

# *Summary and Recommendations*



**KLAMATH  
FIRST FOODS  
ROUNDTABLE  
OCTOBER 2022**

# Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	4
KTAFF Statement	4
Background	4
Importance of Klamath First Foods	6
Barriers and Issues	8
• Availability and Access	8
• Land Access and Development	8
• Water	8
• Climate Change	9
• Community Engagement	9
• Food Security and Health	9
Next Steps and Recommendations	11
• Information and Resource Gathering	11
• Food Sovereignty Assessment	12
• Community Engagement	12
• Communication and Outreach	15
• Strategic Planning	15
• Participation in Regional and National Food Sovereignty Movements	16
Conclusion	17



*"... reclaiming our first foods isn't just about the food. It's about reclaiming the language of the songs and the traditions that go with these first foods."—  
Willa Powless*



## Acknowledgements

On behalf of the Klamath Tribes Agricultural and First Foods Committee, we would like to thank the participants of the Klamath First Foods Roundtable that was hosted on October 4th, 2022. We value and honor your time, energy, knowledge, and insight.

## KTAFF Statement

On behalf of the Klamath Tribes Agriculture and First Foods Committee (KTAFF Committee), we would like to thank those who were able to participate in our first Roundtable discussion that was held in October of 2022. The KTAFF Committee was established June, 6th, 2022, and meets bi-weekly. It was identified by committee members that input from tribal community members was fundamental and a necessary first step to organizing committee priorities.

This document summarizes the main themes of the Roundtable discussion and is intended to serve as a starting point for next steps in the development of a Klamath Tribes First Foods Initiative. We are committed to a holistic approach to the development of this initiative and will include additional opportunities for input and discussion.

**Sepk'eeča nanokdwaa Geeladat / Bless the land, animals, relatives and the people**

## Background

The Klamath Tribes Agriculture and First Foods Committee (KTAFF Committee), in partnership with Tahoma Peak Solutions and funding support from the Catena Foundation, hosted a First Foods Roundtable for the Klamath Basin, composed of a set of diverse stakeholders. The primary goal of the First Foods Roundtable was to elevate the importance of - and encourage the incorporation and protection of - First Foods of the Klamath Basin and its tribes.

### **Current KTAFF Committee Members:**

- Jeff Mitchell, Co-Chair
- Willa Powless, Co-Chair
- Camille Delorme
- Herman Anderson
- Les Anderson



### **Indigenous Food Sovereignty Definition**

*“Food plays an important role in the formation of identity, in the development of community, economic and social institutions, and in the everyday lives of Native people and communities. Not only are certain foods central to the ceremonial and epistemological belief systems of many Native nations, but Native communities also face unique issues as they try to feed their people. Issues of hunger, food insecurity, maintenance and access to traditional food sources, and geographic isolation make accessing fresh and healthy foods a challenge for many Native American communities, families, and children.”- Food Sovereignty Assessment Tool (2nd Edition), First Nations Development Institute, 2014*

