

Places Are Alive As Long As We Remember”: Indigenous and Government Collaboration to Protect Cultural Heritage of the Upper Columbia River

Pei-Lin Yu, Boise State University

Visiting Researcher, National Museum of Ethnology (Minpaku), Osaka



Presented at the NCKU-EFEO International Conference
Indigenous Archaeology and Cultural Heritage in Asia-Pacific
Tainan, Taiwan
March 15, 2023

1. INTRODUCTION

Since the 1930s, the construction of large dams has transformed America's huge western rivers into reservoirs. This has stabilized flooding and provided water and clean power supplies for a growing population – yet the **costs to Indigenous people and ecosystems have been high – and ongoing.**

The dams **destroyed most of the salmon fishery, displaced modern communities and inundated tribal lands,** traditionally important resources and travel routes, traditional use areas, sacred locations, and archaeological sites. Erosion has also become problematic.



Since 1906, a series of laws to protect cultural heritage resources have been enacted by the United States Congress. These laws require government entities, or those on government land, using government funds, or permits, to inventory, evaluate significance, and protect cultural heritage sites and objects.

In 1990, the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation law regarding the repatriation of Native American burials, funerary objects, sacred objects, and objects of cultural patrimony, was enacted.

Consultation with tribes is central to these laws.

A barrier to successful consultation emerged in the 1970s: **many Native American tribal governments and US government agencies lacked the capacity to participate meaningfully** in such a broad array of potentially damaging activities.

This is especially true for large projects with long-term, complex impacts like the Columbia and Snake River dams. As a result, **Indigenous interests and concerns for public archaeology were not heard.**

Out of necessity, some **creative solutions** were born. In this paper, I introduce the **Payos Kuus Cuukwe Cooperating Group**, and novel approaches to collaborative approaches, including Indigenous archaeology.

