotsa, my mom Althea, my Auntie Feather, Trinette Minthorn, Grandma Butch, and my Ullu Jennifer Mesteth.

When I'm out there digging, I think to myself, "just keep working" because it is hard work, but I'm proud to do the work too because my mom, Kotsa and her grandmas dug for feast. I find myself letting the wind guide me –like these are the sisters who want to go to feast. Also, what keeps me going each year is all the laughing and singing we do in the cars with my cousins, friends and aunties I don't get to see that much."

Stella Wolf

My Indian Name is *Watašyosyos*. I was 2 years old when I received my name, Blue Earth, from my grandpa Ronald "Roony" Pond. It is the place name for the Blue Mountains in the Palouse language. I am 13 years old now.

For my first Gathering ceremony, I participated in the Children's Feast with my Ullu Jennifer Mesteth and also gave my roots to my Ullu. When I joined The Women diggers, my mom; Althea Wolf, dad; Jeremy Wolf, and Kotsa Alvina Huesties had a giveaway ceremony for me, and Kotsa was my speaker. I gave these first Roots also to my Ullu. I also want to mention that I gave my first weaving to Grandma Susan Sams.

My gathering mentors are my mom, Kotsa, and other influential mentors are Ullu because I went with her for Children's Feast.

I've been gathering since I was a baby. My dad carried me in a backpack. There are pictures of me. In some of the pictures I'm sleeping. I love the mountains.

Meadow Spencer-Fossik

My Indian Name is *Taymaatayxpam* "The place where love medicine grows" (Place name: Mt. Emily)

I have been gathering since I was five years old, performed the root dance and had my giveaway at children's feast, and gave my first roots to Mildred Quaempts

My mentors are my mother and father Brosnan and Bobby, are my mentors and Linda Sampson in another of my teachers.

I keep up with my parents in gathering, preserving, and cultural arts, but my mom says I am the best and most efficient peeler, even better than her.

Listening to Longhouse Cooks & Gatherers

Forums offer an opportunity for Tribal harvesters to provide guidance and feedback to CTUIR staff and leaders. A First Foods Forum was organized and hosted in June 2023, and focused on the needs of Longhouse Cooks and Gatherers.

In this forum, participants discussed wide ranging topics. Many spoke of challenges to harvest of cultural foods by non-Tribal communities, especially the selling of these Foods for profit rather than subsistence. They also spoke of how Women's Foods -- the Roots and Berries -- needed better protections in Tribal codes and from non-Tribal agencies. CTUIR's Fish and Wildlife Code establishes restrictions on persons able to harvest plant and animal species on the Umatilla Indian Reservation (Section 15.01). This section specifies that non-Indians are not permitted to gather plants, animals, or other materials from Tribally Owned lands, including on the reservation and on other lands in Ceded lands.

Photo top: CTUIR Longhouse Gatherer Trinette Minthorn washes and prepares a container of Latit latit, or "Indian Celery" as part of the Celery Feast to welcome this First Food home in the early spring. *Photo by Annie Warren, NWPB.*

Photo bottom: Preparing Latit latit involves cleaning plants and removing damaged or inedible parts, as part of food safety done for any kind of food. *Photo by Annie Warren, NWPB.*

Enforcement of these Tribal regulations is a topic that is always raised, both in discussions of First Foods harvest as well as with air and water quality protection. Needs around food safety and processing were also raised. Some spoke of the need for people to help at all phases of gathering, including cleaning and processing, especially for Feasts. As part of the cultural protocol for Feasts -- which welcome home each archetypal First Food when it returns to the Longhouse table each year -- Gatherers spend days together prior to these Feasts, harvesting First Foods, then cleaning and peeling them together. Gatherers noted during the forum that more people were participating in the harvest activities, but fewer are available to process and clean these Roots and Berries, even though this is an essential part of honoring these First Foods.

