

Ecotrust

TRANSCRIPT

Negotiating a Future: Indigenous Leadership Through the Ages

Speakers: Roberta Conner and W. Ron Allen

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Presented by the Ecotrust Indigenous Leadership Program

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This is the first of four briefings that address the theme, *Indigenous Leadership: Ensuring a Future for Native Peoples, Cultures, and Lands*.

Lisa Watt [00:07] Good morning. Roberta Cordero has offered this opening blessing. Roberta is a citizen of the Chumash Nation and the recipient of an Ecotrust Indigenous Leadership Award in 2014 in recognition of her efforts to re-establish her community's connection to its canoeing and seafaring roots. Roberta couldn't be on camera today but she is with us and has offered this prayer.

[Prayer shown in the Chumash language on screen and recited in English.]

kiy-is-nono k'e nene hi-l 'alapay k'e šup

You who are grandfather & grandmother of all that is above & on the earth

'a'laleqwel hi li'ya hi'l kik'l

Creator of everything & everyone

tanikutiyuw

Please watch over us

kiyam-sukuwun hi molmoloqiwaš

We honor our ancestors

taniqilikiyuw

Please take care of us

taniqilik hi-l li'ya he-l kuhk'u

Please take care of all peoples

taniqilik hi-l šup k'e šxa'min hi liya hil 'alapay

Please take care of earth & ocean & all that is above

kiyaq^hinalin ho-l č'iči'win k'e ki-kikič

We thank you for our children & relatives

kiyaq^hinalin hi li'ya 'eqweleš

We thank you for all of creation.

kiyqantuč kika kiyalasal

So we believe and pray.

Thank you, Roberta. We're delighted you're here.

Lisa Watt [01:00] Good morning again. My name is Lisa Watt and I am the director of the Indigenous Leadership Program here at Ecotrust. I am also a citizen of the Seneca Nation, Six Nations, from the Allegany Territory in western New York State. I'd like to introduce my

Ecotrust colleague and co-host Indigenous storytelling fellow Jessica Douglas, who is a citizen of the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians. I'd also like to introduce Megan Foucht, who is a member of our communications team and providing support for this briefing today.

All of us at Ecotrust are delighted to welcome you to this inaugural Indigenous Leadership Briefing Series. At this point in a program, a land acknowledgment is usually recited but not here at Ecotrust. We recognize that while land acknowledgments are intended to be respectful, they oversimplify complex tribal histories and overlook the ongoing impacts of colonization that tribal communities continue to live with today.

Jessica Douglas [02:03] In place of a land acknowledgment, the Ecotrust staff, and especially the Native staff, are asking you to support Indigenous communities by taking action. We ask that you:

1. Give land back to tribes.
2. Protect the environment and salmon. Tribal cultures depend on them.
3. Invest in tribal economies.
4. Insist that the United States respect tribal sovereignty and uphold its trust responsibility to tribes, which includes appropriate levels of federal funding to support tribal needs. Many promises to tribes still need to be kept.
5. Elect officials and judges who understand tribal governments, relationships, and law.
6. Ensure your children and grandchildren are taught the accurate histories, cultures, and contemporary lives of Indigenous people in your school system. And,
7. Inform yourself about issues impacting tribal communities and speak up.

Jessica Douglas [03:01] All lands and waters are precious to Native people, and all of us have the responsibility to treat them with respect and care they deserve. We need to do more. Thank you.

Lisa Watt [03:12] The Indigenous Leadership Briefing Series is the lead-up to the Indigenous Leadership Awards, or as we know them inside Ecotrust, the ILAs, which will be relaunched in spring 2022. The ILAs is a celebration of the determination, wisdom, and continuum of Indigenous leadership across our region. At its heart, the ILAs are about Indigenous survival. To date, 56 Indigenous leaders throughout our region have been recognized. They represent many different landscapes, cultures, and languages. This relaunch gives us the opportunity to once again recognize the outstanding work of tribal leaders dedicated to uplifting the environmental, cultural, economic, and social conditions of their communities and homelands.

This free briefing series is intended to highlight the achievements of Indigenous communities by looking at moments in American history and showing how Indigenous leaders responded. We are asking an important question: When faced with seemingly insurmountable challenges, when the odds were against them, how did tribal leaders and communities respond? The events described in this four-part series are stories of vision, courage, and determination.

The goals are to present accurate information about Indigenous perspectives and voices, dispel stereotypes, and demonstrate the power and influence of Indigenous leadership. We believe examples of Indigenous leadership are around all of us, everyday. We just need to look.

I'd like to take a moment to recognize an anonymous funder who made these briefings possible. I don't know if you're on this call today but if you are, on behalf of the Indigenous leaders participating in the series and Ecotrust, we thank you for your generous support.