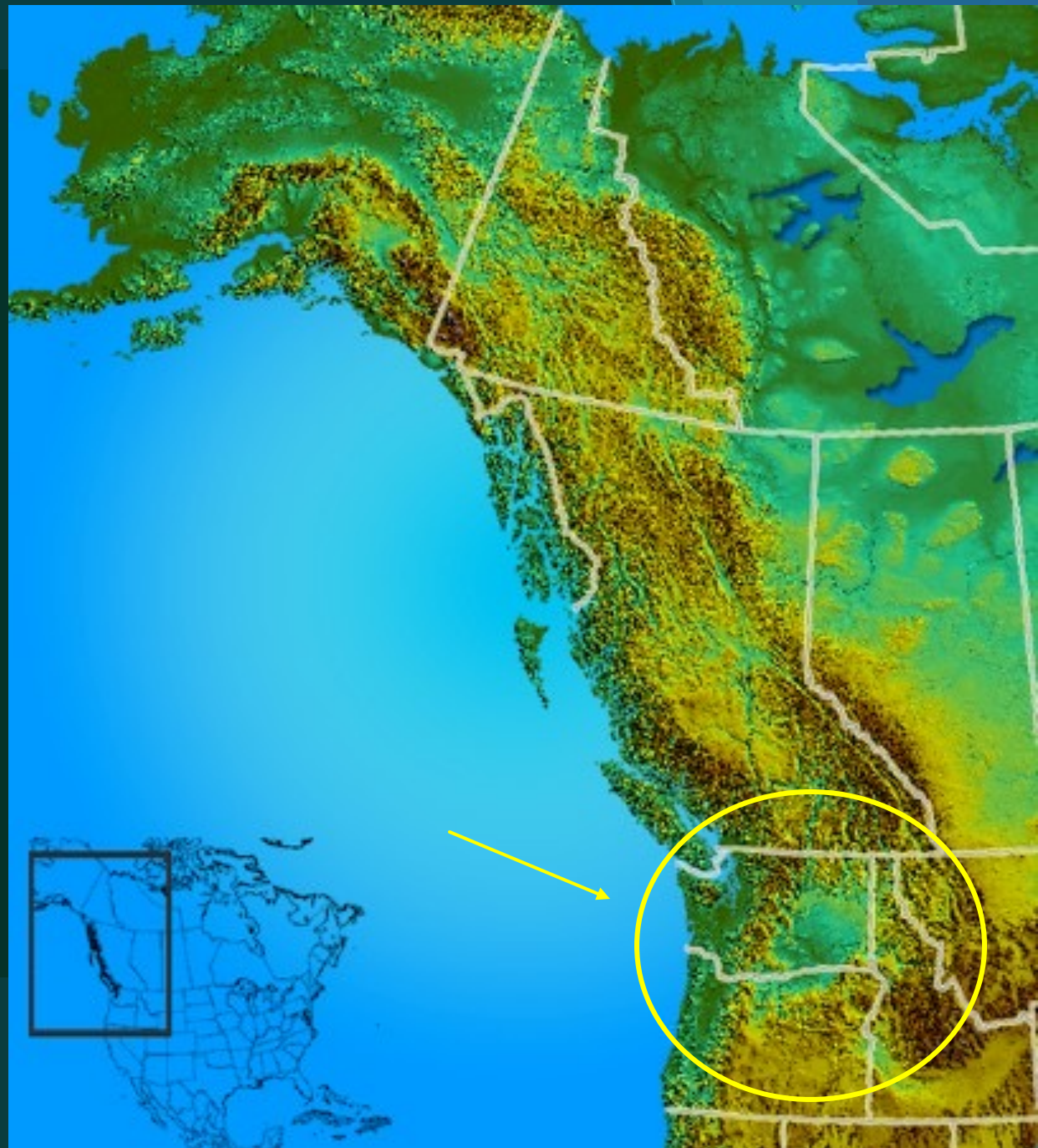


2. CONTEXT

The land.

The Columbia River stretches nearly 2,000 km. from the Pacific coast into the mountains of Oregon and Washington.

Today I will discuss the Upper and Middle Columbia regions.



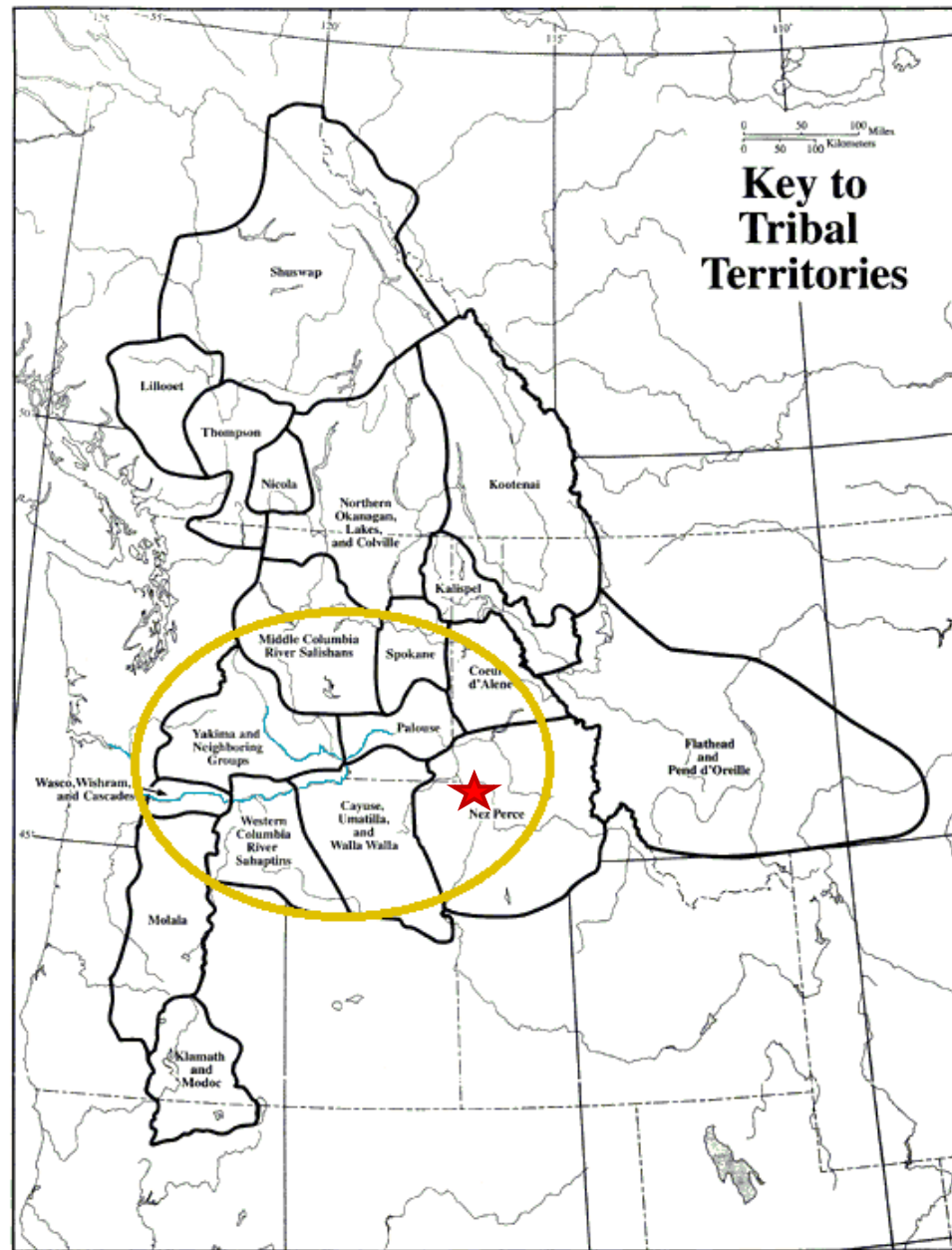
People and cultural heritage.

This area has been occupied by the ancestors of today's Native American tribes since at least 16,000 years BP (new discoveries at Coopers Ferry on the Salmon River, Idaho.)