Longhouse Gatherers sit and prepare Latit latit, or Indian Celery, to be honored and eaten at the 2023 Celery Feast
Photo by Annie Warren, NWPB.

Food-safe storage of First Foods was also an area of improvement that was noted. As First Foods are increasingly recognized not only for their cultural importance, but as a modern subsistence food for many Tribal people, food safety issues are being recognized as an area where improvements to protocols and infrastructure can be made. Forum participants highlighted a need for infrastructure improvements in the Longhouse kitchen, including more counter space for preparation and meat processing, additional dishwashers and refrigerators, dedicated color-coded cutting boards, communication aids like a whiteboard, access to Public Works staff contacts, skills and knowledge building like regular food handlers training and Master Food Preservation classes, and a formal deep cleaning and sanitation routine and standards for the kitchen.

Top photo: First Foods Feasts are a good reminder that Tribal people are timeless: traditions represent connections to ancestors and past years, and an opportunity to preserve and perpetuate culture now and into the future.

Bottom photo: Many generations of Longhouse Cooks and Gatherers work together to prepare foods for Feasts.

Photos by Annie Warren, NWPB.

Access issues were also raised. Off-road and motorized vehicles were flagged as causing harm to Roots, and Gatherers noted a need for additional and more diverse harvesting locations. Forum participants requested assistance from CTUIR DNR in locating and accessing First Foods harvest sites, particularly those that are close by (within an hour of driving) for Feast gathering needs.

Opportunities to improve public safety around the edges of residential areas during hunting seasons was also discussed, and enforcement of trespassing and poaching regulations by Tribal and non-Tribal law enforcement could be assisted through the use of technology, like aerial drones.

Thanks to the CTUIR DNR Wildlife Program and First Foods Policy Program managers Andrew Wildbill and Althea Huesties-Wolf for facilitating the forum discussion.

Top photo: Joy and laughter are an essential ingredient in preparing foods for Feast. Gatherers keep "a good heart" while they harvest and prepare First Foods, so they will bring physical and spiritual nourishment to those who eat them.

Bottom photo: Root and Berry First Foods are prepared on the Long-house stove to be honored during the Celery Feast. Photos by Annie Warren, NWPB.

Part 3

Gatherers Future

Tribal people have always been here and will always be here, tending the land with culture and connection through each generation. The Gatherers on the hillside in their colorful Wing Dresses are said to look like flowers in the early spring.

Photo courtesy of LeAnn Alexander, 2023

Preparing for Fire Project

In their seasonal timing, First Foods respond to changes in air temperature, soil moisture, snow depth, day length, and a number of other known and unknown phonologic triggers. They arrive when the conditions are right, and Gatherers must be ready to greet them, regardless of circumstance.

Gatherers are exposed to all kinds of inclement weather conditions while harvesting First Foods — cold, smoke, and heat exposure being the ones with the most significant impacts.

Air quality is especially important in considering impacts on Gatherers. Chronic exposure to poor air quality caused by seasonal wildfire smoke increases risk of lung and brain cancer, cardiac stress, and complications to existing illnesses. Western public health recommendations for smoke exposure are to issue "shelter-in-place" orders to keep people indoors. But we know that heavy smoke events are likely to become more frequent in the future, and First Foods wait for no one. So Gatherers must be prepared to protect themselves from these hazards as they continue to keep their promise.

To help Gatherers be prepared, Meyer Memorial Trust provided CTUIR with $176,037 over five years (2019-2023) to initiate these efforts.

Top photo: CTUIR Longhouse Gatherer Trinette Minthorn secures Roots in their gathering bag in spring conditions that include snow and hail. *Credit: CTUIR DNR FFPP 2023.*

Bottom photo: CTUIR Longhouse Gatherer Michelle Thompson demonstrates one adaptation strategy to keep Gatherers safe from wild-fire smoke impacts during Huckleberry gathering season.
Photo credit: CTUIR DNR FFPP Huesties-Wolf, 2023.