Jessica Douglas [05:02] This will be our format for today. We're going to keep it simple. Each speaker will talk for 20 to 25 minutes and we will take questions at the end so please feel free to put your questions in the Q&A section. If we don't have time, we will provide written answers to some of the questions in an FAQ document that will appear alongside the recording of this briefing on the Indigenous Leadership Briefing webpage.

Our first speaker is Bobbie Connor, executive director of the Tamástsiikt Cultural Institute of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation in eastern Oregon. She serves on an array of nonprofit boards, including Ecotrust's Board, where she serves on the executive committee. Bobbie is also the 2007 Indigenous Leadership Awardee. She will speak about the ancestors of the Cayuse, Walla Walla and Umatilla tribes who negotiated their Treaty of 1855 and answer the questions, what happened at the Treaty Council? What was at stake?

Lisa Watt [06:00] Our second speaker will be Ron Allen. Ron is a current Tribal Council chairman and CEO of the Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe near Sequim, Washington. Ron is a nationally recognized and deeply respected Indigenous leader, having served as [past] president of the National Congress of American Indians and the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians. Ron will talk about Indigenous leadership today and what the future might hold. Ron will be joining us shortly. He is chairing a meeting for the U.S.-Canada Pacific Salmon Treaty Commission right now but he will be with us shortly. We welcome them both. And, now we turn this over to Bobbie Connor.

Bobbie Conner [06:40] [Indigenous language] Good morning, I'm delighted to be here. I am a member of the Confederated Tribes [of the Umatilla Indian Reservation] as well as director of Tamástsiikt, as previously mentioned. And today I want to share with you just a little bit of our history as an example of what has happened all across the country to tribal peoples. You need to know why treaties matter, and they matter to you for a number of reasons. But most importantly, if you own a home or a business, whether it's commercial or residential real estate, your title, your deed emanates from the dispossession of our lands -- from us. So, we have had the opportunity to tell people that if they want to abrogate treaties, then give us back the land. And I say that with all seriousness. Our treaties are documents that help not only protect our way of life and protect our existence, they are the cradles of our contemporary existence and we will defend them with our lives, and many people have.

Bobbie Conner [08:00] Not only are treaties important because they help us live the lives we want to live but they also are important because they are a nation-to-nation agreement. Treaties are the supreme law of the land. They have supremacy over state-to-state and they are critical not only between foreign nations but also with domestic nations. My grandfather told my mother why he served in World War I in France in the U.S. Navy. He said we never wanted a treaty. That was not our people's desire, it was the United States that wanted a treaty. We defend the treaty by our service in the armed forces. We defend our treaty in courts across this land. We defend our treaty in negotiations with many entities - federal, state, and other. And we defend our treaty in many multi-layered jurisdictional arguments and conversations and solutions that we make today.

And the reason that we defend our treaty and depend on our treaty is because it is how we have survived. It is how we have protected not only our sacred ceremonies, our First Foods, and the burial sites of our ancestors. It is how we have created a cultural stronghold against all odds. The fact that we are fighting today using our treaty to defend our way of life constantly, it should come as no surprise to most people, but some people are surprised by that.

Bobbie Conner [09:46] I'm going to take you through a little quick walk back in time. The 15th century, or the late fourteen hundreds, there was a papal bull issued by the Catholic Church that basically indicated the dispossession of lands from Natives who were non-Christian would be by treaty or conquest. Those were the two choices. Candidly, I don't know what tribe in the nation [south] of the 49th parallel who has ever agreed that we gave up anything. We have never given up. We continue to fight today. The fight is one continuous battle.

The dispossession of our lands from us happened in our neighborhood [the Pacific Northwest] in a very short period of time. Lewis and Clark arrived at 1805 and 50 years later, we were in a council with the United States, being asked to give up our homelands – just under seven million acres that had been the heart of our country for all of our existence, since time immemorial. The Treaty Council that took place in Walla Walla in 1855 had the following intent: to place the Cayuse, Umatilla, Walla Walla, Okanagan, [Colvilles, Palouse,] and Spokanes on one of two reservations where the contemporary Yakama reservation is or the contemporary Nez Perce reservation, as they were defined in the 1855 Treaty.

There was no intention for the Cayuse, Umatilla, or Walla Walla to have a [continued] relationship with our Aboriginal homeland. We were being punished for killing the Christian missionaries, the Whitmans, in 1847. The U.S. government's position was that the Cayuse had abrogated or relinquished any hope of owning land by virtue of our acts by men who were trying to protect our people from disease, incursion, and encroachment. The cost of that was that we would have no home in our homeland. Yet, after 18 days of deliberation, one of the longest treaty councils in the Pacific Northwest, that was contentious, that could have ended in bloodshed, concluded for our tribes on June 9th.