L: Davis, L.G. and Schweger, C.E., 2004. Geoarchaeological context of late Pleistocene and early Holocene occupation at the Cooper's Ferry site, western Idaho, USA. *Geoarchaeology: An International Journal*, 19(7), pp.685-704.

R: "Plateau: Key to Tribal Territories"
Handbook of North American Indians. V. 12: Plateau.
Edited by Deward W. Walker, Jr. Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1998.

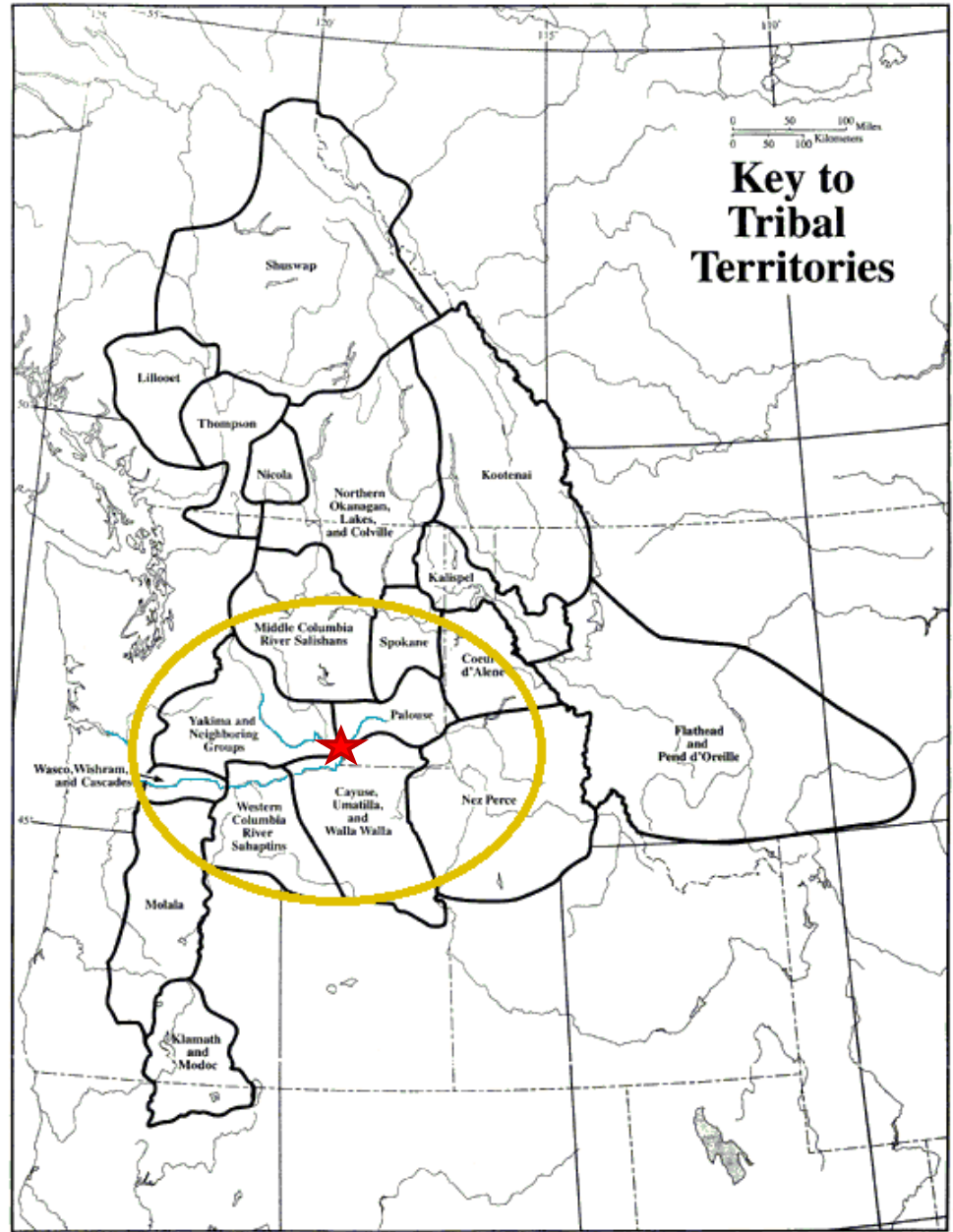


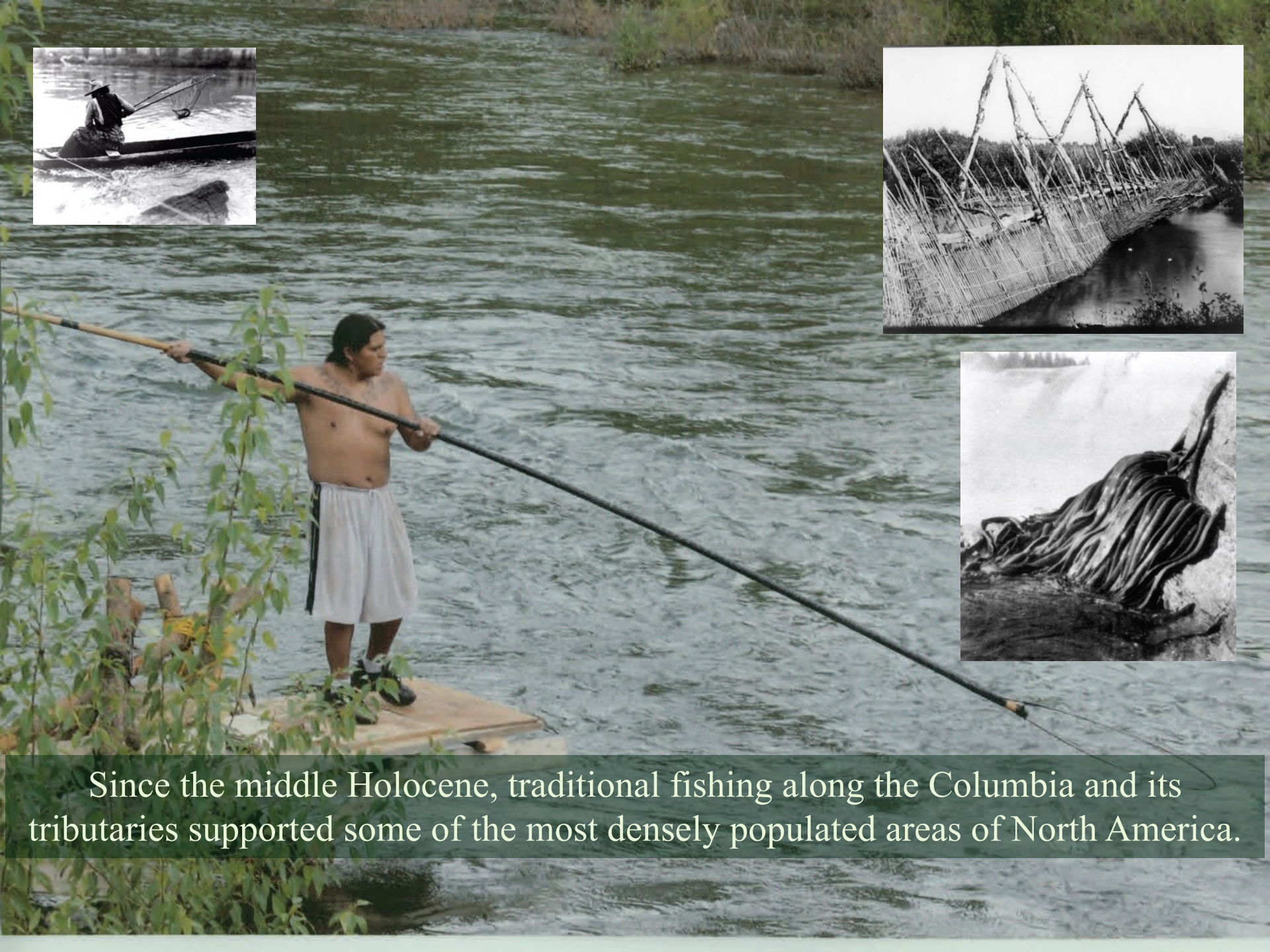
People and cultural heritage.

This area is also known for the famous ‘Ancient One’ or ‘Kennewick Man’ case, in which scientists sued the US Government to prevent repatriation of human remains of c. 8,600 years age. The remains were transferred to tribes in 2015 and reburied in a secret location.



Cascade point, Haskett type. This example is similar to the point fragment associated with the Ancient One.





Since the middle Holocene, traditional fishing along the Columbia and its tributaries supported some of the most densely populated areas of North America.

Important species of fish from the Columbia River Basin. Pre-dam fisheries were so abundant that local people said ‘you could walk across the river on the backs of the migrating salmon.’



FISH IDENTIFICATION CHART

USFWS/Bob Hine



Chinook (King) Salmon, *nacó7*, have a dark mouth with a black gum line, sharp teeth, spots on both lobes of tail, and large spots on the back.

USFWS/Tim Knapp



Sockeye (Red, Blueback) Salmon, *q'óy c*, in spawning color have a white mouth with a white gum line, almost toothless, no spots on tail or back, and large gold eyes.

USFWS/Tim Knapp



Coho (Silver) salmon, *k'ilay*, have a dark mouth and white gum line, sharp teeth, spots only on the upper lobe of tail, and spots on the back.

USFWS/Duane Raver



Bull Trout (Char), *'islám*, have an olive green body with cream to pale yellow spots on the back, red or orange spots on the sides, and pectoral, pelvic, and caudal fins have white or cream-colored margins.

USFWS/Bob Hine



Steelhead, *héyey*, have a dark-olive back, silvery white on the underside, a heavily speckled body, and a pink-red stripe along the sides.

