



# Collaborations in Indian Country

Reflections and  
Recommendation for  
Hydropower Reform Coalition  
efforts at Tribal Partnerships

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I appreciate the opportunity to provide this report as it offered me an opportunity to reflect on nearly two decades of work in Indian Country to remove dams and restore fisheries. Herein I share some of things I wish I had known when I started working for a Tribe and with Indigenous activists. Thus, this report reflects my own personal experience augmented by interviews with Tribal leaders asked to reflect on their experiences working with non-native environmental advocates and campaigners.

I do want to thank my mentors and colleagues (native and non-native) who kept me around even when I did not demonstrate adequate or necessary cultural competency while working in Indian Country. Thanks for all those kicks in the shin underneath the table: Leaf Hillman, Kelly Catlett, A'wok Troy Fletcher, Ronnie Pierce, Ron Reed, Susan Fricke, Toz Soto, Earl Crosby, Pimm Allen, Frankie Myers, Molli Myers, Dania Rose, Kathy McCovey, Chook Chook Hillman, Annelia Hillman, Bill Tripp, Stormy Staats, Regina Chichizola, Wendy Ferris-George and so many others.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT ..... 1

INTRODUCTION ..... 3

**A Brief Introduction to the Decolonize Movement ..... 5**

**Role reversal..... 8**

INTERVIEWS WITH TRIBAL LEADERS..... 8

**Interviewees..... 10**

**What I learned from the Interviews..... 10**

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....14



## INTRODUCTION

In 2000, I was working for Friends of the River, based in Sacramento, CA. I had just made a life altering decision to abandon a career in academic science to pursue that of an organizer and campaigner for the environment. After a year of training with Green Corps, I was delighted to get involved with the California Wild Heritage Campaign as Friends of the River was on the steering committee for the coalition driving it. I can remember reaching out to Ronnie Pierce, the only Native American I actually knew at the time, and asking how the Karuk Tribe felt about including parts of its aboriginal territory in our list of proposed Wilderness designations. “This isn’t wilderness,” she growled. “Never was. You think no one was living here tending the land before you people showed up?”

I can’t remember how the call went after that but I’m pretty sure it didn’t last long. I was confused, disappointed, and maybe a little mad. Why wouldn’t Tribes want to designate the lands as wilderness? Wouldn’t that protect these sacred places important to the Tribes? What were they thinking?

Mine was the reaction typical of a privileged white guy thoroughly indoctrinated by an educational system that failed to include non-western perspectives. Although I really had not thought very much about it, I suppose that at a subconscious level, I didn’t think Indians had much of an effect on the environment. How dumb!

It took me a long time and a lot of close working and personal relationships with native collaborators, colleagues and friends and a significant amount of self-education, but twenty years later I get it...or at least I am starting to. And if conservation organizations are going to remain relevant and successful, they better start ‘getting it’ too.

Many (if not most) environmental professionals are white, upper middle class, college educated and male. Many (if not most) developed their environmental ethic reading books by and about Teddy Roosevelt, Edward Abbey, Wallace Stegner, Aldo Leopold, John Muir, and David Brower. Maybe a few of us also read Rachael Carson.

The point is that since the inception of the American Environmental Movement, it’s been the nigh exclusive domain of white men (and Rachael Carson) who for the most part excluded Tribes and other communities of color from the frame or worse, held them in contempt. Early American conservationists were influenced by white supremacists such as Madison Grant who supported conservation while espousing eugenics theories to the praise of conservation movement luminaries such as Teddy Roosevelt and John Muir (and incidentally Adolf Hitler).<sup>1</sup> Even Thoreau who is remembered as a humanitarian as much as a conservationist wrote, “the farmer displaces the Indian even because he redeems the meadow, and so makes himself stronger and in some respects more natural.”<sup>2</sup>

The good news is that perspectives within the American environmental movement are rapidly changing. It is good news because, by and large, the environmental movement is losing, and conservationists desperately need to find a new way forward. Global temperatures rise every day, our seas are cluttered with plastic (and worse), and our

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2020/07/22/liberal-progressive-racist-sierra-club-faces-its-white-supremacist-history/> Accessed January 4, 2021.