CTUIR Longhouse youth Stella Wolf gathers Huckleberries wearing a P100 respirator to keep her lungs safe from wildfire smoke, which were provided using MMT funding. *Photo credit: CTUIR DNR FFPP Huesties-Wolf, 2023.*

The Preparing for Fire Project aimed to prepare Gatherers and other Tribal harvesters for smoke conditions by focusing on three key project components:

1. Supporting information for intentional burning capacity
2. Improving public awareness and decision making skills around air quality and risks;
3. Provide residential and personal protective equipment to Gatherers and other harvesters to mitigate against harm from smoke.

Cultural or controlled burning is an essential and ancestral management tool for Tribes to create resilient and healthy forests and grasslands. Today, CTUIR is leading efforts to return intentional burning practices that replicate the benefits of cultural burning. Certain Tribal properties like Rainwater and Wanaket Wildlife Areas are actively managed with tools that include prescribed intentional burning. To do this safely, accurate on-site weather and atmospheric conditions are critical for deciding if an intentional burn operation is within its prescribed conditions to go forward. To improve information, CTUIR purchased a remote automated weather station (RAWS) for the Umatilla Agency BIA Fire Operations to use in making “go/no go” decisions on the day of a planned burn. More information on using prescribed fire as a management tool on these lands is found in the next section.

The project also sought to improve our Tribal community's understanding of the risks of smoke, and strategies to mitigate this risk. This effort was focused on Gatherers and other Tribal harvesters, and the aim was to provide skills and knowledge around autonomous decision-making about safety and air quality during harvesting seasons. To make safe decisions for their families during wildfire season, Gatherers need to know current and relevant air quality information. In order to support this informed decision-making and with the support of Tribal families, localized air quality monitors were placed in Tribal community homes to provide Gatherers with data on how air quality in their homes compares to outdoor air quality at locations around the CTUIR homelands. These IQ Air Visual Pro devices sample air quality on-site in Tribal homes, and also display up-to-date data on air quality at local publicly available stations, and provide a 30-hour predicted forecast as part of their display. This way, Gatherers are able to see what air quality conditions are locally, in their own homes, and where they may be traveling.

Finally, the project provided home air filtration units and various personal protective equipment items to Gatherers and other Tribal harvesters, in order to remove barriers to accessing these. Tribal homes exist in a range of quality and condition, and some homes may be more fortified against particle pollution than others. Vulnerable Gatherers and Elders may need additional air filtration equipment, which can be difficult to acquire and can be prohibitively expensive. With funds generously provided by Meyer Memorial Trust, 40 high quality air filtration units were purchased and distributed to vulnerable Tribal community members and families. This will create safer home conditions for Gatherers to return to after harvest, and protect respiratory health of our community.

Top photo: Heavy smoke conditions from wildfire smoke can cause harm to those with chronic health conditions, and will be a regular seasonal presence due to climate impacts.

Middle photo:Over 100 IQ Air's Air Visual Pro units were placed in the Tribal community to assist with decision-making around air quality.

Bottom photo: CTUIR youth provide input to a listening session as a air filtration unit cleans the indoor air to protect against particle and other air contaminants.

Photo credits: CTUIR DNR FFPP, 2023

Good Fire: Return of Intentional Burning

Elk in a Telephone Ridge stand recently treated with thinning and prescribed fire. *Photo credit: Game camera photo, 2021.*

Indigenous people have managed the land with fire since time immemorial. Traditional burning and lightning-caused fire meant that fire was once common in Western ecosystems; it was an agent of disturbance to which plants and animals were adapted. Policies of fire suppression, which coincided with Euromerican settlement, sought to eliminate fire from the landscape. The practice of fire exclusion persisted for over a century, and most fires on public and private land continue to be suppressed. However, the folly of excluding fire from our fire-maintained ecosystems is increasingly evident. As a result, controlled burning is an increasingly common land management tool to return fire to the landscape.