In that treaty, we reserved eight hundred square miles or five hundred and twelve thousand acres for ourselves to live on. That treaty was not fulfilled, ever, at that size. A boundary in 1871 lopped off roughly a quarter of a million acres in one act. The consequence of signing that treaty, however, is that we have a subset of our homeland in our homeland, rather than living on one of those other two reservations. What has become the Umatilla Reservation, a postage stamp compared to our original Aboriginal domain, is a cultural stronghold for our people where we have managed to hang on to our culture, our ceremony, and our languages and continue to fight to have those persist well into the future.

But the consequence of the Treaty of 1855 was that we then became part of a multi-layered, very complex set of jurisdictions and stewardships and responsibilities in an overlay pattern over lands that had once been ours. So let's be clear, what is called a ceded land in a treaty has no bearing to our hearts and our minds. We believe that all of these lands that have always been ours are still ours. There are many jurisdictions over these lands but we have never given up the responsibility for taking care of the homeland, the entire homeland, and that includes the water and the air and all the beings that should live here, including the extirpated species.

Bobbie Conner [14:05] Tribal leaders today are faced with enormous challenges, and I hope that tribal leaders can look at the headmen who participated in the Walla Walla Treaty Council when there were no good options for the Cayuse, Umatilla, and Walla Walla peoples. Our leaders stayed engaged in the negotiations, both outside of the council and inside the council with the treaty makers on behalf of the U.S., as well as with the superintendents of Indian Affairs and with other tribes at night in our own parleys in order to make the best possible result out of what was an insulting, coercive, and unfortunate circumstance, where the supremacy of colonialism was unquestioned and unfettered. By virtue of our headmen staying in the negotiation until we eked out, through Superintendent of Indian Affairs Joel Palmer, this homeland that we have now as a reservation, we gave ourselves a fighting chance to live today and flourish.

It should come as no surprise to people who are close to what's been happening in Indian Country since the Indian Education and Self-determination Assistance Act [in 1975, PL 93-638] that tribes are becoming economic powerhouses. It is no surprise to me that we have withstood the test of time despite the intent to terminate our people and our treaty and our reservation, despite the attempts by citizens who came into this country and squatted on our land before they had any legal right to be here, making claims that it should be the elimination of this reservation that should occur, many times in our history in the 1870s as well as the 1880s.

What governs our behavior today is not how we've been treated by others. Strangely enough, we do not respond to the way we've been treated, with backlash. Instead, we respond based on the law, the traditional law of our people. The traditional law teaches us that we not only have the responsibility to take care of everything that sustains us, the land, the water, the air, the other beings that live here, we not only have the opportunity to take care of ourselves in a good way and to take care of the Earth, but we have a responsibility to be generous. We have been hospitable, we have been trustworthy, we have operated in good faith for all of our history. And what is surprising is that other people haven't figured that out. The reason is because we're never leaving. We have never given up. We will never give up. And we have no intention of ever ending our lives in this place we call home.

One of the most important things I've learned working here at home is that there is no social stigma for being poor. However, there is great social stigma for being stingy, for withholding that from another that which they need. We have been treated by other governments and other agencies and other partners in a very stingy way sometimes. But it is not our response to reciprocate in that way.

Instead, what we try to do always is uphold the traditional law that says we have a responsibility to take care of that which was given to us originally, and nothing, no law, no court decision, will ever overturn that belief or that system as long as we continue in our lifeways to uphold that system and that law. People should understand there were no rights given to us in a treaty. The treaty was the opportunity for the United States to have our ceded lands. It was under duress that we ceded our lands and we reserved this homeland now called a reservation.

But what is in the treaty are reserved rights, retained rights, inherent rights, and with those rights come responsibilities. And we have never abrogated our responsibilities, and we will continue to defend our rights. We defend our right to have good health and well-being. We defend our right to have clean air and clean water for us and everything else that lives

here. We defend our culture. The assaults on our culture perhaps have been some of the most devastating impacts in history. Colonialism and the colonial mindset have been an assault on our culture for all of our period of contact starting two hundred and [sixteen] years ago, depending on which explorer we count.

Bobbie Conner [19:39] What I would like to say, in conclusion, is that I am enormously proud of our leaders. I am proud of our elected officials as well as spiritual leaders and community leaders because they are fierce, they are focused, they are deliberate, and the solutions that tribes are looking for with our partners and other entities are long-term. We are not interested in Band-Aids. We're interested in taking care of the planet forever. Our treaties were made in agreements in perpetuity, forever. We are not short-term thinkers and we are -- unfortunately for some people -- newsflash -- never letting go. We are not going to acquiesce. We are not going to take a back seat and we will not be silenced by people who come to us with hateful attitudes, with racist stereotypes, and we will not ever let go of the right to take care of ourselves.

I apologize to those of you who are having technical difficulties. I do hope that you can enjoy this conversation that we're having today through technology, through the recording if you have been unable to connect. I'm going to conclude my remarks there and turn it back to Lisa.