<sup>2</sup> Thoreau, H. D., & Witherell, E. H. (2001). *Henry David Thoreau : Collected Essays and Poems (Library of America)*. Library of America.

planet's biodiversity is collapsing. However; Tribes are starting to win campaigns. Look to Standing Rock, Medicine Lake, Klamath Basin, or United States vs Washington State (the Culverts Case) for inspiration.

Earlier this year the Sierra Club made meaningful strides to confront its own racist history and that of the American conservation movement in general. In the midst of the Black Lives Matter movement and a national reckoning over racial injustice, the Sierra Club owned up to the fact that what is often lauded as one of the seminal achievements of the American environmental movement, creation of the National Park System, was an inherently racist endeavor. Yes, Muir protected Yosemite, possibly the greatest example of an alpine valley on earth, but in so doing excluded the Ahwahneechee people from their aboriginal home.<sup>3</sup>

In a public statement, Executive Director Michael Brune noted, “[John Muir’s] words and actions carry an especially heavy weight. They continue to hurt and alienate Indigenous people and People of Color who come into contact with the Sierra Club...willful ignorance is what allows some people to shut their eyes to the reality that the wild places we love are also the ancestral homelands of Native peoples, forced off their lands in the decades or centuries before they became national parks.”<sup>4</sup>

While Brune and others’ efforts in this regard are worthy of praise, it should be noted that these issues did not just come to light in recent years. About the same time that John Muir was penning lines like, “A strangely dirty and irregular life these dark-eyed, dark-haired, half-happy savages lead in this clean wilderness,” other aspiring conservationists such as Mary Austin advocated for Indians and their place within the ‘wilderness.’<sup>5</sup>

Wendell Berry called out fellow environmentalists in *The Hidden Wound* where we find one of the most poignant reflections on generations of racism by a white conservationist. “*For examples of a whole and indigenous American society, functioning in full meaning and good health within the ecology of this continent, we will have to look back to the cultures of the Indians. That we failed to learn from them how to live in this land is a stupidity—a racial stupidity—that will corrode the heart of our society until the day comes, if it ever does, when we do turn back to learn from them.*”<sup>6</sup>

The only correction I would make to Berry’s comment is that we don’t have to ‘look back at the cultures of the Indians.’ Today there are Tribal communities all over America and the world implementing traditional land management practices *right now*. There are close to 600 tribes in America and 106 Federally Recognized in California alone. That is to say, to my great relief, a trove of indigenous wisdom and understanding remains, is in practice, and is available to inform land management decisions moving forward.<sup>7</sup> A current example is wildland fire management in California. Here, land managers face the ever-increasing frequency and severity of wildfires that

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<sup>3</sup> Bullinger, J. (2018). *Yosemite finally reckons with its discriminatory past*. Outside Magazine.

<sup>4</sup> Brune, M. (2020). *Pulling Down our monuments*. <https://www.sierraclub.org/michael-brune/2020/07/john-muir-early-history-sierra-club>. Accessed January 4, 2021.

<sup>5</sup> Merchant, Carolyn. (2003). *Shades of Darkness: Race and Environmental History*. Environmental History - ENVIRON HIST. 8. 10.2307/3986200.

<sup>6</sup> Berry, W. (1970). *The Hidden Wound*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.

<sup>7</sup> Karuk Tribe. (2019). *Karuk Climate Adaptation Plan*, Karuk Tribe.

destroy homes, communities, and watershed health. Land managers' search for solutions are leading them back to Tribes over 100 years after criminalizing cultural burning practices. "Today, fire suppression has failed. We talk about fire suppression policies that are 100 years old. That's experimental. Our practices in terms of using fire to manage this landscape, that is not experimental. These are tried and true practices that we know work. Karuk people have been here using fire since the beginning of time," notes Karuk Tribal member Leaf Hillman.

Brune's statement on behalf of the Sierra Club also begs one to consider that America's conservation movement, particularly in its beginnings, was a joint effort between the federal government and non-governmental organizations to remove Indians from their lands in an effort to provide eastern tourists with easy access to the exotic scenic vistas the American West is famous for. This partnership between conservation groups and lawmakers led to the passage of the 1964 Wilderness Act that defines wilderness as a place where "man is a visitor who does not remain."

