

Urban Forest Management Plan Final Written Report Native Communities

Name(s): Kim M. Camara, Francis Calf-Looking, Kelvin Frank

Organization: Native Community Liaison Team

Community/Communities engaged: Indigenous Native American

Tribes Represented at Surveying Talking Circle (21+ Tribes)

NW Coast Salish: Makah Nation, Quinault

Plateau: Colville, Confederated Tribe of Warm Springs, Yakama

East: Comstock Seneca

Plains: Blackfeet, Piegan, Crow Agency, Lakota Oglala Sioux, Sisseton Wapaton

Central: Omaha

SW: Laguna Pueblo

Alaska: Aleut, Inupiaq, Kodiak, Tsimshian

First Nations Canada: Cowichan, Saskatchewan Cree

South of US Border: Native Mexican,

Other: "Indipino" (Filipino & Native American)

Dates: Various

- **Conversations, Meetings, Gatherings & Recruitment Activities**
- **Thursday, 12/6/2018
Surveying Sacred Urban Trees Talking Circle**

1. Overview Major findings

- Trees are Powerful
- Diversity of urban Native Peoples are interested and have sacred relationships with trees, environmental connections, healing properties, and are aware of their presence
- Native Peoples are the caretakers under natural laws of creation
- Western Red Cedars are very important culturally
- Trees, especially Cedars and other originally from here, are crucially important to animals, insects, and people for reasons including clean air, keeping the land stable, and providing medicines for ceremony
- Being Coast Salish holds strong teachings, relations and respect of sacred trees, especially Western Red and Yellow Cedar, when collecting medicines and using trees for clothing, cooking, transportation and carving of sacred items like canoes, paddles, hats, vests, ceremonial dress and masks
- All peoples live under natural laws of this creation

Major Findings Cont. ---

- Creation stories like that told by an Elder in the Circle, informed people about the Pine Tree Being Creator (Comstock Seneca story)
- Spruce trees symbolize Mother Earth: The branches outright are a Mother embracing the Earth (Comstock Seneca)
- Oak Tree is rigid with deep roots
- Traditionally tribal peoples did not use burial coffins like now – when a person passed, their bodies returned to Mother Earth and became part of trees – “Our Ancestors are part of the Trees as Trees are our Ancestors.” (Crow Nation)
- Increase Native trees of this land like Cedars to bring Seattle back to being the “Emerald City” – this is a Sacred Place.
- Trees are Sacred, Sentient, Living Beings which is a relationship held by Native peoples everywhere
- Trees have traditionally been and are now integrally part of Indigenous Peoples’ ways of life in different ways
- Note of tall trees in places

A Sacred Talking Circle participant quote:

” For one I think nothing brings people together and helps create community like a shared meal (and bonus points for such a delicious one at that!). It was a lovely way to kick off the meeting. Additionally, the gifts of the paddle necklace and cedar bundle helped me to feel a real sense of belonging with the group. The specific format of the talking circle was new to me, but I realized how powerful it was in creating a safe space where everybody's voice was welcome, invited and heard by a present and attentive audience. Through the stories, teachings, and science which was shared I was very grateful for how many new perspectives and lessons I was able to glean in only a short period of time.”

b. What challenges did you face in doing this work?

- Lack of sufficient time to recruit, invite, educate and inform larger numbers of urban Native community people, organizational leaders, reservation-based environmental Elders, experts and tribal leaders, children and youth, university/college students, teachers, and educators, families, and cultural story tellers, knowledge-keepers, and language holders
- Lower levels of trust held by community people of “surveying”
- Varying levels of community relationships held with and by liaison team members
Varying levels of knowledge and experience with medicine people, carvers, teachers, Elders and others who carry traditions, ways, and practices
- Large geographic outreach areas to cover for a small number of liaisons
- Lack of sufficient resources to carry on quality, time-rich surveying work
- Ability to implement a variety of surveying techniques for in-depth outcomes
- Inability to sufficiently contact and work with already existing tribal urban and reservation-based environmental people like climate change people (Williams’ at Tulalip

Challenges Cont. ----

And NW Indian Fisheries Commission in Olympia – Billy Frank Jr. founded environmental organization)

- Outreach with Native urban and reservation communities are complex, geographically wide-spread yet connected, and take long periods of time to develop trusted commitment to work like this for a variety of reason
- Understanding of the colonial system that has created invisibility and annihilation of Native community peoples, places and presence is key to any work of governmental and civic agencies as well as indigenous peoples
- Cultural competency can affect project outcomes – sometimes “predictable” and other times not - the City DON and forestry team was exceptionally excellent with extending respect and flexibility in how this initial project was planned and implemented
- Being able to hold a longer Talking Circle, i.e., half a day or 1 complete day, would have resulted in deeper discussion, input, and ideas from Native community people
- Research a person who can take detailed notes of discussion comments (or video record) during talking circles, gatherings and meetings – this can assist in capturing more information

How did you overcome them or recommend to others facing similar challenges in the future?