Lisa Watt [21:09] Thank you very much, Bobbie. Those are exactly the words we need to hear. All of us [need to] be reminded of those words every day. I want to jump back a little bit. I want to jump back first to 1855 and what the ancestors had to think about. Because here you are, a group of people that is facing this government that is intending to do harm. I'm assuming I think, I don't know this, but I'm assuming that there are many of the tribal people who could not read, who could not write, who could not speak English, and yet they were responsible for negotiating a future. Is that the dynamic that happened at the Treaty Council?

Bobbie Conner [22:04] I'm reluctant to characterize our people as victims in the Treaty Council deliberation. It was certainly a situation that was duress. It was coercive. However, I would suggest that a number of things were at play. In addition to the interpreters who were present during the day, our people were multilingual. We had begun speaking English as early as 1805 in the attempts to communicate with Lewis and Clark. The fort that was established in our homeland, the trading post, began in 1816. We had regular and routine contact, some people did, with non-Indian speaking citizens who were living in our area for almost 39 years, if you count that 1816 to 1855 timeline. We had the Whitman missionaries from 1836 to 1847, eleven years in our homeland. There had been young men who had been sent away to the Red River settlements in Canada for education. Two of whom died fairly early in their educational journeys but one of whom was able to come home and was learned. There was a Nez Perce headman, Timothy or Timuutsu, who was able to record a transcript of the proceedings at the Council, and I believe those transcriptions were created in Nez Perce. But those transcriptions are yet to be identified in the National Archives and Records system. I hope someday they are found. And so I would suggest to you that there were people who had varying degrees of comprehension of English.

The proceeding on our behalf took place in our languages. Our people spoke amongst themselves and to themselves. Headmen addressed their colleagues in their own languages. But what I would suggest to you is that there are many times when the U.S. treaty commissioners did not understand what was going on, and I would suggest that not

everything that happened in the Treaty Council was fully transcribed. The entire deliberation is probably not captured in the treaty transcription. But when I think about the men who sat at those councils, there were 36 X's on the Cayuse, Umatilla, Walla Walla and other bands of Indians living in southeastern Washington and northeastern Oregon, according to the treaty language. There were 36 X's representing those headmen, and I think they were thinking about multiple things.

We had already proposed, outside of the Treaty Council proceeding, going to war. If we could find allies in the council grounds, who would agree to go to war, there were so few non-Indian citizens at the time in this region, that we could have easily wiped them out and taken our country back. However, the consequence of the smallpox and measles pandemics that had already hit our people in the 1840s left us with very few Cayuse headmen in 1855. One estimate is maybe 50 men of childbearing age, not elders, not elderly men, who could go to war. And the consequence of that is that we were trying to come up with another solution. When the U.S. treaty commissioner said, 'We're not giving you any land in your homeland,' we were still proposing war outside of the council.

Once the opportunity to go to war was exhausted and we could find no allies to join us to make that an effective campaign, we then had to go back to the Treaty Council and make that our most effective weapon. And so the deliberation at the council grounds, the men who held out and said, 'Speak straight, talk straight. Tell us exactly what you mean. Show me what you mean. What are you asking me to do?' We were in rebuttal mode most of our time in council.

Most of the headmen who spoke on behalf of our people were asking the U.S. commissioners to tell us exactly what they were promising and exactly what they meant. And I will say to you that my study of the people who participated in the Treaty Council is that some of the principal parties were not very knowledgeable about our lands. And one of the unfortunate circumstances is that subsequent treaty participants in treaty councils, subsequent participants in the treaty surveys, and subsequent participants in the Indian claims commissions all had conflicts of interest and may not have been appropriate parties for those deliberations in many cases on the non-Indian side of the fence. So I would say to you, we knew we were dealing with people who were not trustworthy.

Lisa Watt [27:18] You know, by asking that question, it wasn't the intent to just focus on victimhood here. It just struck me, at 1855, what was really happening at that time? You know, how much was there an understanding of what was really happening back East as it was making its way West? But your demonstration of the complexity of those issues is very enlightening.

Bobbie Conner [27:48] So, Lisa, one of the things people should realize is that when first the Northwest Company and the Hudson's Bay Company, the fur trappers, came here, they came with French voyagers and [engages]. They came with mixed blood Algonquin peoples from perhaps your homeland and they came here already knowing what had happened to people in the East. They came here knowing what was happening to people north of the 49th parallel. They came here already seeing the consequence of colonization on the eastern seaboard, and when they came here, they warned us. Not only did the missionaries have their eyes on our country, they warned us that the people who were coming in the wagon trains had their eyes on our country. That is one of the reasons the Whitman missionaries were killed because they ran an aid station for the immigrants who were coming into our homeland. Those immigrants were not only bringing disease but were looking to take our country. The consequence of the missionaries focused not on our

education and not on ministering to us but to focusing on taking care of their own people, [which] was a shift that happened in the early 1840s. And by the time we killed the Whitman's in 1847, we were in desperate protection and defensive mode to take care of what we had left in terms of our health and well-being.