Still, as Environmental Defense, Union of Concerned Scientists, and many other organizations follow the Club's lead, we may indeed be witnessing a real institutional change in the conservation movement. Only time will tell.

## A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO THE DECOLONIZE MOVEMENT

In recent years, the world's indigenous communities have embraced the challenge of dismantling white patriarchal power structures that drive global economics. This concept is not new. Decolonization as a movement undoubtedly trails behind colonization as a political policy by only a matter of minutes although the realignment of borders post World War I is considered by many scholars to be the beginnings of the modern decolonization movement. The term is often associated with the end of Imperialism by European naval powers. Many Indigenous scholars would disagree. Undoubtedly the stories of the new world's indigenous people and their generations-long decolonization efforts have either been lost to history, disregarded by academia, or simply labeled by another term. As Annabel LaBrecque writes, "The study of decolonization remains marginal in the general American history curriculum. This doesn't—and shouldn't—come as a surprise; the historical archive has been carefully written in favor of the colonizer. After all, the purpose of colonization, in many cases, is to reform the "uncivilized," and language and history are no exception to this endeavor. As a result, we've adopted a mindset inclined to justify the colonizer's side of the conflict. When we do approach these conflicts with a critical eye, we still make excuses that there are no veritable sources available from the perspective of the colonized."<sup>8</sup>

In any case, what follows is a discussion of decolonization as an indigenous movement aimed at restoring tribal sovereignty over traditional native lands in the Americas.

To understand the concept of decolonization and how it factors into the work we do, we must first understand colonization. Colonization is generally understood as the act of a political unit invading, conquering, and controlling

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<sup>8</sup> LaBrecque, A. (2018). *The National History Center's New Teaching Decolonization Resource Collection*. <https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/march-2018/the-national-history-centers-new-teaching-decolonization-resource-collection>. Accessed January 4, 2021.

a new geographic area. But one must also appreciate that colonization goes beyond the physical, which is often obviously brutal. One must acknowledge that colonization is also purposefully cultural and psychological in nature. It effectively defines who is mentally, emotionally, and spiritually privileged in the new cultural setting. To colonize a people and a place means to redefine what food is eaten, what art is appreciated, what religion is practiced, what language is spoken, what physical attributes are considered comely, and what behaviors are considered socially acceptable.

But perhaps the deepest root of colonization, and the most harmful, is the exclusivity of western epistemology. In other words, Europeans have thoroughly established through colonization, that there is only one true way to *know* something. Western scientists often see the scientific method as the pinnacle of intellectual thought and epistemology. Any conclusions about any topic not derived from this method of fact seeking cannot be trusted. Thus, western science provides not only the best way of learning and knowing, but the *only* way. This rejects alternative epistemologies out of hand, thereby reducing the traditional ecological knowledge of indigenous communities...the world over as superstition, archaic, and useless.<sup>9</sup>

Personal experience suggests that this may be the most fundamental difference between the Western mindset (my mindset) and that of Indigenous collaborators and co-workers.

In recent years, the weaknesses of Western science and epistemology relative to the traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) of Indigenous communities have been increasingly exposed. We can return to California's current wildfire crisis as a case in point. Western science guided policy makers (some of whom, such as Roosevelt and Pinchot, were founding fathers of the American conservation movement) to adopt strict fire suppression policies in our national forests. While it was well known that Native People regularly applied fire to the landscape, Western scientists dismissed the practice out of hand, literally viewing Indigenous People as pyromaniacs. Today, our forests are laden with fuels accumulated for decades since fire suppression policies were enacted in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. As Karuk Natural Resources Director Bill Tripp noted in a recent editorial in the Guardian, "As wildfire rages across California, it saddens me that Indigenous peoples' millennia-long practice has been ignored in favor of fire suppression."<sup>10</sup>

The fact that suppression of traditional fire management practices is a primary contributor to the west's unprecedented wildfire crisis is now being acknowledged by land management agencies themselves.<sup>11</sup>

My point is that in order to appreciate the perspectives and knowledge of Tribes, we must first decolonize our own minds and challenge the notion that western science is the exclusive province of knowing. We must appreciate that other epistemologies, other ways of *knowing*, exist and are valid. My long-time supervisor and mentor with the Karuk Tribe Leaf Hillman quipped after scientists declared Spring Chinook to be genetically distinct from Fall Chinook, "it looks like western science is finally catching up to us."