- Having three (3) community liaisons of differing tribal backgrounds, levels of work and educational experience, and relationship affiliations, assisted significantly with bringing in people who may not have attended otherwise
- Differing roles carried out by each liaison assisted greatly in creating a holistic “Medicine Wheel” approach for an empowered, initial survey of Indian Country people based in Seattle
- This project has inspired this team of Native community liaisons to continue doing this work in collaboration with City, County and State leaders and organizations
- Networking and relationship strengthening in a broader arena of areas has increased for all team members for future work
- Having a Talking Circle with cultural protocols known to tribal peoples assisted in building trust, involvement, engagement and building relationships to be part of future work – many expressed questions about when the next Talking Circle will be held?
- Making sure to acknowledge the First Peoples of the land everyone was standing on at the Filipino Center, was a crucial protocol and teaching experience for many attending
- Programming a diverse number of tribal and non-tribal presenters holding knowledge, teachings and information in environmental areas, contributed scientific and traditional teachings to build awareness for inter-generational people in the Circle
- Hire and/or bring in a videographer for Talking Circles and/or public survey gatherings
- Invite in a professional photographer like we did to visually record – LT Productions

2. Process:

a. How did you go about collecting information?

- Informal one-on-one conversations
- Information tables/booths
- Facebook postings & messenger conversations
- Email notices and conversations
- Sacred Tree Talking Circle discussion & collecting of surveys
- Community event attendance, flyer postings, conversations
- Collaborating with Seattle area environmental community groups and Seattle Parks Foundation partners and staff
- Visiting urban sites, organizations, cultural community centers, city libraries, community centers, community pools, art shows, cultural centers, schools and education centers
- Native organizational sites, programs, holiday art marts, Indigenous Day gatherings, cultural programs, Title VI Native Education programs, tribal reservation centers and offices, and OSPI Native Education Program Conference

b. How many people did you engage?

Sacred Tree Talking Circle – 39 + Filipino Cultural Center individuals - 25

Urban Seattle Recruitment locales:	Liaison #1 -	200 to 300 people
Urban Seattle Recruitment locales:	Liaison #2 -	150 to 250 people
Greater Seattle & Reservation Locales:	Liaison #3 -	50 to 75 people

19 surveys were submitted after completion of the Sacred Urban Trees Talking Circle gathering on Thursday, 12/6/2018. 39 people were in attendance as well as Filipino Community Center individuals who joined the dinner in a different location from the circle.

Findings:

a. For each of the focus community questions, what were the most common responses you heard? What responses do you believe we should pay the most attention to?

Based on surveys:

- Plant more trees
- Trees are healthy, give oxygen and create clean air, and are good for other plants, animals and humans
- Re-create Seattle as the Emerald City it once was
- Share stories, traditions, uses, and ways trees are part of Native peoples' lives
- Be aware of different kinds of trees, especially those Indigenous to here
- Control and stop cutting of trees – work with home owners and especially contractors building condos, business buildings and apartment places. See fewer trees near apartment buildings
- Focus on local indigenous trees, their traditional uses, and bring in Native people to work with the City on this

Survey Findings Cont. ----

- Increase cedars!
- Trees are found in sacred spots. Where are these in Seattle? Need to find out more about this.
- Talk with Elders from nearby tribes- Suquamish, Snoqualmie, Muckleshoot, Duwamish relations, Tulalip, Puyallup, Port Gamble and others nearby
- Relate and treat trees as living beings – have and hold respect and honor trees for being Sacred sentient, living beings – this is held by all Native peoples
- Existence of tall trees is less in city areas – go home to reservations and forested areas in more rural areas you see tall trees that are older

b. What were the most prevalent attitudes, common barriers, and opportunities you heard?

- Minimal direct experience with trees by some urban-based Native people
- Lack of understanding about trees, Native traditions and uses
- Lack of Elders and medicine people to provide teachings
- Lack of resources, people and classes, workshops, talking circles like this one
- Transportation be made available to go to forests, reservations and wooded areas for urban living Native people
- Bring in more of our children to learn, gain knowledge and be inspired to become our future leaders taking care of our trees and the earth
- We loved having these three (3) youth being present in the Circle. What a blessing to have them!
- More time is needed to learn about and work with trees and how Native Peoples care for and relate to them
- Trust of governmental people and agencies with historical trauma and history

c. Did you hear any other valuable information outside of the questions?

- Yes, much of the information related by Elders and other tribal people speaking in our Talking Circle, were about Sacred ways, relationships, stories and work with Sacred Trees, like planting hundreds of indigenous trees with the Forest Service, to heal and bring back the environment to where it used to be before colonial impacts changed the Sacred natural world.
- Note: many tribal plains people have in the past, or currently work with the Forest and Park Service in states like Montana, Wyoming, North & South Dakota, and other nearby states. Fire fighting in Northwest states is done by a significant number of tribal individuals.
- In speaking with liaisons, numbers of Talking Circle participants expressed strongly that we hold more talking circles about trees, the Earth, medicines and related topics in Seattle and other urban city areas where Native people live.
- Excitement was expressed about how we held the Talking Circle with Native people, protocols and ways that are of Indian Country. At the same time, information given by Christopher about what is happening with Cedars in Seattle was information not known. It is good now that “we know this and can tell people.”
- It was good to have youth and children present – they are our future leaders

Valuable Info. Cont. ----

- Good to have our Native people together like this
- “I learned a lot about trees in Seattle I did not know”
- Those who have seen the pictures want copies and love how good they are!