By the time the Territorial Provisional Government in 1850 hang five of our men in Oregon City, we knew that these people not only had their eyes on our country but were already beginning to encroach and squat in our country. We knew the headmen who went to Oregon City and brought the horses home and were not allowed to testify to the degree they had intended at the trial – the alleged trial – knew that this was a hostile environment for our people. And the consequence of killing the Whitmans is that there had been a two and a half year open hunting season on Indians all over Oregon. People were being hunted down and killed for no good reason at all, indiscriminately. So, we had already seen what these newcomers could do in their mode of vengeance. And the consequence for us was to try and keep peace, to keep our homeland as much as we could, intact as much of it as we could, and to protect our people from any further devastation. We had the wrath, the wrath had already been wrought upon our people by the time we walked into Treaty Council.

Lisa Watt [30:35] Thank you very much, Bobbie. We'll be back to you. I'd like to now introduce Ron Allen. Welcome, Ron. Welcome to the space.

Ron Allen [30:40] My apologies for being late. I had this international fisheries commitment I had to chair. It's just a busy life of an active tribal chairman.

Lisa Watt [31:04] Thank you and welcome, we're glad to see you.

Ron Allen [31:05] Thank you. My pleasure. I thought I'd give you my backdrop. This is Jamestown. This is our tribal campus. We get into the Christmas spirit, everybody. I kind of wondered what I should put behind me.

Well, listen, I really am very honored to be invited to this session and am very interested and intrigued by the four seminars that are lined up here by Ecotrust. So, where is Indian Country today and what's our future look like? I know that Bobbie gave a real good picture of the history of Indian Country from before the U.S. was a country and ratcheting forward over the mountaintops of today.

I will share that in recent months, through COVID, I found myself reading some literature that I didn't ever have time to read. One of them was *The Indian World of George Washington* and what was it like for the colonies going forward. What was it all about? Long story short, it's a fascinating read about Indian Country on the eastern seaboard from the Iroquois Confederacy all the way down to the Creeks, Chickasaws, Choctaws, the Catawbas, the Delawares, all the tribes that existed throughout the eastern coast. It was really all about the new society moving into America and it was about land. It was about power and land. The most important thing for me regarding my points is, they knew that the only way for America to move west and consume America was by negotiating with the tribes. As Bobbie probably pointed out, [tribes are] in the Constitution, they recognize that, [and] they negotiated treaties. There were treaties being [made] before America was negotiating treaties and so forth, with Spain and England and France, etc. All that stuff was going on.

Ron Allen [33:44] The most important thing is, as you ratchet forward into the 20th and 21st centuries and where my career started back in the 70s, in my observations of self-governance, self-determination, self-reliance movement, [is the transition of] moving out of the Snyder Act back in the thirties and the Indian Reorganization Act when America decided that termination and assimilation were not going to happen, even though it tried to re-emerge back in the Eisenhower era, if I can put it that way. My experience learning what I have learned as a small tribe that got recognized back in 1981 through the federal recognition process, our world has evolved at a very rapid rate. If you look at the tribes from the perspective of the way we were in our history as tribes that were surviving on basically subsistence and survival through the seasons. Now in the late 20th century and into the 21st century, the notion of the tribes as governments, as a governmental member of the American family of governments, we have to evolve and change at an amazing rate.

Yes, it's true that gaming has had a big impact in the late 80s and definitely as moving forward into the 21st century. One of the things that I have always tried to point out is our governments -- from large tribe to small tribe, large land base to small land base -- our status as governments has evolved in what I call, or what Kevin Gover used to call, the political legal infrastructure of tribes that function as government. My old buddy Joe DeLaCruz used to always say, "You guys keep saying you are government, but you don't act like government. You act like contractors. You act like guys who are still at the fort waiting for the blankets and the food to come out and feed you outside the fort." He would argue, don't do that anymore. So, we're not doing that anymore.

Ron Allen [36:03] We're developing our governmental infrastructure, the laws, the rules, and the regulations that manage our affairs. We're reacquiring our homelands. And, more importantly, we're expanding our economic arm of the tribes that is primarily our tax base, [growing] our independent revenue base. Yes, we always demand the federal government provide their obligations to [our revenue base], whether it's through treaties, moral and legal obligations, statutory obligation of the United States to Indian Country and the current five hundred seventy-four Indian nations in America that they have that obligation to.

And yes, we tap into the state governments and the resources that they can provide to the tribes. Some are more successful than others. But at the end of the day, they always have these governmental streams in terms of what they want you to do that is in their minds, our best interests. Tribes are so unique. I know I'm saying a lot of things that probably are obvious to everyone. We're unique, so the things that we need to do, what works in our backyard is different from tribe to tribe, even if you have clusters of tribes like we have here in the Puget Sound, where you have around 20 tribes throughout the Puget Sound area. But yet we do things a little differently.