Intentional, controlled burns are intended to restore the relatively open and productive conditions that characterized forests of the past. Indigenous people historically used fire for many reasons, including to clear underbrush and small trees from the forest understory. The more open stand conditions created by burning benefit understory plants like huckleberry and serviceberry, which thrive in sunny conditions. Deer, elk, and other wildlife also benefit from the abundant forage production that follows burning. Removing smaller, competing trees improves drought and pest resilience in the trees that remain. Returning fire to the landscape improves forest health, reduces wildfire hazard, and creates a walkable understory for Gatherers and other Tribal harvesters.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) is CTUIR's closest partner with respect to fire management. Wildfire suppression remains an important function of the Agency, but the BIA also conducts controlled burning on Tribal lands in support of CTUIR's land management aims.

Top right photo: Umatilla Agency fire crews use drip torches to light small fires to help promote low intensity burns as part of forest management.

Bottom left: CTUIR Tribal members and community often serve as crew members on regional fire response teams, like a fire on the Yakama Nation that involved first responders from all around the area.

Bottom right: BIA Fire operations periodically use helicopters to ignite large-scale controlled burns.

Photo credits: BIA Umatilla Agency Fire Operations 2021.

Top photo:
BIA and CTUIR DNR fire personnel conducting a prescribed burn near Indian Lake in 2023.
Photo credit: Lindsay Chiono, CTUIR DNR

Bottom left photo:
BIA Umatilla Agency fire crew display the CTUIR flag on the fire engine during the Pendleton July 4th parade. July 2021.

Bottom right photo:
Aerial ignition of prescribed burn at Stage Gulch, as seen from the helicopter carrying out the ignition.

Photo credits: BIA Umatilla Agency Fire Operations, 2021.

Tribal Water Commission Member Kristin Conner (right) takes in the sights at the Rainwater Wildlife Management Area on a tour lead by CTUIR DNR Wildlife Program staff Lindsay Chiono and Jerry Middel (left). *Photo credit: Annie Warren, NWPB*

One location where this cooperative knowledge is on display is at CTUIR's Rainwater Wildlife Area. The Rainwater Wildlife Management Area is located south of Dayton, WA, and has been managed directly by the CTUIR Dept. of Natural Resources Wildlife Program for over 20 years. This site is managed specifically for the health and abundance of First Foods, and for Tribal access to the Foods.

Rainwater staff continue to improve forest and grassland management strategies to be responsive to First Foods and Tribal harvesters. CTUIR's Dept of Natural Resources' (DNR) Wildlife Program directly manages this site, and uses a variety of management approaches that include forest thinning, controlled burning, and experimental noxious weed control to create resilient, drought- and wildfire-resistant, and accessible forests and grasslands for First Foods and for Gatherers.

Conducting prescribed burns requires a lot of information to minimize risk as much as possible. Burn activities use localized and up to date weather information to make decisions about whether conditions are right on a given burn day. CTUIR DNR works with local agencies on weather information, and utilizes a mobile Remote Atmospheric Weather Station (RAWS) to gather highly localized weather information at the site of the burn. This increases the likelihood that a prescribed fire achieves its intended goals and stays within the boundaries of the planned burn unit. A RAWS station dedicated to CTUIR and its partners was purchased as part of generous funding provided by Meyer Memorial Trust and will continue to help CTUIR facilitate prescribed burns now and into the future.

CTUIR reintroduced broadcast burning to Rainwater only recently, in 2021. Prior to Tribal ownership, the property was managed for cattle grazing and timber production, and fire was largely absent. As a result, many forest stands are dense, and tree competition for water, nutrients, and light is fierce -- these stands are increasingly vulnerable to large-scale mortality from wildfire, insect outbreak, disease, and drought. The forest understories are often dark, with accumulated limbs and logs and little green vegetation. As a remedy, CTUIR DNR staff thin the forest of smaller trees to reduce tree densities before igniting controlled fires to consume surface fuels. Burning promotes resprouting of many shrub species and clears the way for future tree regeneration.