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<sup>9</sup> Whitt, L. (2009). *Science, Colonialism, and Indigenous Peoples: The Cultural Politics of Law and Knowledge*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. doi:10.1017/CBO9780511760068

<sup>10</sup> Tripp, B. (2020). *Our land was taken. But we still hold the knowledge of how to stop mega-fires*. The Guardian.

<sup>11</sup> Vinyeta, K. and Lynn, K. (2013). *Exploring the role of Traditional Ecological Knowledge in Climate Change Initiatives*. USDA.

One may find the very idea that there exist multiple epistemologies, multiple ways of knowing and understanding reality, sounds...well, kind of psychedelic. But when we consider just how long a Tribe like the Karuk have lived in place developing traditional ecological knowledge (maybe 10 millennia) and compare that to how old western science is (maybe 10 centuries), it makes it easier to wrap our minds around the concept. This is not to suggest that western science is not valid or valuable, just that it is not the exclusive approach to understanding a question or solving a problem.

The second concept the Western mind must confront when considering decolonization is how much of our individual and collective thinking is deeply and subconsciously affected by a nigh universal acceptance of manifest destiny by previous and current generations of Americans (and Europeans). There may be no greater example of gas-lighting in the history of humanity than the indoctrination of manifest destiny. Millions of Europeans struck off towards the new world fully believing that killing (or colonizing) everyone already living in this new world was morally justified and inevitable. A large number of the victims of this effort even came to believe it.

For this next point I should acknowledge I am neither a philosopher nor a psychologist. With that said, I will walk boldly out on a limb and to make what I immodestly posit to be critically important for understanding racism: human nature demands that we dehumanize others before we are capable of the cruelty we visited upon the 'new world.' In other words, we had to truly and deeply believe that Native People were less than human in order to do to them what we did. We must appreciate that the very notion that Native People (or African American people or Jews) are somehow less human resides in the psyche of almost every one of us to some degree. Recent events in America reveal this notion resides on the surface of many American's psyche; but whether you're a member of the Proud Boys or identify with Anti-fa, the twisted concept of manifest destiny resides somewhere in our grey matter and has some role in our racial biases be they conscious or unconscious.

Thus, we all need to work to understand world history more deeply than it was taught to us in the schools we attended that were overwhelmingly a product and a tool of colonization. We must think critically about our history if we are to reconcile our role as environmental advocates with the reality of colonization and the horrific crimes committed against indigenous people.

One of the Interviewees that informed this report is Don Sampson, former Chairman of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla and former director of the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish and Water Commission. Mr. Sampson emphasized the enduring legacy of manifest destiny. Mr. Sampson recently co-created a program at Portland State University that offers a Certificate in Tribal Relations designed to help "provide customized focused training on aspects of tribal relations for your organization. Our offerings are designed for local, state, and federal government agencies, non-profit and for-profit organizations, and trade associations that work regularly with tribal nations and native communities."<sup>12</sup> A key part of the curriculum, explained Mr. Sampson, is to provide participants a basic understanding of manifest destiny as a political philosophy that made conquering the new world possible.

This whole topic is, and should be, an uncomfortable discussion. We are talking about a genocide that arguably is still underway. My colleague, Professor Cutcha Risling Baldy, responds to every white person's obvious question of, "what can we do to help?" by looking them in the eye and stating flatly "Give the land back." This usually creates a

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<sup>12</sup> Portland State University. <https://www.pdx.edu/tribal-government/tribal-relations-programs%20Accessed%20February%202021>. Accessed February 20, 2021.

very uncomfortable silence for a few moments where I think most white people expect her to initiate polite laughter. She never does.

