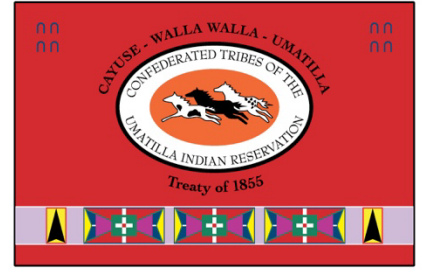


Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation

PRESS RELEASE



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Sams Wins 2024 Ecotrust Indigenous Leadership Award

MISSION – Corinne Sams, a Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR) Board of Trustees Member at Large, has been named a 2024 Ecotrust Indigenous Leadership Award (ILA) winner.

Ecotrust is a Portland-based nonprofit working with community members and organizations toward a vision of an equitable, prosperous and climate-smart future. It celebrates determination, wisdom and continuum of Indigenous leadership across the region.

“When I received the announcement that I was selected as a recipient of a 2024 Ecotrust Indigenous Leadership Award I was very surprised, excited and extremely grateful for those who took the time to write nomination letters and letters of support on my behalf,” Sams said. “I work alongside and read about so many deserving Indigenous leaders and community members who are doing incredible work protecting sovereignty, culture, lands, first foods, water, economics and so much more across Alaska, California, Canada, Oregon and Washington. This acknowledgement is absolutely something that makes my heart big and I will forever be grateful for. As an elected leader of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation I have done my best to work diligently for the protection, restoration and enhancement of our natural resources, lands, sovereignty, health, prosperity and all interest that impact our tribal and non-tribal people in this region. This work is not possible without the enormous amount of support from my family, fellow Board of Trustees members, General Council officers, staff, tribal membership and all our tribal, state and federal partners. I celebrate this award with all of you and look forward to continuing this important work on behalf of all of us.”

On the CTUIR Board Sams helps the tribe make decisions in areas such as restoring native fish, water conservation, treaty rights, technology, business, education, health and agriculture. She chairs the Fish & Wildlife Commission, sits on the Law & Order Commission and helps steer legislation to the Board.

Sams also works with the tribe’s youth. In 2023, she took students to the Willamette Falls to search for lampreys and teach them about the fish. Most of these students were female, showing her dedication to empowering women as well.

She helps organize the tribe's First Fish Ceremony by alerting tribal officials of when the CTUIR's first salmon of the year is caught. She speaks at the ceremonies on the importance of salmon and the ceremonies themselves. This year's ceremony took place at the tribe's Nixyáawii Community School so students could attend.

As the former chair and current treasurer of the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fishing Commission (CRITFC) – which coordinates policy and provides fisheries technical services for the CTUIR, Warm Spring Tribes, Yakama Nation and Nez Perce Tribe – Sams spearheaded the 2024 CRITFC Salmon Camp for students enrolled in the four tribes.

With Sams as a driving force, the CRITFC tribes as well as the states of Washington and Oregon (known as the Six Sovereigns), accomplished a major goal in December 2023 when the Biden Administration signed the Resilient Columbia Basin Agreement (RCBA).

This accord lays the groundwork for the U.S. government to work with the Six Sovereigns to protect and restore salmon, steelhead and native fish to the basin. Sams helped the Six Sovereigns galvanize a partnership with the U.S. government to uphold tribal treaty obligations in the basin and address climate, energy and tribal justice crises.

"We are proud to recognize Corinne Sams for her dedication to tribal youth, education and cultural continuity," said Kara Briggs Ecotrust Tribal Lands & Waters vice president. "These commitments along with her passion for protecting and defending tribal rights were key components for her selection as one of Ecotrust's 2024 Indigenous Leadership Award recipients."

Ecotrust is set to host an Oct. 16 banquet in Portland to honor each awardee with a blanket, beaded medallion and \$10,000 honorarium. Banquet tickets and a list of awardees are available at ecotrust.org/2024-indigenous-leadership-awards.

The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation is comprised of the Cayuse, Umatilla and Walla Walla Tribes, and formed under the Treaty of 1855 at the Walla Walla Valley, 12 Stat. 945. In 1949, the Tribes adopted a constitutional form of government to protect, preserve and enhance the reserved treaty rights guaranteed under federal law.

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Caption: Corinne Sams