Broadcast burn in a recently thinned forest stand at Rainwater.

Photo credit: Lindsay Chiono, CTUIR 2022.

During a broadcast burn in a thinned forest stand at Rainwater. *Photo credit: John Punches, OSU Coop-erative Extension, 2021.*

Fire can be beneficial in non-forested environments as well. The CTUIR's Wanaket Wildlife Area near Hermiston, Oregon is managed for wetland and shrub-steppe habitats. Wetlands are productive systems, and they can rapidly generate large volumes of vegetation. To maintain open water habitat for waterfowl and shorebirds, CTUIR DNR and BIA staff frequently apply fire to consume accumulated vegetation. Tk'ú (tule rush, Schoenoplectus acutus) is a wetland plant that is abundant at Wanaket, and CTUIR Tribal members harvest tules there. Fire benefits tules by consuming dead plant material and promoting tule resprouting.

Because there are many categories of landowners who now occupy ancestral Tribal lands, CTUIR works with many different entities to coordinate forest management activities across Tribal, public, and private lands. While there are challenges to coordinating and implementing controlled burning, the benefits of using fire as a management tool are increasingly evident.

Beyond controlled burning on Tribal lands, CTUIR works as a co-steward to promote restoration in the Ceded Territory. Off-Reservation public and private lands are critical to continuing the reciprocal relationship between Tribal people and the First Foods. CTUIR works to educate non-Tribal land managers in order to elevate the restoration needs of the Foods among competing priorities. For example, DNR Range, Agriculture, and Forestry Program staff recently proposed a large (over 40,000 acre) forest restoration project on US Forest Service (USFS) Land near the southern Reservation boundary under the Tribal Forest Protection Act. The proposed work includes forest thinning and prescribed burning to benefit Huckleberry and other berry-producing shrubs as well as Deer and Elk. This project expands CTUIR capacity to take a greater role in co-stewardship of shared forest lands. It also aligns desired USFS outcomes with the CTUIR First Foods Mission. Ultimately, the collaboration seeks to provide enhanced opportunities for tribal members to exercise reserved rights to hunt and gather on these lands.

Thanks to the CTUIR DNR Wildlife Program and Range, Agriculture, and Forestry Program staff Lindsay Chiono and Amanda Lowe for contributing to this section.

Clockwise from upper left: Wetland dominated by decadent tule vegetation before, during, after, and one week after burning. Note rapidly regenerating tules in lower left photo. *Photo credit: Lindsay Chiono, CTUIR 2023.*

Tiny Relatives: First Foods and Pollinator Relationships

Pollinators have reciprocal relationships with First Foods

First Foods plant species, similar to many other plant species, reproduce partly through spreading seeds, which are the product of pollination. Pollination is a process that is facilitated by insects that have a close relationship with First Foods plants, with some "specialized" to be the sole pollinators for these plants.

Climate impacts to these relationships are expected, as timing of First Foods flowering shifts unpredictably, and may not align with the emergence of these pollinators in the spring. It is also likely that extreme heat and drought will affect the length of time First Foods flowers will be available for pollination, with fears this will result in a decline in First Foods reproduction and fruiting.

Top left photo: A native metallic sweat bee pollinates a Xáwš flower.

Right photos: Native bumblebees pollinate a Camas flower.

Photo credits: Beecology LLC

Tribes are working to understand and preserve these connections.

CTUIR's Range, Agriculture, and Forestry (RAF) Program is working to improve our understanding of these pollinator and First Foods relationships. To do this, CTUIR has been working with local pollinator research group Beecology LLC to collect data on insect visitors to First Foods flowers, and understand how these visitors impact First Foods reproduction and fruit production.