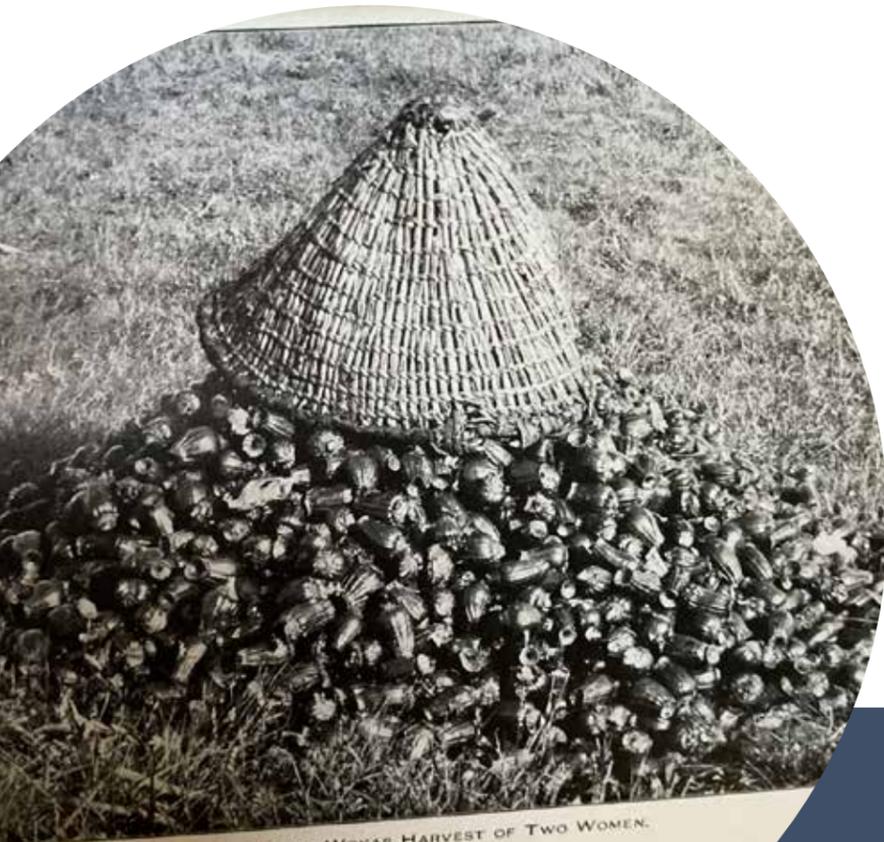


## Importance of Klamath First Foods

First Foods are significant food resources for the Klamath Tribes and staples of culture, spirituality, medicine, and overall well-being. The Klamath Tribes have relied on the first foods for survival since time immemorial, and these foods provide a foundation for the health of the ecosystem and the health of the Klamath people. Many Native oral traditions and creation stories teach that the land provides all the food and medicines needed for tribes to thrive and provides a sacred connection to the land. Traditional foods also play a promising role in addressing food insecurity in Native American communities and securing their physical and mental well-being. Yet First Foods have been decreasingly incorporated into farming and restoration practices, and human impacts have significantly damaged these foods and the ecosystems on which they depend.

During the Klamath First Foods Roundtable, participants expressed the importance of first foods and how they uniquely identify with them. Stories were told of the old days when deer, salmon, wocus, and plums were abundant. Elders described their days of hunting, fishing, and gathering as a means of sustenance and the primary way of securing food for their families and community. Many described these foods as a “way of being” and a definition of culture and “who we are.” For others, connecting to these foods was a powerful medicine in their recovery from drugs and alcohol, prevention of Type II Diabetes, and other chronic health conditions.

Participants see first foods and agricultural programming as one solution to food security, food access, and self-sufficiency and a way to connect back to tradition to solve modern problems.



ONE DAY'S WOKAS HARVEST OF TWO WOMEN.  
FOR EXPLANATION OF PLATE SEE PAGE 130.

*“I’m a hunter, I’m a fisher, I’m a gatherer. My whole life, living here on the Klamath reservation within Klamath Homelands, I’ve always gathered foods with my family. It was tradition that we would go out and learn those practices of hunting and fishing. And so, it was the way I was raised. I really don’t know much different from that.”- Jeff Mitchell*

## Barriers and Issues

Below is a summary of the main identified themes of current barriers and issues facing first foods in the Klamath Basin. It is important to note that the issues listed below are multi-faceted and are rooted in a long history of colonization, treaty rights, termination, and restoration. **The barriers and issues listed below are examples that were given during the Roundtable and are by no means an exhaustive or detailed list of all the issues impacting First Foods.**

### 1. Availability and Access

#### Land Access & Development

One of the primary barriers discussed during the Roundtable was that of land access and the development of land. Much of the land that has first foods, or the potential for restoration of first foods, is in private landownership or is designated as National or State Forest land. It was identified that although there are some good relationships with private landowners, more can be done to build relationships and provide access to Tribal members for gathering, hunting, or fishing. Several Tribal Members addressed the need for Memorandums of Agreement between the Tribe and the National Forest Service or Bureau of Land Management to address first foods gathering when negotiating these contracts or agreements.

Another top concern from participants was the new development of land. Places that were once accessible or used for gathering roots, fruit, or other first foods have recently been taken over by private land developers. New home developments now appear in these landscapes that were once places for harvesting these important cultural foods.

#### Water

There is a strong concern for the availability and quality of water within the Klamath Basin. Participants at the Roundtable discussed how the marsh was completely dried up this year and how there was no wocus for harvesting. Wocus is an important first food source and several attendees of the Roundtable described how wocus used to be in abundance years ago.