USFWS/Tim Knapp



Chum (Dog) Salmon, *k'ilay*, in spawning color have a white mouth with a white gum line, well-developed teeth, no spots on the tail or back, vertical bars, and white tip on the caudal fin.

USACE



Cutthroat Trout, *waw'kam*, have small black spots on the head, body, and fins, and red to yellow streaks on the underside of the jaw.

USACE



Lamprey, *hésu*, look like eels, have a dark bluish gray when they first enter freshwater and turn red-dish brown in color when spawning. They have no scales, two back fins, large eyes, one nostril on the top of their head, and can grow up to 30" in length.

USFWS/A. Hoen & CO.



Dolly Varden (Char), *'islám*, is similar to the Bull Trout, but normally found in coastal waters.

USFWS/Duane Raver



Rainbow Trout, *waw'kam*, is similar to Cutthroat but may show red or pink streak on the sides and white tip on pelvic and caudal fins. Same species as steelhead but are inland resident fish.



Abundant roots and berries provided nutritious and storable carbohydrates. This sculpture honors Native women who gather arrow-leaf balsamroot.



Throughout the 1800s, the Fur Trade, then Euro-American settlement, led to a series of wars, treaties, and Executive Orders that restricted Native peoples to small areas of 'reserved' lands.

Laws such as the Dawes Act led to further loss of lands and cultural heritage, yet peoples of the Columbia Basin continued to practice their culture including traditional fishing, root collecting, and other subsistence, into the 1930s.

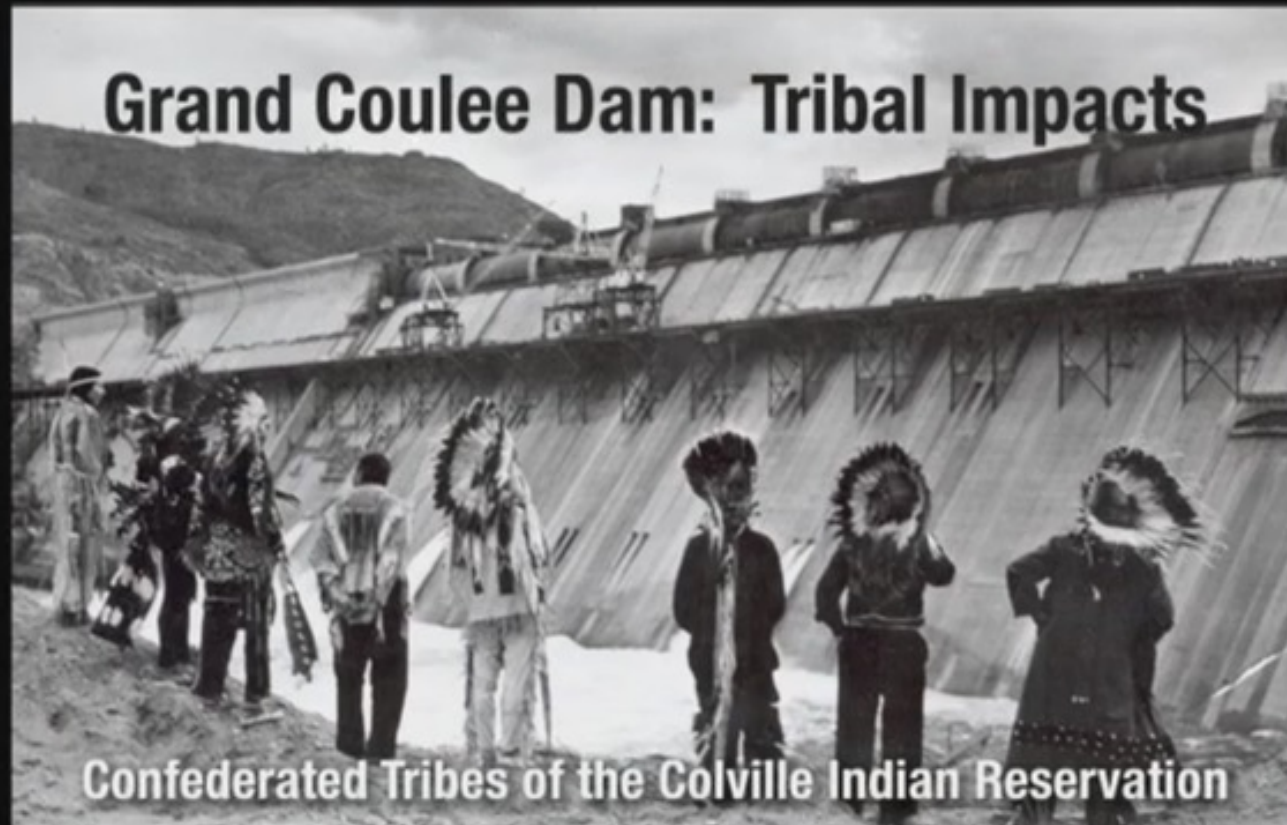


In the 1940s, the US government responded to need for flood control, irrigation, and wartime hydropower by extensive construction of dams on the Columbia River. Grand Coulee, c. 1942; modern day.