From Beecology LLC's preliminary data, some Xáwš pollinators include the Narrow-Legged Miner Bee *(Andrena angustitarsata)*, pollinators to Wíwnu and Camas includes the Fuzzy Horned Bumblebee *(Bombus mixtus)* and Black-Notched Bumblebee *(Bombus bifarius)*, and pollinators for Latítlatit includes the Small Green Miner Bee *(Andrena microchlora)* and Sweat bees *(Lasioglossum family)*.

In a series made possible by MMT funding, First Foods Policy Program worked with RAF to host an educational event at the Nixyáawii Governance Center to provide Tribal staff and community members an opportunity to learn more and interact with the science behind this information. Beecology LLC provided First Foods Pollinator collection insect boxes and microscopes, with additional insect collections loaned by Oregon State University Hermiston Agricultural Research and Extension Center (OSU HAREC)

Bottom left photos: Close up of First Foods Pollinator collection boxes provided by Beecology LLC (Credit FFPP 2023).

Top right photo: CTUIR Board of Trustees member Aaron Ashley looks through a microscope at a First Foods pollinator on display in the rotunda of the NGC (Credit: CTUIR CUJ 2023).

Bottom photo: FFPP acting Program Manager Althea Huesties-Wolf helps CTUIR Knowledge keeper and Cultural Scholar Thomas Morning Owl learn about First Foods Pollinators as he looks through a microscope (Credit: CTUIR CUJ, 2023).

This research effort is complementary to other CTUIR DNR efforts to better understand First Foods relationships, now and in the future as conditions change. CTUIR DNR is also working with Oregon State University researchers to conduct ecological monitoring for First Foods plant species, in an effort to understand their current conditions, how these are changing, and what effect this is having on the health and abundance of First Foods plants. This event even included a small field component, where participants learned how ecological monitoring is conducted, and some ways Tribal Gatherers can help supplement this data collection effort. These educational presentations were recorded and are available indefinitely on the CTUIR Climate Adaptation Youtube channel. Scanning this QR code (right) with a smart phone will take you to the online video archive!

SCAN ME

Thanks to the CTUIR DNR Range, Agriculture, and Forestry Program staff Cheryl Shippentower and Oregon State University Extension Service's Bryan Endress for contributing to this section.

Participants in the First Foods and Pollinators educational event learn about ecological modeling approaches being used to monitor culturally important plant species with Oregon State University's Bryan Endress (left), who is the primary researcher for the project.. *Photo credit: CTUIR DNR FFPP 2023.*

CTUIR Tribal member Rosa Arellanes (right, facing camera) and non-Tribal field technicians conduct ecological modeling approaches to monitor culturally important plant species as part of research with Oregon State University's Bryan Endress.

Photo credit: Bryan Endress, OSU Extension La Grande, Oregon.

Stewarding Reciprocal Relationships

Information from Gatherers has helped restore areas of the land, and influenced management for the First Foods and medicines so they can thrive. This management approach is not limited to reservation land, but the shared public lands like state and federal lands that will benefit the American public as a whole. The reciprocity between Tribal harvesters' observation of the land and plants they gather continues to be a way to ensure management is achieving the intended results.

Root Feast is a time to give thanks and open the land up in a good way, by first giving gratitude to the Foods that sacrifice themselves for us. It is key for Gatherers to do so with a good heart, and to *always have a song in your heart*. Multiple grandmas, who are now gone, said these words to many Diggers, and those words continue to be passed down.

Other customs that Gatherers are taught is to not over-harvest an area, and to leave the tops and peelings from the plants where you gathered the Roots from. Diggers do this by not returning to gather at the same places that were gathered for Feast. In this modern world, this custom (or unwritten law) is difficult to enforce, because not all Gatherers participate in Root Feast; however, everyone should know one of the Diggers who can share where they gathered for Feast. It is further complicated when other Tribal and non-Tribal people gather in the places where the Diggers harvested for Feast. Head Diggers usually have this in the backs of their minds, and this is why Feast gathering commonly occurs on Tribal or private land, as opposed to public land, because access can be limited.