In addition, participants spoke of concerns related to the use of pesticides, herbicides, fertilizers, and other sprays or chemicals that are used by private landowners as well as government agencies. People expressed their fear of these chemicals entering the waterways and contaminating fish, wildlife, and other first foods that are then consumed by the community.

*"I want my grandchildren and great-grandchildren to go out and gather if that's what they choose to do, I want them to be able to ... find camas, apos, celery, whatever it may be." - Jeff Mitchell*

*"...going out to the marsh. I really cried. There was no water. We went to the marsh every year, collected our wocus... Unfortunately, today I'm really sad because we didn't get any wocus this year... we didn't get any plums." - Danita Herrera*

## Climate Change

Wildfires and extreme drought are just two examples of climate change issues that are affecting first foods today. Extreme weather changes and a decrease in water availability are stressing the ecosystem that sustains the first foods of the Klamath Basin. Participants expressed concern for the salmon returning home once the dam is removed. One person said, "now that we have salmon coming home, are we ready for them?" It is not only the salmon that are in danger but the c'waam, koptu, birds, and plant species.



### Community Engagement

Participants identified the need to engage the community in more cultural activities, or skill-building activities such as gathering, hunting, fishing, gardening, and canning/preservation. Although there are some opportunities currently available, they are not always accessible to everyone in the community. It was suggested that more classes were made available to youth, or any tribal community member, to learn more about first foods and to participate in more ceremonies.

### 2. Food Security and Health

Prior to colonization, the Klamath people obtained their food sources from hunting, fishing, and gathering in traditional homelands. Colonization, federal and state policies, and broken treaty agreements have deeply impacted how the Klamath interact with the food system. It has led to high rates of preventable chronic diseases, such as Type II Diabetes.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated many existing barriers to food security and health for the Klamath Tribes. It shed light on the need to have local control of the food system to respond to food insecurity issues, post-pandemic recovery, and future emergency preparedness. Many tribal members are currently living in a food desert. There is limited access to fresh, healthy, affordable foods, including regular access to traditional first foods.

Participants expressed that although there are programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and commodities, or food box programs, these programs alone are not enough to feed families and are not enough to positively contribute to the health and well-being of its participants to fight against chronic disease or infectious diseases like COVID-19.

In addition, it was also mentioned that the rising cost of food and fuel due to inflation is a huge concern. There's an immediate need to feed the people and the KTAFF Committee has an opportunity to play a large role in making that happen between departments.

The KTAFF Committee expressed the need for immediate actions toward tribal self-sufficiency and sovereignty to reclaim the local, tribal food system.



Report of U. S. National Museum, 1902.—Coville.

PLATE 2.



## Next Steps & Recommendations

After the Roundtable discussion, there were six recommendations identified that the KTAFF Committee should consider when deciding upon the next steps. These recommendations include more information/resource gathering, a food sovereignty assessment, more community engagement, communication/outreach, strategic planning, and participation in regional and national food sovereignty movements.



## Information Gathering & Inter-tribal Food Symposium

During the Roundtable, it was identified that there are several resources currently available to use as a starting point for information gathering. This includes data from the Integrated Resource Management Plan (IRMP), the Economic Self-Sufficiency Plan (ESSP), and any recent Community Health Assessments done within the last five to ten years. This information could be synthesized, adapted, and shared with the tribal community at large. For example, it was discussed that the IRMP could be made into a more visual and easy-to-read format for community members to provide feedback. The main objective of this would be to gather opinions on the IRMP and what is missing from that plan.

Integrating data regarding first foods into the IRMP would make it unique to the region and a progressive step toward future restoration and management practices.

In addition, it was expressed that an Inter-tribal Food Symposium Gathering could be hosted to aid in information gathering and sharing. Ideally, all Klamath Tribal Departments, committees, and commissions currently doing work in First Foods, Agriculture, Natural Resources, Food Security, etc would be invited to share about their work and ways to collaborate in the future work with the KTAFF Committee and neighboring tribes.