Columbia River Basin



Through the 1950s-1970s dozens of dams were constructed. This is the current extent of the Federal Columbia River Power System.



Most of the natural salmon fishery has been destroyed. Thousands of hectares including Indigenous communities, root collecting grounds, archaeological sites, and burial areas have been flooded.

Loss of traditional knowledge, lifeways, and health has been incalculable as a result of the dam construction and operation.

Major Cultural Heritage Laws describe responsibility of the US government to minimize impacts to cultural resources.

- The Antiquities Act (1906)
- The Historic Sites Act (1935)

- **The National Historic Preservation Act (1966)**

Requires that federal agencies take into account effects of their undertakings on historic properties. Authorizes the creation of the National Register of Historic Places.

- The Archeological and Historic Preservation Act (1974)
- The Archeological Resources Protection Act (1979)

- **The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (1990)**

Assigns ownership or control of Native American human remains, funerary objects, and sacred objects of cultural patrimony to culturally affiliated Native American groups.

- American Indian Religious Freedom Act (AIRFA) (1978)
- Executive Order 13007 (1996)

Guarantees access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites by Indian religious practitioners to ensure that these sites are not adversely affected.

3. THE CULTURAL RESOURCES COOPERATING GROUP CONCEPT

There are nine Cooperating Groups associated with various dam project areas in the Pacific Northwest. Members and Representation: **Tribes; Federal Agencies; States; Other Expertise.**

Group activities are supported by funding from the federal agencies: in this case, the Bonneville Power Administration and the US Army Corps of Engineers. Funding is partitioned into **Administrative/meetings and Activity support.**



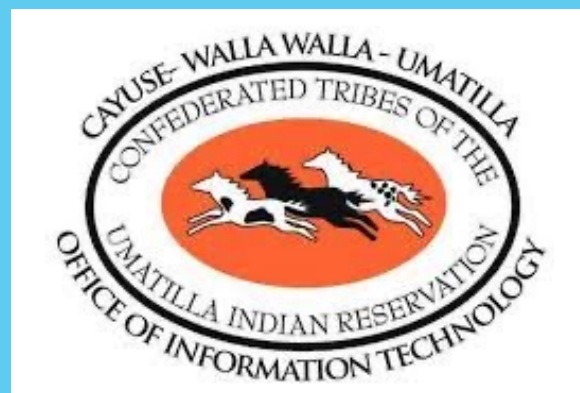
Payos Kuus Cuukwe, or 'Snake River Knowledge' is one of several Cooperating Groups established in the mid-1990s for long-term collaboration between Indigenous stakeholders and government agencies.

The goal is to conduct legally mandated protection of archaeological and ethnographic heritage affected by ongoing operations of large reservoirs; and to mitigate for unavoidable damage.





Wanapum Band of
Priest Rapids



Tribes Within the Payos Kuus Cuukwe Cooperating Group



Government Agencies Within the Payos Kuus Cuukwe
Cooperating Group

Annual cycle for the Payos Kuus Cuukwe Cooperating Group

➤ *Spring Workshop*

- Share knowledge about previous fiscal year performance and issues
- Updates regarding the larger FCRPS system and Cooperating Groups, from annual report
- Scope needs for communication with leadership

➤ *Summer meetings*

- Field meetings to visit sites and resources with tribal staff and Elder experts
- Progress reports; trouble-shooting; various assistance

Colville Tribal field crew documenting erosion at archaeological site during the spring 'draw down', Lake Roosevelt, 2020. CCT History and Archaeology Department. Photo: L Bonstead.



Annual cycle for the Payos Kuus Cuukwe Cooperating Group, continued

➤ *Fall Workshop*

- Update for summer fieldwork
- Share knowledge about upcoming operations, repair, construction of dams and reservoirs in the next fiscal year
- Decide on routine and new activities for upcoming year

➤ *Winter meetings*

- Put funding instruments (usually contracts) in place for tribal expertise
- Report writing and publication



Corps of Engineers removing invasive 'Tree of Heaven' from culturally important site. This was a special request of the Cooperating Group.

4. PAYOS KUUS CUUKWE SUCCESS STORIES

➤ 1. *Ongoing Site Stabilization and Monitoring*

Columbia Park, which includes the site of the Ancient One, is more than 7 km long. The shoreline of the river has serious erosion, affecting many archaeological sites. Tribes set the priority for bank stabilization using rock, ‘biobags’, native vegetation, and other techniques. Other sites are stabilized as funds become available, and tribal monitors can spot trespass, looting, and other illegal behavior and report to law enforcement.