Translating Knowledge: Policy in Action Series

With funding assistance from MMT as part of our "Closing the CAP" grant project, CTUIR published the Climate Adaptation Plan (CAP) in December 2022, and the document was adopted across all Tribal departments by the CTUIR Board of Trustees. This was only possible with a collaborative and participatory planning approach that valued the process of bringing community together to plan, equally as valuable as the documented outcome. We are grateful to Meyer Memorial Trust for making it possible to complete this work. Once the CTUIR CAP was completed, it was reviewed by the CTUIR Board of Trustees, a 9-person governing board elected by CTUIR Tribal members, and was adopted as government-wide policy for CTUIR by resolution on December 19th 2022.

With the CAP completed, our first step was to bring this plan back to the Tribal community to be validated and critiqued, as we always strive to provide Indigenous people with access to Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) as defined by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP) in all planning and projects. To do this, First Foods Policy Program organized monthly public events designed to introduce specific sections of the CAP and highlight existing CTUIR policies, plans, and activities as examples of climate resilience inherent in Tribal procedures and lifeways. We titled these events "Policy in Action."

Top photo: Rainwater Project Manager Jerry Middel gives an introduction to the area to tour participants.

Bottom photo: Diverse tour participants listen to Wildlife Ecologist Lindsay Chiono review management history of the larch stand.

Photo credits: CTUIR DNR FFPP 2023.

Policy in Action events were designed to:

1) introduce the CTUIR community to the contents of the CTUIR CAP,

2) identify community members with skills and expertise related to climate resilience strategies and potential projects, and

3) seek guidance on interest and feasibility of various recommended strategies that are already occurring or can be implemented in the future.

Community engagement and learning events in 2023:

February: Virtual event provided an overview of CTUIR CAP Executive Summary and upcoming events.

March: Hybrid event focused on Water and reviewed the Surface- and Groundwaters section of the CTUIR CAP, including a hands-on activity that provides skill and understanding around water quality monitoring.

April: Hybrid event focused on plant First Foods and reviewed the First Foods section of the CTUIR CAP, including a field component highlighting opportunities for community science skills and knowledge training for cultural knowledge keepers.

Top left photo: Rainwater tour participant Elk Minthorn talks with CTUIR Wildlife Ecologist Lindsay Chiono as the group reboards the bus.

Top right photo: tour participant Leo Stewart (CTUIR) ventures off road to gather ččáa (serviceberry, Amelanchier alnifolia).

Bottom photo: tour participants enjoy lunch at the tour's summit, provided by Kinship Café.

May: Hybrid event focused on built environment impacts and reviewed the Infrastructure section of the CTUIR CAP, including a community forum opportunity to share about recent natural disaster experiences for CTUIR community.

June: Hybrid event focused on Health and reviewed the Health section in the CTUIR CAP, including a skills building component for decision-making to reduce air quantity risk while preserving cultural connection.

July: In-person event to highlight the Tribal Sovereignty as part of climate adaptation, including an open invitation tour of the Rainwater Wildlife Area. Hybrid event to review the Tribal Sovereignty section of the CTUIR CAP was planned but cancelled due to funeral.

August: No event held; lack of CTUIR staff capacity in DNR and OIT to implement planned event.

September: No event held; planned down time to be prepared for October events.

October: One in-person event at the Longhouse and one hybrid event at the NGC to inform community guidance on the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (ODEQ) Climate Pollution Reduction Grant (CPRG) Priority Climate Action Plan (PCAP). Additional event focused on soil health and the Economics and Community section of the CTUIR CAP was planned but did not occur due to lack of capacity within DNR

Photo: Wildhorse Resource and Casino bus on the gravel Robinette Mountain Road as tour participant Noah Leavitt walks a scenic stretch of road. Thank you to Wildhorse Resort and Casino for the use of their bus for the tour!