*"...as far as integrating the first foods into a program, it's a natural flow to canvas these areas while simultaneously having the new younger generations integrated and learning these foods, also providing them to the elders and gathering for ceremonies. It all comes together at some point. It comes back and the purpose of the program is to tie the people and land back together." – Micheal Ridge*

## Food Sovereignty Assessment

To create a strategy for a Klamath First Foods and Agriculture Program, it will be important for the KTAFF Committee to gather data from community members about what their current needs are, what is important to them, and what they'd like to see in a First Foods and Agriculture Program. One way of gathering this type of data is through a Food Sovereignty Assessment (FSA), or Community Food Assessment. This type of assessment focuses on solutions and takes stock of assets, resources, as well as potential barriers. The First Nations Development Institute developed a Food Sovereignty Assessment Tool, and it uses a community-based participatory approach that promotes community control of the food system. It is designed to be adapted and conducted by the community and its members.

It will be important for the KTAFF Committee to work with community members to design the sections and/or questions to ask. There were several ideas during the Roundtable about what could be included in the assessment to gauge interest and prioritize projects.

### Ideas to Include:

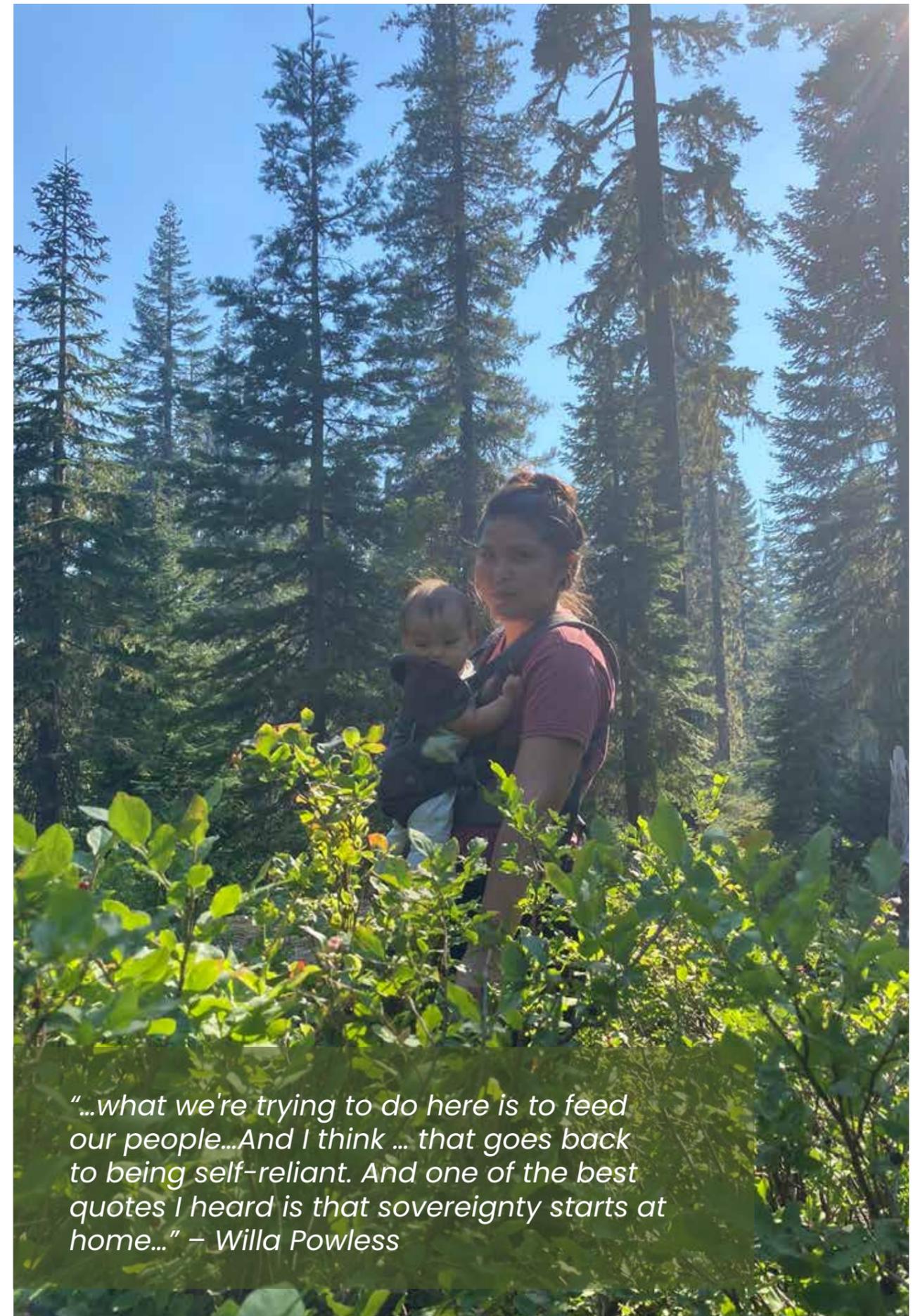
- A storage or freezer facility store meat or to process food that was gathered by community members
- Preservation classes
- Classes led by elders to teach the youth skills
- Cookbooks
- Seasonal Round Calendar
- Food security + access issues (where people get their food, what type of food they are accessing, program assistance and/or other needs)
- Tribal food production
- Farmers market
- Mobile Slaughter Unit
- Gardening and other self-sufficiency projects