Ron Allen [37:35] So that economic arm, which is a part of the political infrastructure, separating politics from business, is a big deal for us. But as a result of gaming and economic acumen and our capacity to be a good manager of governmental affairs and all the programs that serve our people, [it is] the business sector that generates revenue to provide better resources for the tribes.

I pause here to give you a sense of the magnitude of that responsibility. Right now, the federal government provides somewhere around \$28 to \$29 billion dollars through IHS, BIA, HUD, Transportation, Labor, and so forth that provide assistance for Indian Country. Twenty-eight, twenty-nine billion [dollars] annually. The needs of Indian Country are probably north of \$300 billion annually to try to catch up with mainstream America, to provide the kind of housing, elder assistance, cultural programs, educational programs, all

of the fundamental needs of our communities that we have an obligation to serve. So that's a huge bridge. Twenty-eight, twenty-nine billion [dollars] to three hundred billion [dollars] annually.

So how do you get there? It's about the tribal government developing these arms, developing their tax base, developing their business acumen to generate unrestricted revenue so that the revenue pie that serves our community grows but the slice that is federal or state is smaller. It grows too because the pie's getting bigger but you've become more self-reliant.

Ron Allen [39:18] Now, as we all move forward and get better, we understand Washington, DC, we understand our state capitals. We understand how the politics of local governments work. We are becoming more and more successful. Tribes are becoming the largest employers in our respective communities. All of a sudden, America cares about us. They care about what we think. They look at us as a panacea for the challenges and the needs of the community, everything from senior care to health care and so forth.

My example is in my backyard. I'm from a tribe of only about five hundred and fifty people in a very small, very rural community. We have a health care program. It didn't make sense for a clinic to just serve 500 people. We opened it up to the general public. We serve well over 17,000 people and turned our health care clinic into a business. We did what we're good at and we find it successful and the community loves us for that and we provide better services to our community.

We are thinking outside the circle. We don't do things inside a box because we're Indian. We do things outside the circle, a different way of thinking. We're creative and Indian Country always has been creative because we've always had to use limited resources to do a lot.

Ron Allen [40:47] So even as we continue to be more successful, we're always chasing the expectation and the desires of our community. That's okay, that's just a reality. All of our tribal leaders, our young tribal leaders coming on board, they need to learn that. So, one of the things that is important for these kinds of [leadership] processes is orientation so tribal leaders who are coming on board, young or older, understand the magnitude of what we have to do. Often, they may come on board and their agenda is about health care or natural resources or taking care of our elders or public safety for our women and children, and so forth. But when you come on board and realize that, as a government, we have a lot of responsibility. It's complicated.

Ron Allen [41:39] Our world today in the 21st century is like a multi-tiered chess game. At the local level is taking care of our people and dealing with the local things that's going on around it. Then you keep tiering up. You start dealing with state, local, and federal governments [and] international affairs that affect our interests. And then you deal with all the institutions that are out there that affect our interests and our rights and you have to track them somehow. You have to keep track of what's going on in the litigating branches at the local level, state level, and federal level. What's going on with the organizations that have an interest in our affairs? The National Governors Association, the National Conference of State Legislators, National Associations of Attorney Generals, Western Associations of Attorney Generals, and so forth. And then there's the National Association of Sheriffs, of County Officials and so forth. You want to know what they're doing and advocating [for] because they're politically active. We have to keep track of what they're

doing. The think tank organizations, the educational organizations that are studying us. You want to know what they're doing in terms of what they are studying about us.

So, if you are a tribal leader, now all of a sudden you come in and you think your interests are health care and education, I got news for you -- our world is much more complex than that. It's a good news/bad news kind of thing in terms of where we are today and the complexities of being a tribe and tribal government and being citizens -- not members -- citizens of our communities, and then change what we're doing. We don't have to be [seen as] the way they think of us in the past. We can have control over how they see us.

Ron Allen [43:20] Right now, we have the unbelievable experience that we never had in the past in terms of an administration that is embracing us. Yes, they're embracing us from the perspective of racial equality but we have to inform them, yes, we are a unique race in America as Indigenous people. We are the original race but we are also a political race and that standing is really important. It is how we secure set-asides for American Rescue Plan moneys, CARES money, transportation moneys and moneys like Build Back Better and so forth. When these initiatives happen, we want our fair share. There are all kinds of forums out there that we have to be active in and we have to have trust. And when emphasizing the trust, trust in our fellow leaders.

You know, somebody has got to be out there in the front lines and all these different battles of the war that we're in and nobody can cover everything. It is complicated. So, my a multi-tiered chess game, and if you had a PowerPoint presentation that showed you the complexity of our world, nobody can cover all those bases. It's overwhelming mentally just to even be able to hear the updates on it. You get overwhelmed by it but you have to have trust in those who are defending our rights in those different forums. So that's our world today and it's exciting. It's not where we were 40 or 50 years ago.