Non-native conservation advocates must learn to work in this uncomfortable space. We must recognize that Native people represent a broad range of ideas, philosophies and plans for how we all can work together to ensure a habitable planet. As Karuk activist Chook-Chook Hillman noted recently, “We don’t just do things for ourselves, we do it for the world. You know, we’re all included in it.”<sup>13</sup>

## ROLE REVERSAL

As Tribes, Indigenous People, and People of Color work to decolonize western institutions all over the world, including conservation non-governmental organizations, environmentalists must stop trying to convince them to be our allies and instead commit to become *their* accomplices. Some of the toughest places to do the work of decolonization is in places that some people may think are already ‘woke’ to such issues such as ‘progressive’ environmental non-governmental organizations. We must embrace the reality that protecting the environment is inherently anti-racist work. We must fully transition from the 19<sup>th</sup> century conservation mindset of nature being a respite for aristocratic gentlemen hunters and ladies painting landscapes to an inclusive mindset that acknowledges and prioritizes the relationships between nature and humans established millennia before white Europeans set foot in North America. We must honor those who were here first, acknowledge the natural resource management expertise of indigenous people, honor native sovereignty, and support their struggle instead of inviting them to join what we perceive to be ours.

## INTERVIEWS WITH TRIBAL LEADERS

In order to improve relationships and appropriately engage tribal communities in the future we interviewed four tribal leaders and asked a series of questions aimed at revealing how Hydropower Reform Coalition member organizations are perceived in Indian Country; looked for any common threads regarding what Hydropower Reform Coalition groups consistently do right (or wrong); and got direct feedback on steps the Hydropower Reform Coalition can take to improve in the future.

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<sup>13</sup> Krol, D. (2020). *‘Our right to fire’: Tribes battle agencies, old policies to restore fire practices*. Arizona Republic.

Interviews were conducted in approximately one hour and the conversations relied on the following prompts:

- What did collaboration look like? Were there formal coalitions, informal working groups, or simply professional relationships that formed?
- What specific types of resources would have made the efforts more successful? Examples might include access to and development of improved technical resources, coordinated policy advocacy with elected officials, funding for tribal participation or work product that supports shared resource goals, etc.
- Were there conflicts between conflicting goals of the conservation community and tribal communities? How were these conflicts managed or resolved?
- Was there formal outreach to tribal council or senior tribal members regarding shared or potential conflicts on the hydropower project? What did that look like and was it appropriate?
- What more could groups do to improve upon collaborations in Indian Country?

Although the Interviewees names and brief relevant background information is included below, the interviewer committed to not directly attribute quotes directed at specific organizations or individuals. This was done in an effort to encourage interviewees to provide direct and frank responses and comments. Thus, some remarks quoted in this section are attributed directly to the interviewee and some are not.

## INTERVIEWEES

**Ron Goode** is the Chairman of the North Fork Mono Tribe. Although North Fork Mono is not federally recognized, they are recognized by the state of California. The Tribe claims jurisdiction over 1.4 million acres of aboriginal territory in Madera, Fresno, Mariposa, and Inyo Counties. North Fork Mono were involved in Federal Energy Regulatory Commission relicensing of Big Creek and Mammoth Pool projects; however, most of Chairman Goode's direct experiences with Hydropower Reform Coalition groups was from the Dinky Creek Collaborative. This collaborative features a range of stakeholders including Tribes, conservation groups, focused on the implementation of a federal Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program on the Dinkey Landscape, Sierra National Forest, California. Although distinct from a Federal Energy Regulatory Commission relicensing, the similarities in process and the familiar themes hit upon in the interview led me to include this information in this report.

Beyond Federal Energy Regulatory Commission relicensing and the Dinky Creek Collaborative, Chairman Goode has decades of experience working with conservation groups on a wide range of natural resource issues, though most notably fire-related issues.

**Don Sampson** is a former Chairman and a former Executive Director of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation. In addition, he served as Executive Director of Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish and Water Commission and currently has a consulting business to help tribal governments improve effectiveness and efficiencies. Mr. Sampson was at times directly and other times indirectly involved in Federal Energy Regulatory Commission relicensing efforts related to Snake River dams and Condit Dam on the White Salmon River.

**Daryl Williams** is the Natural Resources Liaison with the Tulalip Tribe, Director of the Tulalip Energy Corporation, and a board member for the Center for Environmental Law and Policy. Daryl also serves as President of the Adopt A Stream Foundation and Director of Qualco Energy. He was appointed to the Puget Sound Action Team by Governor Locke, and was a member of the National Tribal Environmental Council. He collaborated with Hydropower Reform Coalition member groups during relicensing of projects in the Skykomish and Skagit watersheds in Snohomish County, WA.