## Community Engagement

There was strong interest from the KTAFF Committee and Roundtable participants to include more community members in the discussion. Aside from gathering data through an assessment, the KTAFF Committee can make ongoing efforts to ensure that community members feel heard and are a part of the discussion and planning process.

A few suggestions to implement this are:

- Open the KTAFF Committee to community members to voice ideas or provide feedback on resources, assessments, or projects.
- Ensure all levels of voices are heard (Elders, youth, leadership, staff/programs/ departments, committee, commissions, community members, and other stakeholders)
- Host additional roundtables or focus groups to help design assessments or programs





*"...I'm so impressed with the youth of the tribe today and the things that they are committing themselves to..." – Mary Gentry*



## Communication & Outreach

Communication and outreach are strategies for communicating with your target audience (tribal community members). It includes whom you are talking to, why you are talking to them, how and when you will talk to them, what form of communication the content should take and what channels you should use to share it. This can be an e-newsletter, social media, etc. It is a way to keep ongoing communication with the community about events, KTAFF Committee meetings, the First Foods Roundtable video, the summary document, and whatever it may be that you want the community to engage with. This will become increasingly important as you begin to prioritize projects and want community input.

This is also a low-budget and easy-to-do next step to help gain community buy-in for the KTAFF Committee and First Foods and Agriculture Program. Tap into current communication resources within the Tribe such as the Klamath Tribe's communication outlets (newsletter, social media) as well as the active Klamath Tribal Youth Council social media. This is an area, and opportunity to engage the youth in your mission.

## Strategic Planning

It is strongly recommended that the KTAFF Committee formalize its mission, vision, and values as a committee and set goals for the coming year(s). This would provide direction and set clear expectations and timelines to keep the work moving forward. It is important to conduct a strategic planning process that comes from systems thinking perspective and is done with a neutral facilitator.

Identified KTAFF Committee work that was discussed at the Roundtable includes:

- Applying for funding: NRCS, USDA, Foundations
- Develop policy: Federal, state, county, city, and tribal levels
- Develop partnerships and enhance relationships with private land owners
- MOA's other agreements
- Collaboration of all Klamath Tribal Departments, Committees, and Commissions
  - New Public Health Department to create public health ordinances
    - License own food vendors, ag producers
  - Dieticians
  - Diabetes program
  - Commodities
  - TANF

### What Strategic Planning Provides:

Strategic planning provides clarity, direction, and focus for the committee. Having a clear mission and vision enables the committee (and the Tribe) to develop a strategic roadmap for making the vision come to fruition. It is also a level of accountability to both the committee and key stakeholders.