Ron Allen [45:21] Today, we're a player. We're at the table. Are we getting everything we want? No. But are we getting a whole lot more than what we did in the past? Yes. You've got to be able to measure where you were versus where you are and where you're going, and that's Indian Country today. That's my experience as one tribal leader who is quite active here in Washington state and in our region, the Northwest. Many of you know, I've been very active with NCAI. I'm on more boards and advisory committees than I want to admit, but you get active. That's what it is. My buddy Joe DeLaCruz at Quinault and Mel Tonasket [and Lucy Covington] from Colville Nation, Sam Cagey up at Lummi Nation, and Dee Pigsley down in Siletz, and other friends who would basically say to you, it's like a calling, you've got to go do it. Some of us kind of say, "okay, got it, I'm going to go do it" and we become road warriors. And there's a lot of us out there, crisscrossing.

I apologize if I went too long. I didn't check my clock but I hope that gives you a sense of what our Indian world is today and where I think we're going tomorrow.

Lisa Watt [46:43] Thank you very much, Ron. I knew our world was complex but the way you described it, it's even more than I thought, so thank you. Ron, what do you think is the biggest challenge facing Pacific Northwest tribal nations right now? And in the future?

Ron Allen [47:11] Well, interesting question. Going to my earlier point, we have lots and lots of needs. We in the Northwest care about salmon. We care about the environment, we care about the needs we have. I think that the biggest challenge is probably something you wouldn't think of. In my opinion, it's about patience and perspective. We are gaining ground. So sometimes we think that we have to have exactly what we want but if we make

meaningful and measurable steps in the right direction, then that is success. We have to be diligent and persistent because the issues that we have out there -- health care, health care capacity, educational opportunities, natural resources, public safety -- the list is long. But if you look at them, you have to be able to measure them. Are you making meaningful, measurable success? Patience and perspective. We are doing better.

You know, right now we've got a great administration and a federal government. That's great. Now tomorrow maybe we get another Trump and we feel like we're under attack again. So not to worry, we survived Trump and others that we thought were anti-Indian. We have to have confidence. So, I think that we want to be patient and keep everything in perspective and keep elevating the understanding of our tribal leaders on how we can move forward and how we can move forward together. Small tribe, big tribe, yes, we're all Indigenous people.

Lisa Watt [49:10] Thank you, Ron. We have a question from an Ecotrust Investments board member: Can Ron talk more about the size and scope of private equity and other conventional investment vehicles that are controlled by tribes?

Ron Allen [49:35] That's an interesting question. I hope I can answer the question right. When we talk about the economic arm and the economic goals of tribes and the political-legal infrastructure, in order to deal with the outside financial world, you have to give them confidence about the world they live in, the legal infrastructure that they live in that gives them the certainty and comfort to invest. Tribes have to rethink how they're moving forward. So, we've always viewed our sovereignty as our protective shield but our sovereignty is an authority that we control and you can control it surgically and under your control in your conditions. So, if you're going to do a project and you want an outside investor to come in and invest in you or on your reservation and they want to spend \$50 million, they want certainty that their investment is going to be protected. And so we have to have ways to entice them to make that investment [such as] limited waivers of sovereignty. That's one issue.

Then the other issue is, if you're not going after an investor, you're doing it on your own. Then, you have to secure the capital and that's the financial institutions that you want to deal with. Now you can deal with large banks if you've got a big project, 50, 100 million dollars, whatever. That's one thing. But if you have a small project and you only need a million or five million or whatever, you need to develop relationships with the local banks. They also loan and they know you. They live in your backyard, they've observed your certainty. What they look for is stability and certainty and assurances that their investment will be protected and they have confidence that they will invest with you. There are so many elements to economic expansion and exploitation, if I can put it that way, but that certainty and stability are critical to the outside world of Indian Country, outside of our rez and our trust lands, etc.

Lisa Watt [52:20] Thank you, Ron. Bobbie do you have anything to add?

Bobbie Conner [52:23] Well, things came up in the chat. I want to thank a couple of points that came up from people I know. One of which was about people who are not right now protected by treaties, and there are executive order reservations that are treaties. There are different ways that reservations were created. One of the things I wanted to point out is that during the treaty deliberations in the 1850s, and it starts much earlier on the eastern side of the United States, is that we were already factionalized. So, when you asked about the state of affairs, Lisa, in 1850, by 1850, we had already been familiarized

with the United Kingdom, the Queen's country. The oblate Jesuits were here who were more affiliated with the trappers and traders and more likely affiliated with the United Kingdom and the Protestant missionaries who came were all affiliated with the United States. And we had factions already formed before the Treaty Council of people who had had the influence of Christianity and those who had not succumbed to the influence of Christianity or had renounced it by then. And there were folks who were friendly to whites and not friendly to whites because our relationships with those missionaries, as well as with the trading post, were elective. They were not obligatory.