**Frankie Myers** is the Vice Chairman of the Yurok Tribe whose reservation is located along the lower 40 miles of the Klamath River in Northern California. Vice Chairman Myers was actively involved in the grassroots coalition supported by Hydropower Reform Coalition and member groups for over a decade before being elected to serve on the Tribal Council.

## WHAT I LEARNED FROM THE INTERVIEWS

Some of the comments and stories from the interviews sounded familiar to me as a 20-year veteran of organizing campaigns in the Klamath River basin, but there was plenty to learn from similar campaigns in other river basins. Here I extract eight themes that ran through all the interviews and present for consideration.

- 1. Hydropower Reform Coalition groups bring much-needed expertise on Federal Energy Regulatory Commission relicensing processes to the table.** Most Tribes only have to contend with a Federal Energy Regulatory Commission relicensing once in a generation. This means that whatever legal and policy experts they have on staff or contract are not experts in the laws, regulations, and policies of Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission is an arcane bureaucracy. Hydropower Reform Coalition member groups can provide Tribes with access to some of the most experienced Federal Energy Regulatory Commission lawyers and policy experts in America. This fact was roundly appreciated by everyone interviewed.
- 2. Conservation groups tend to have a myopic view of the issues at hand.** A repeating refrain by respondents was the tendency of non-native conservation organizations to view the river issues such as water quality, fisheries, etc., as the *only* issues. For example, there is a failure to connect the collapse of fisheries to the mental health issues affecting Tribal members or how fire management relates to fisheries. For Tribes, these issues are clearly interconnected and inseparable; however, most conservation groups have a narrow mission and an even narrower grant deliverable they are driving towards. This leaves Tribal members with the feeling that conservation groups care only about their own narrow issue and are not truly interested in developing the deep relationships necessary to be a true ally. This reveals a failure to appreciate the emotional and social impacts that the lost access to traditional resources have on individuals you are working with.

Even while acknowledging that conservation non-governmental organizations would obviously focus on environmental issues, respondents all remarked that this focus was too narrow. Two respondents noted that when deciding whether or not to partner with non-governmental organizations they had to weigh whether or not the effort was a net benefit given the fact that they knew many of their primary concerns would never be addressed or understood.

The Klamath Federal Energy Regulatory Commission relicensing offers a case study of how non-governmental organizations mission could be better served if they would try to better understand this point. For Klamath River Tribes, the decline of the fishery is nothing short of an existential crisis. One way the Karuk communicated this to Federal Energy Regulatory Commission was through a commissioned report by a sociologist that explained the health and psychological impacts of denied access to a traditional diet. This elevated social justice and human health issues in a Federal Energy Regulatory Commission proceeding in a novel way. It weighed heavily in Federal Energy Regulatory Commission record and created a new narrative to help explain the impacts of dams.

This sort of broadening of the issue has helped California expand the scope of the California Environmental Quality Act such that cultural impacts are now placed alongside environmental impacts. The argument can be made that a similar effort to broaden the National Environmental Policy Act would be of benefit for river restoration campaigns nation-wide.

3. **The appropriate level of interaction is typically staff to staff, but that's not a hard and fast rule.** Tribal governments vary greatly in structure and norms. I should note that the majority of Indians in America don't belong to a federally recognized Tribe. Some Tribes that are not recognized by the United States are recognized by their state government with varying degrees of benefits, and still other Tribes function the best they can as community groups or even under the banner of a 501(c)3. The most appropriate way to reach out to a given Tribe is thus highly variable; however, interviewees agreed that a formal letter to the council and attending a council meeting is never a bad way to start. This is related to the next point.
4. **Relationships matter.** All the interviewees stressed the importance of relationships. Two of the biggest challenges for non-governmental organizations in this regard is staff turnover and the uncertainty of long-term funding. Most Tribal leaders have worked with a staff person from a non-governmental organizations only to see them move on to other jobs, be reassigned to a new threat, or simply have their grant money run out. It can take years to develop a trusting relationship in any community, particularly rural communities. To be most effective these relationships can't be merely transactional in nature. In other words, your relationship is not just an exchange of services and expertise. The relationships need to be real, authentic and transformational. That said, if an organization can only muster the resources necessary for a transactional relationship that is arguably mutually beneficial, that's okay *as long as it is presented as such*. Note that a single relationship with a tribally affiliated individual is unlikely to create the organizational/Tribal relationship you are looking for. Multiple relationships between front line organizers, executive level decision makers, cultural practitioners and board/council members may be necessary to establish a meaningful relationship that can endure and succeed at waging high profile campaigns for change.