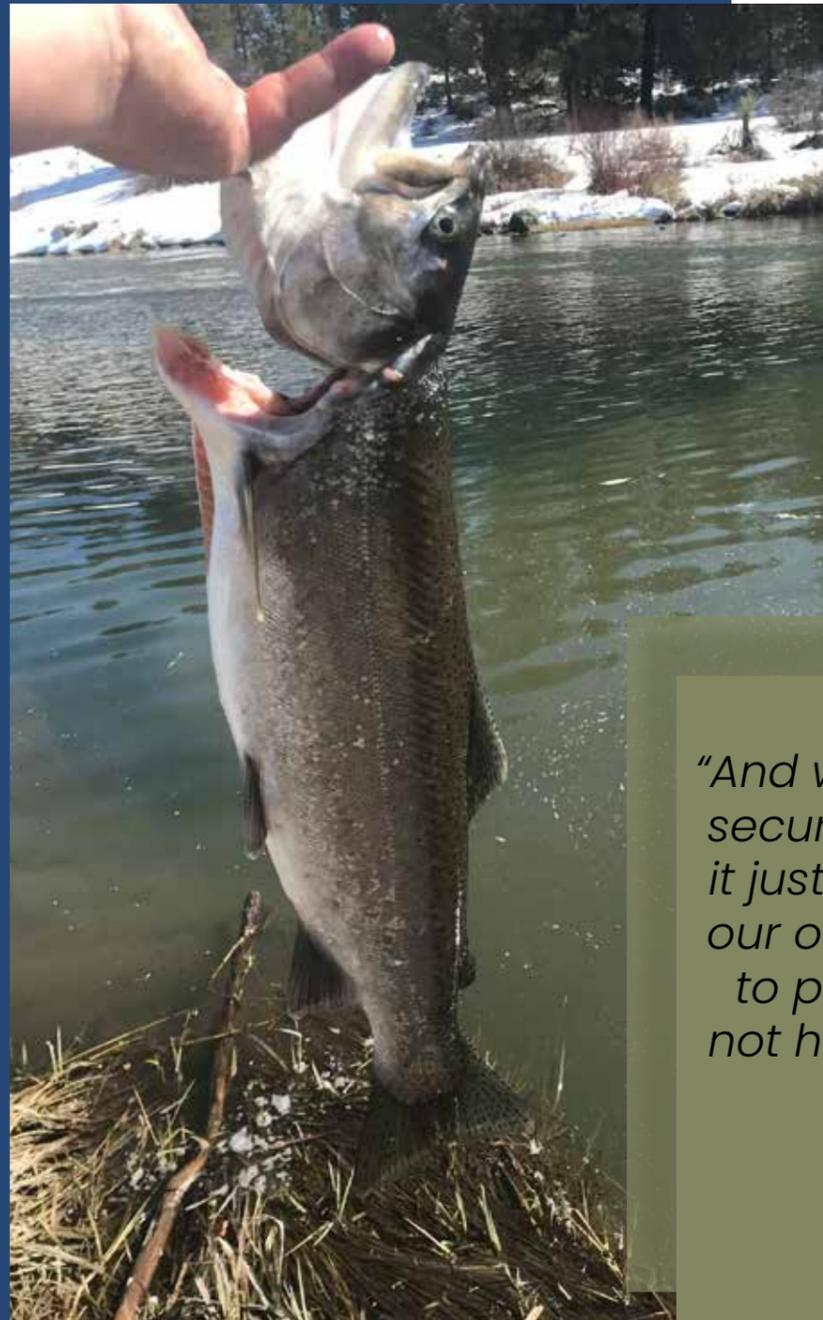


## Participation in Regional & National Food Sovereignty Movement

Currently, there are several regional and national food sovereignty coalitions, committees, conferences, meetings, and other types of events that gather communities inter-tribally to discuss, brainstorm, share resources, and problem-solve food systems and sovereignty issues. Designating committee members, leaders, or staff to attend these events provides an opportunity to identify additional resources, such as funding, technical support (ex: policy or code development), and networking.

### Some examples of regional or national opportunities include:

- Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians: Food Sovereignty Sub-committee
- NW Tribal Food Sovereignty Coalition and Annual Gathering
- Native Farm Bill Coalition
- Indigenous Food and Agriculture Initiative (provides legal technical assistance)
- Intertribal Agriculture Council
- Native American Nutrition Conference
- Great Lakes Intertribal Food Summit
- Lower Klamath River Basin Tribes
- Columbia River Basin Tribes



*"And we really saw through the pandemic, the lack of food security for our community and our family members, and it just highlighted the fact that we don't have control over our own food system... [I want] to help our people be able to preserve foods so that we can rely on ourselves and not have to rely on the government like we did during the pandemic..." - Willa Powless*



**FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

**Jeff Mitchell**  
[mohiswaqs@aol.com](mailto:mohiswaqs@aol.com)

**Willa Powless**  
[wpowless.council@klamathtribes.com](mailto:wpowless.council@klamathtribes.com)