And so, we could take or leave these people who had already invaded our lands for the most part. The consequence of that is, it sheds some light on the fact that we did not have unanimous consent when we participated in the Treaty Council among all of the Plateau people that were representing the many bands and nations of the Yakama, the many bands and nations of the Nez Perce, as well as the many bands of the Cayuse, Umatilla, and Walla Walla. So we did not come with one heart and one mind. We came -- all of us -- struggling for the best possible solution.

The consequence, unfortunately, is that the Treaty did not stand for some of us. So, with the Nez Perce Nation, there was a subsequent treaty in 1863 and then in 1893, and over time there were people, including ancestors in my family, who became identified as non-treaty people. And the fact of the matter is, the treaties do not protect everyone who fall under our genealogy. And one of the most horrific facts of the U.S. treaty-making process was, they did not understand our kinship systems and our relationships, not only on the coast of Oregon, Washington, British Columbia, and Alaska being intermarried up and down the coast but in the interior [as well]. We're intermarried up and down the [Columbia] River because we have a cultural taboo: we don't marry close relatives.

So, when they established the reservation system, they were cutting us off from our relatives in some respects [which] had isolationist overlays. In addition, they wanted to protect those isolationist overlays in the late 19th century because they didn't want us to amass any power and go to war because they were certain they would be defeated. But more importantly, they created a political [structure] – Ron talked about the political legal structure – and what they taught us is to call each other 'them' and 'us'. They taught us to fight among ourselves when we had been one people. We shared languages, we shared our diet, we shared the traditional law. And the consequence is that the United States used divide and conquer tactics sometimes too successfully. We're still trying to overcome that in many of our inter-tribal relationships and projects.

Bobbie Conner [56:23] Secondly, there was a Land Back question [in the chat]. I would say to you, first, go to the Ecotrust Call to Action [for Indigenous Communities]. The Call to Action was fantastic. Before you think about encouraging someone to give land back to us, whether it's a church or a university or a private party, please be mindful of the condition of that land. It should be stewarded the way we would want it stewarded. The water, the wildlife, the air quality, and we don't want people giving us back their problems, liabilities that they've amassed over time. Companies included, whether it's corporate America, the churches of America, or internationally, we're not looking for more liabilities and more problems to manage, we have enough as it is.

So, if people are encouraged to give land back, please be mindful of which tribe you want to start a conversation with first. Go to the tribal government first and foremost and the tribe will assess whether or not they are in a position to take that responsibility because sometimes a gift is not a gift.

Lisa Watt [57:30] Thank you very much, Bobbie. Thank you. Ron. Thank you both very, very much. This has been a really wonderful and informative session. As we close, we hope that you'll consider supporting the work of these two Indigenous leaders and the organizations they lead or are affiliated with. For Bobbie, we hope that you'll consider supporting the Tamástslíkt Cultural Institute and the Nixyaawii Community Financial Services. For Ron, we hope you'll support the [Jamestown] Dungeness River Nature Center.

Lisa Watt [58:00] We would appreciate your feedback to this briefing today. A five-minute survey will be sent to you immediately following this gathering and we hope that you'll respond so that we can make this series the best that it can be.

Finally, the second briefing in the series will be on Wednesday, January 19th, 2022, entitled *Termination: The Attempt to Destroy and the Rebuilding of the Siletz Tribes*, with Siletz tribal elders and leaders Ed Ben and Bud Lane, where we will hear a firsthand account of what happened during termination and one tribe's efforts to rebuild itself to become a thriving, culturally centered community today.

Once again, we hope you are walking away with new understandings and insights into Indigenous leadership and the future of tribal nations in the Pacific Northwest. We hope to see you all on January 19th. Thank you.

CITATIONS:

Allen, W. Ron, *Negotiating a Future: Indigenous Leadership Through the Ages* for the Indigenous Leadership: Ensuring a Future for Native Peoples, Cultures, and Lands webinar series. Ecotrust Indigenous Leadership Program, December 15, 2021.
<https://vimeo.com/658779211>

Conner, Roberta, *Negotiating a Future: Indigenous Leadership Through the Ages* for the Indigenous Leadership: Ensuring a Future for Native Peoples, Cultures, and Lands webinar series. Ecotrust Indigenous Leadership Program, December 15, 2021.
<https://vimeo.com/658779211>

Ecotrust Indigenous Leadership Program, *Negotiating a Future: Indigenous Leadership Through the Ages* for the Indigenous Leadership: Ensuring a Future for Native Peoples, Cultures, and Lands webinar series. Ecotrust Indigenous Leadership Program, December 15, 2021.
<https://vimeo.com/658779211>