One interviewee was very up front about the transactional nature of his relationships with non-governmental organizations. The interviewee noted that he would often lead the "push on power company executives" at the behest of conservation groups in exchange for their support on issues specific to cultural issues. He described it as an imperfect but functional arrangement.

5. **Listen, listen, listen.** If you are like me, and I know some of are, you have spent a lot of time in meetings mentally rehearsing your next brilliant contribution to the discussion and impatiently waiting for a momentary lapse in the action in which to spring your brilliant idea on the group. Although this behavior is not the exclusive domain of middle-aged white guys with a solid educational background, we are pretty famous for it in Indian Country. Stop it. We need to listen first and listen often. Don't show up with a straw-man proposal at the first meeting. Don't assume anyone wants you to develop a straw man proposal. Spend some time finding out what the issues are from the Tribe's perspective and then spend some time finding out if the Tribe is interested in working with you.
6. **Sometimes Tribes need financial resources; however, some Tribes can offer conservation groups financial resources.** It's probably fair to say that most Tribes lack all the financial resources necessary to fully engage in a Federal Energy Regulatory Commission proceeding or similar rule-making process. In these cases, its wholly appropriate to discuss how you and your organization can help identify resources. Most Tribes are adept at working with federal agencies on funding for various programs, but many are less adept at working with private foundations. What's more, many foundations have never considered making grants directly available to Tribes.

My experience in the Klamath's *Bring the Salmon Home* campaign is that the Tribes were better at securing funding for technical studies as the Tribes have sophisticated fisheries and water quality

programs that non-governmental organizations can't compete with. Conversely, the non-governmental organizations were better at finding funds for public outreach, lobbying, and legal work. However; in recent years several large foundations have begun providing more direct funding to Tribes for outreach and communications work so this too is changing.

On the other end of the spectrum are Tribes with large gaming facilities. For example, Daryl Williams noted that Tulalip operates the two largest casinos in Washington. This allowed the Tribe to offer financial support to conservation groups helping with a Federal Energy Regulatory Commission relicensing project, not the other way around. Understanding a Tribe's ability to finance such efforts is important when reaching out for a collaboration.

- 7. Do your homework first.** All Tribes are different. Some have large reservations. Some have large memberships but have no reservations. Some have treaties; some don't. Some have adjudicated water and fishing rights, some don't. Some Tribes are incredibly focused on natural and cultural resources, some aren't. Some Tribes still reside in their aboriginal territories, others don't. Some Tribes are made up of several bands of culturally distinct ethnic groups, some represent only one ethnic group. Most are somewhere in between all these things. Don't assume because you have worked for one tribe that you understand them all. Each tribe is extremely unique beginning with its government structure, religion, language, economics and legal battles.

This is why it's important to do some homework before reaching out to a Tribe. It's not the Tribe's job to educate you on their history so you can be a better ally. Yurok Vice-Chair Frankie Myers noted, "It's exhausting and time consuming to always have to explain the basics of Tribal law and Yurok fishing rights to non-governmental organizations. Groups need to assume some responsibility for educating themselves before they show up here."

Although you can't get a full understanding of a Tribe's history and culture from books and the internet, you can usually get the basics. If nothing else, you can gain a basic understanding. Before reaching out to a Tribe, non-governmental organization staff should become familiar with the given Tribe's history of relations with the United States. Some key questions to research before reaching out include:

- Is the Tribe federally recognized? If so when did that happen?
- Is the Tribe state recognized?
- Does the Tribe have a reservation? Where is it and how big is it?
- Where is the Tribe's aboriginal territory and is it the same as its reservation?
- Does the Tribe have adjudicated water or fishing rights?
- Does the Tribe have a treaty with the United States?
- Did the Tribe go through termination? If so, was it re-recognized at a later date?
- How many members does the Tribe have?
- Who are the appropriate authorities to first reach out to? Formal government or Cultural Leaders? These are typically two separate forms of government power.
- What type of lawsuits, if any, are the tribes currently involved in?