**d. What are the summarized demographics of the people you engaged?
As listed above in question 1, representatives engaged in the Talking Circle were of these specified tribes (probably more):**

Tribes Represented at Surveying Talking Circle (21+ Tribes)

NW Coast Salish: Makah Nation, Quinault
Plateau: Colville, Confederated Tribe of Warm Springs, Yakama
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Central: Omaha
SW: Laguna Pueblo
Alaska: Aleut, Inupiaq, Kodiak, Tsimshian
First Nations Canada: Cowichan, Saskatchewan Cree
South of US Border: Native Mexican,
Other: “Indipino” (Filipino & Native American)

Broader community outreach activities and conversations would increase this number up to at least 100 additional tribal representatives. Other Indigenous peoples would include First Nations Canada, Latino Hispanic Peoples, and Island People from Samoa, Hawaii and other related areas. For example additional tribes include Muckleshoot, Puyallup, Lower Elwha Kallam, Dine Navajo, Lummi, Haida, Tlingit, Tulalip, others

4. Recommendations:

a. Based on what you heard, what recommendations do you have for Urban Forestry Work? as we move forward?

- Continue to invite Native Peoples to be involved and engaged in your plan process
- Set up a second phase of surveying with these Native liaisons for deeper assessment of community relationships with trees, knowledge of, and commitment to culturally-focused practices of maintaining, planning for, growing, planning, cutting prevention, and collaborative solution-based initiatives in support of urban and rural-based trees and plants.
- Continue interweaving networks with tribal peoples locally, state-wide and nationally
- Find resources for additional learning, trainings, workshops, classes, conferences and educational opportunities for your Urban Forestry people AND tribal community people of all ages from young children-youth-adult-Elder
- Once your plan is written, provide time and opportunity for Native community feedback and suggestions before submission to City and County people
- Further educate, inform and enculturate all diverse peoples of American Indian heritage, of urban tree work, practices, presence of trees and how Native people can be involved.

Recommendations Cont. ----

- Provide ways for city, county and state agency people and people living in city areas, of Native community people's historical trauma due to the colonial system and history for fuller understanding, knowledge and cultural competency.
- Many Native peoples live and have lived in locations without any trees – this is something that should be brought to the forefront of everyone's knowledge. Factors include reservation experience, low income related factors, and other historical contributions to the invisibility of Native peoples in the US.

b. Do you see any possible opportunities for future urban forestry engagement work with your community?

- Connect and seed relationships between tribal environmental people, Elders, Medicine People, Coastal artists and carvers, knowledge keepers and Urban Forestry researchers, personnel and staff – this stands to increase Indigenous knowledge, ways, and protocols held and observed historically and presently.
- Respect for Indigenous knowledge and ways combined with modern science stands to contribute to empowered growth, preservation, life maintenance, and presence of Trees in Seattle and beyond
- Engage Native peoples who have experience, knowledge and expertise who work in and for City, County and State Forestry agencies
- Collaboratively plan together future plans, activities, projects, assessment and evaluative programs
- Continue to invite these three, and possible other potential liaisons like Cesar Garcia, into civic and governmental environmental work like this Urban Trees surveying project
- Increase educational opportunities for governmental, civic and agency people to learn and gain knowledge of our Native Peoples' relationships with Sacred Trees
- Learn collaboratively of macro and micro eco-systems in relationship to science while interweave with traditions, stories and uses by Tribal Peoples

5. Supporting Documentation

a. If possible, please send photos of the engagement work you did. Be sure to ask for permission to take and share photos.

Some LT Productions photos have been emailed with permission given by Loren T. Palmer.

Photos of Cesar Garcia children and youth has been given to Kim M. Camara

For additional photographs: <https://ltproductions.smugmug.com/Talking-Circle-Trees>

b. Attach notes or transcripts of the meetings / interviews you held. Leave off any names or other identifying information.

Attachments

1. Flyer – *Surveying Sacred Urban Trees Talking Circle, 12/6/2018*
2. Schedule - *Surveying Sacred Urban Trees Talking Circle, 12/6/2018*
3. Tree Coloring Page Handout with teaching – Artwork by Brandan McCarty, Makah
4. Sign In Sheets - *Surveying Sacred Urban Trees Talking Circle, 12/6/2018*
5. Flip Chart Notes Pages (2) - *Surveying Sacred Urban Trees Talking Circle, 12/6/2018*
6. Photos of Talking Circle – LT Productions, Loren T. Palmer
7. Surveys – 19 submitted

Core Team Presentation Guidelines

~ 20-minute presentation + time for questions

Tuesday, 12/11/2018, 11 am – 12 pm, Seattle Municipal Tower