

New Website Highlights Tribal Voices on Climate Change Indigenous Climate Project Website Launched

SEATTLE, WA (6/18/24)-The Indigenous Climate Project has launched a newly designed website that highlights oral histories and traditional ecological knowledge of Northwest tribal leaders, unveils a connected middle school curriculum and a new documentary highlighting tribal leaders talking about the impacts of climate change and potential solutions. The project is a partnership between THIS IS INDIAN COUNTRY (TIIC), an indigenous led nonprofit; Washington Wild, a statewide conservation nonprofit; and the Pacific Education Institute (PEI). The project is funded primarily by the BECU Foundation and can be viewed at <https://thisisindiancountry.org/climate-project-1>.

“Tribes didn’t cause climate change, but they have been leading the way in responding to it,” said Leonard Forsman, Chairman of the Suquamish Tribe, and President of the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians (serving 57 Northwest tribes.) “There has been a growing realization that the experience and traditional knowledge tribes generated over thousands of years, combined with their contemporary science, have much to offer in terms of sustainable environmental management.”

“Since August 2022, we have conducted 25 interviews with tribal leaders in the Northwest. The Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) they have shared with us has been life-changing. From a true sense of place and ancestry guiding them, and an emerging position of political and economic power, the tribes are battling climate change head-on and inspiring us all,” said Michael Harris, TIIC President.

“I totally agree. It has been an honor to be affiliated with this program, and we are dedicated to working with tribes in our efforts to support the restoration of natural resources impacted by climate change. The guidance provided by this website is invaluable in this effort,” said Tom Uniack, Executive Director of Washington Wild.

“Natural riches flourished under thousands of years of tribal stewardship. But in the few hundred years since, the harrowing impacts of non-tribal society have caused immense water pollution problems, climate change and other dramatic changes in our ecosystem,” said Willie Frank III, former Chair of the Nisqually Tribe and son of renown Billy Frank, Jr. “Obviously, there are lessons to be learned about the sustainability tribes have achieved,” he said.

The oral histories can be viewed at <https://thisindiancountry.org/tribal-map-1>
The Indigenous Climate Project has created a middle school curriculum, written by long-time tribal advocate Steve Robinson, vetted by tribal leaders and PEI entitled, “Climate Change and the Tribes.” It, too, is featured on the site, and will provide the basis for a teachers’ workshop in August.

“It is more important than ever for students, teachers, and people in general to learn about and practice long-term environmental management principles of the tribes,” said Forsman. “There is a huge gap between environmental sustainability and the management practices in mainstream society.”

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