Planned for 2023: Additional events planned for November were cancelled due to lack of staff capacity within DNR.

These events were planned as a hybrid format to provide maximum access for the Tribal community, and presentations were recorded and have been archived on the CTUIR Climate Adaptation Youtube channel, accessible at the QR code link on demand. Even the Rainwater tour was recorded and edited together into a video with a transcript, in order to provide this information in perpetuity to the Tribal community. All of this education was made possible by funding provided by Meyer Memorial Trust.

SCAN ME

Rainwater tour participants gather around Wildlife Ecologist and prescribed burn coordinator Lindsay Chiono as she discusses the history of forest management and treatment at the site's notable Larch Stand.

Photo credit: CTUIR DNR FFPP 2023.

Building the Future: BioPlastic Longhouse Utensils

Single use plastics are synonymous with convenience, as well as the creation of avoidable waste. Plastics manufacturing also emits tremendous amounts of carbon in its process, and is a contributor to the climate crisis. CTUIR is committed to reducing the amount of single use plastic it consumes, and is excited to provide these bio-plastic reusable utensil kits to the Tribal community, with generous funding by MMT.

Photo below: CTUIR Gatherer Butch Dick holds up a set of reusable Longhouse cutlery funded by MMT. Right is the infographic distributed with these utensils to the Tribal community.

Photo and infographic by CTUIR FFPP Climate Intern Ermia Butler, 2023.

Final Project Reflection

Kupins muddy from a full and joyful day of harvesting Roots are ready to go home. *Photo credit: CTUIR DNR FFPP 2023.*

Nowadays, Root Feast occurs on a Sunday, and the event "Root Feast" starts the Sunday before the actual feast. Head Diggers will have contacted previous years diggers to let them know they will announce root feast at the next Sunday service. Gatherers and Diggers are the same, but in the context of Root Feast; Diggers are the women who went and gathered specifically for feast.

Head Diggers have scouted the best sites for Feast. These sites are fairly near the Longhouse, so Diggers can return before dark. The digging sites for feast have enough roots to harvest, and if the land is owned by non-Indians, the Head Diggers will have made access arrangements ahead of time.

Once feast is announced at Sunday Services, a set of women step forward to stay with "The Sisters" upon their return to the Longhouse. The roots women gather are also referred to as The Sisters. These women are usually a mother-daughter pair, or a grandmother, daughter and granddaughter set. These women will stay with The Sisters; talk to them about the community and The Diggers and even sing to them so they are not alone during the night.

While men serve an important role, Root Feast is a time for sisters, humans and plants. The Diggers, complete Feast together. This means they open feast, eat, pray, gather, sing, process, cook, serve, clean and close feast --together.

The Diggers should have minimal distractions because this time is dedicated to The Sisters, and a time for the women to bond. It is a very important rite of passage because women must work with each other, keep a good and positive state of mind. If the women do not, one of the elder women will address them to find out why they are unable to keep a positive state of mind. This stability within the ranks of women is key to a stable community. Women must be given their time and separation from their families to rekindle their role and power as individuals --together.

For the remainder of the year, women can recall Root Feast, and it will influence them to make good choices for themselves, their families and the community. Root Feast keeps women accountable for their actions and helps them address the actions of their family.

Through Root Feast, women preserve these relationships into an uncertain future, solidified in ancient customs of women supporting women. Through our hard work and service, The Sisters will be here long after we are gone to guide the girls we will never see with all the good intentions we left on the land as Diggers and as Gatherers.

References and Acknowledgements

The following CTUIR publications are quoted or referenced in this book:

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First Foods are prepared to be served on the Nixyaawii Longhouse table in ceremony honoring the return of these Foods each year.
Photo credit: Annie Warren, NWPB 2023.

Back cover photo: CTUIR Youth grow up learning about Tribal harvester relationships to First Foods in the Nixyaawii Longhouse. *Photo credit: Annie Warren, NWPB 2023.*