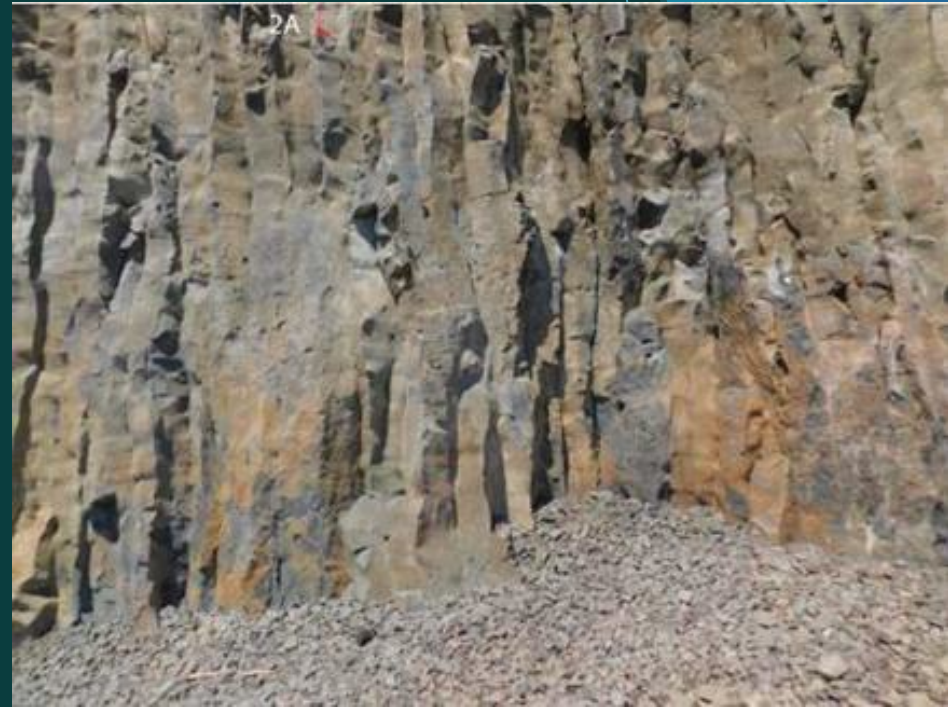
➤ 2. *Culturally significant plant restoration*

Placement of young willow trees and tule reeds along the Columbia River shoreline helps to stabilize soils, provides habitat for birds, fish and insects, and provides culturally important materials for basketry, mat-making, and more.



➤ 3. *Graffiti removal at a sacred rock imagery site*

A specialist in rock imagery restoration re-documented the panels using D-stretch software and recorded additional panels at the site. The contractor then conducted graffiti removal testing and camouflage. The results were a striking improvement to the site, though some graffiti has returned (it has been an ongoing problem). The group will continue to monitor and treat the site as needed.



Rock imagery before and after graffiti removal at McNary site 45BN1753. Photo L. Bonstead

➤ 4. GIS Story Maps

Tell important cultural information to Tribal audiences including students.

Tribal experts decide on the best content to include, and remove sensitive information from public versions of the story maps.

Let's visit one created by the Nez Perce Tribe, which shares traditional knowledge associated with the sacred Palouse Canyon.

➤ <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/32fe5924fced46e78c991c32aee9eea>



The story of Beaver carving the Canyon is an example of knowledge about ancient processes.

➤ 5. Cooperating Group “Special Ingredients”

- Operating Guidelines for the group.

- Mutually developed and agreed upon
- Include rotating Tribal Leadership role each year
- Meeting schedule, format, products
- Voting and dispute resolution
- Conscious attention to respectful and open communication

- A facilitator for meetings.

- Professional; Respected; Neutral
- Long-term



Unmet Needs and Areas of Concern

- Unforeseen stressors: rampant development, climate change, political change
- Limited law enforcement capacities
- The nature-culture divide in government agency management structure (e.g. how to address invasive species and culturally important species)
- Keeping the ‘special ingredients’ (facilitator, operating guidelines) funded and supported
- Unaddressed treaty rights and other issues that need to be handled at higher levels.



Conclusion?

The future of Indigenous archaeology in the USA ...

- Indigenous research design
- Indigenous field protocols
- Indigenous curation
- Indigenous curricula and professional training



Ms. Adeline Fredin: Colville Tribal Historic Preservation Officer and descendant of the Ancient One (1925-2018). A pioneering advocate of scientific archaeology conducted by Tribes.

Signs of Times to Come: Indigenous Leaders in National Government Positions



Secretary of the Interior
Deborah Haaland (Laguna
Pueblo)

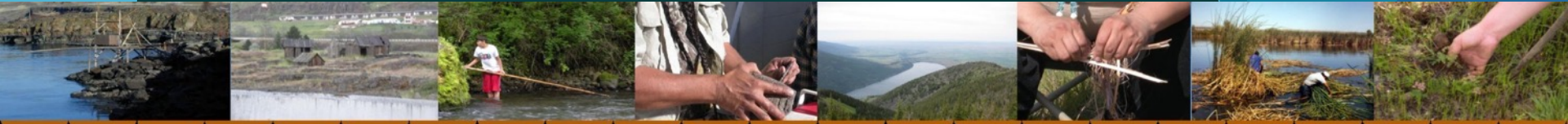
Director, National Park Service Chuck Sams
III (Conf. Tribes of Umatilla Indian Res.)