Working to understand these basic questions suggests that you are willing to do the homework necessary to understand the Tribe's perspectives and needs – and it will save you from looking foolish when talking to Tribal leaders!

8. Tribal leaders don't expect non-governmental organizations to fully understand or appreciate their worldview, but that doesn't mean there can't be a collaboration. This relates to section 4 above in some ways. The point here is that as non-natives, we can work to understand Tribal perspectives, but we may never understand it fully. That's okay. If we bring honesty, humility, and integrity to the table, we can develop meaningful relationships with Tribes to advance efforts to protect and restore rivers.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

Broadly speaking, in the 4 interviews and the many brief conversations I have had with Tribal leaders on this topic, I did not encounter any real horror stories. That's not to say that Hydropower Reform Coalition groups are doing everything right, but it does suggest that (1) Hydropower Reform Coalition groups are indeed able to develop meaningful partnerships with Tribes to engage in Federal Energy Regulatory Commission relicensings and (2) Tribes overwhelmingly view this relationship as a net benefit. From interviewee responses, it generally appears that Indian Country appreciates, needs, and benefits from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission expertise Hydropower Reform Coalition groups bring to the table.

That said, there is plenty of room for improvement. Depending on the needs and desires of Tribes, Hydropower Reform Coalition member groups can do more to empower Tribal participation and educate Tribal staff about how to navigate a Federal Energy Regulatory Commission relicensing and develop political campaigns that center on the desired outcomes from a relicensing process. Groups can broaden their areas of concern beyond fish and water quality to include social justice issues such as freedom to practice traditional religion, gather food and fiber, and economic opportunities for affected communities.

1. **Provide training opportunities to Tribes.** Tribes' organizational capacities vary as much as that of non-governmental organizations. However, whether or not a Tribe has a big legal department or just a handful of volunteer staff, Hydropower Reform Coalition can likely offer a workshop to help them better understand how a Federal Energy Regulatory Commission relicensing proceeding works. Beyond the legal mechanics of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission process, some Tribes can benefit from public relations or other trainings in the basic skills used to drive political change. Hydropower Reform Coalition provided such help to the Klamath's 'Bring the Salmon Home Campaign' by enabling the Ruckus Society's Indigenous Peoples Power Project to host direct action and civil disobedience trainings for Tribal activists. This responded to direct requests from the Tribes and empowered them by helping provide a skillset necessary to carry out their campaign plans. In other words, Hydropower Reform Coalition assistance should not be limited to legal and policy support.
2. **Find a way to train your staff in Tribal relations.** Hydropower Reform Coalition should consider developing resources to train their own staff in Tribal relations. Alternatively, Hydropower Reform Coalition may support their own staff's professional development by paying for them to attend a program such as the Tribal Relations Program at Portland State. There are Native non-governmental organizations and private consultants that can also offer such training.

3. **Recruit Tribal staff and board members into your organizations.** During job searches, Hydropower Reform Coalition and member groups should make attempts to identify qualified candidates for staff and board positions who are Tribal members. This will add new perspectives to the organization's work and facilitate partnerships in Indian Country.
4. **Help Tribes with funding/ask Tribes for funding.** Engaging in a Federal Energy Regulatory Commission relicensing is an expensive endeavor. As Hydropower Reform Coalition and member groups develop partnerships with Tribes, it's reasonable that these partnerships discuss and address finance needs. In some cases, non-governmental organizations can help Tribes find private foundation support that Tribes may be new to. In other cases, Tribes have financial resources with which to support non-governmental organization partners.
5. **Meet with Tribes *before* you make your campaign plan.** A key to any partnership is honest collaboration. Don't assume a Tribe has the same goals as your organization or the same strategic approach to problem solving. As my good friend and mentor A'wok Troy Fletcher once noted, "Tribal collaboration means you meet with us before there's a power point."
6. **Respect Tribes and their sovereign and moral authority in their aboriginal homelands.** For the most part, Tribes have been actively managing the natural resources in their aboriginal homelands for millennia. It is important to acknowledge their legal rights to manage their resources as well as their moral authority to manage their own resources. That's not to say that non-governmental organizations should never disagree with a Tribe's position on a given topic, but it's important to put the decision to disagree in the appropriate context.