Director, Office of Native American
Affairs Ira Matt (Conf. Salish and
Kootenai Tribes of Flathead Indian Res.)



Assistant Deputy Secretary of the Army Corps of Engineers Jaime
Pinkham (Nez Perce Tribe)



Places Are Alive as Long as We Remember

Importance of Protection and Preservation...

Traditional places are non-renewable, irreplaceable, and rendered powerful with the spirit of our ancestors and Creator. Cultural Resources provide the historical and cultural foundation of the United States and Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation.

You can Help by...

Not removing archaeological resources or touching rock images, taking care of native plants and animals, and reporting illegal activities.

It is Against the Law...

To write, paint, or vandalize rock images or cairns; to dig, or use tools, sticks or hands to remove artifacts from the ground.

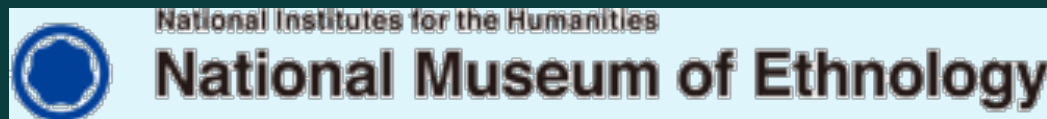
Places are embedded in Indian culture. The names of places convey knowledge of the land, its resources, and its history. Places connect people through legends, ceremonies, cultural activities, spiritual beliefs, memories and activities associated with the location.

Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, Department of Natural Resources, Cultural Resources Protection Program

Thank you for your attention.



Special thanks to organizers! LIU Yi-chang (NCKU), Chao Chin-yung (NCKU), Chung Kuo-feng (NCKU) & Frank MUYARD (EFEU)



**Thanks very much to Tribal members of
the Payos Kuus Cuukwe Cooperating Group!**

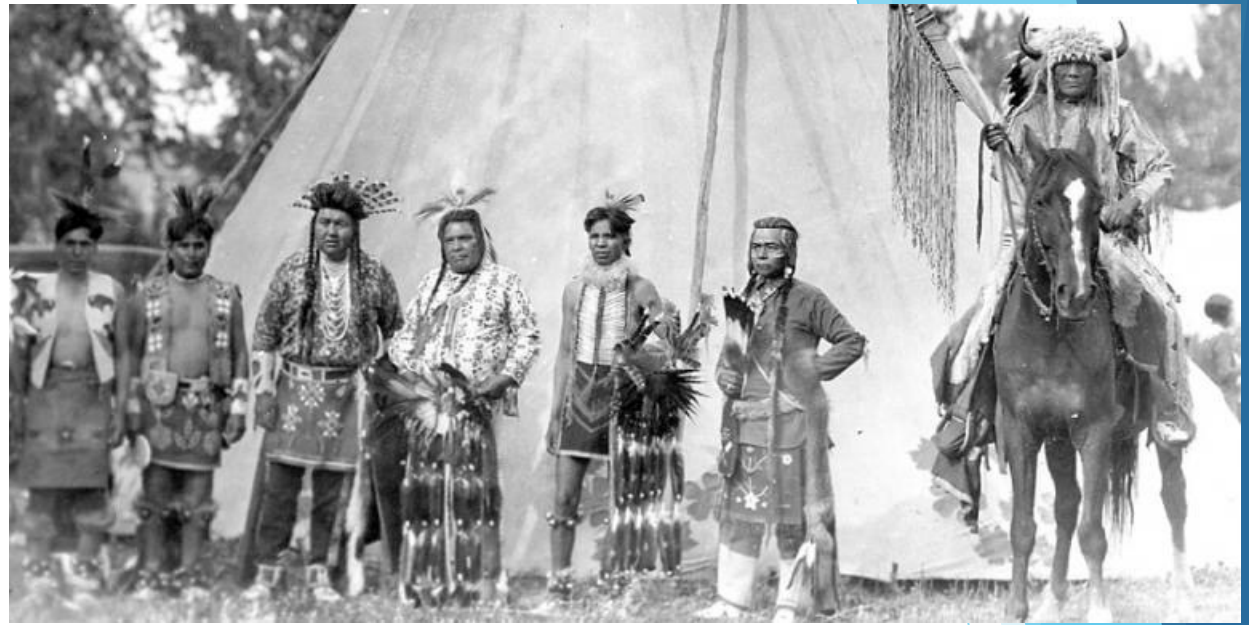
The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation
The Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation
The Wanapum Band
The Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation
The Nez Perce Tribe

Invite you to visit and leave a message at the signature page.





First Foods
Revitalization
Moss pit cooking.



Language Revitalization:
greetings and public signs

<https://www.colvilletribes.com/phone-greetings>