

Tribal Self-Governance Demonstration Project

SOVEREIGN NATIONS

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A large black and white photograph occupies the center of the page. It depicts an elderly woman with short, dark hair, wearing a dark jacket over a patterned garment and a necklace. She is standing in front of a rustic wooden structure, possibly a traditional house or a fence made of logs and branches. The background shows more of the structure and some foliage.

Self-Governance and the Elwha Dams
An Elder's Perspective

The Indian and the Constitution

If you were to sit in on a class regarding the development of the U.S. Constitution in a typical public school, what would you hear? Most likely, you would hear the students and the teacher talk about the founding fathers of the country – people like George Washington, Thomas Paine, Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson. This would certainly be fitting and appropriate. These were great men, whose words and actions were destined to change history. As evidenced by the quotation by Jefferson on page 3, many of their thoughts and words would seem to provide an endless voice in support of human rights and change.

But one thing you would be less than likely to hear being discussed in that classroom is that the Constitution these men crafted was actually fashioned after one that existed on this continent a thousand years before Columbus set sail.

Through the centuries, as the monarchs of various European countries were massing one army against another, the nations of the Iroquois Confederacy on this continent were engaged in democracy. The Iroquois Confederacy of the Six Nations

established the principles of freedom of speech and religion, the right of women to participate in government, separation of powers, checks and balances, initiative, recall and referendum in the area now known as the United States long before there was a United States. By the 17th Century, some 60 indigenous nations had become part of this Confederacy, which had been implemented by the Great Law of Peace, established while Europe was still in the "Dark Ages".

The founding fathers acknowledged the existence of the Confederacy. Benjamin Franklin was one of several colonial statesmen who studied and learned from it. He urged colonial governors to follow the example it set in establishing a union. In 1754, Franklin's recommendation resulted in the Albany Plan of Union, which unified Massachusetts Bay, New Hampshire, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia and South Carolina. It was a political twin of the Iroquois Confederacy, and it served as the primary model for the Articles of Confederation, which led in 1787 to the U.S. Constitution. In fact, the Great

Law of Peace and the traditional form of government of the Iroquois Confederacy still exists today.

Congress has continued to acknowledge the existence of the Confederacy, and the inspiration it provided to the development of the U.S. Constitution. Note the reprint of the Joint Resolution, passed by the 100th U.S. Congress, on this page.

Yet, even today, if you were to ask the students in that classroom studying the Constitution what they know about the Tribes, the response would probably seem like a replay of an old western movie.

Maybe there will be some semblance of justice in the portrayal of history in the classrooms of tomorrow. There does seem to be some progress in some places. But for now, let us resolve to let people know that when the Tribes reach out for Self-Governance, it is not without precedent.

The following Joint Resolution, passed by the 100th Congress, officially recognized the Tribal contribution to the development of the U.S. Constitution, as well as Tribal sovereignty and the U.S. trust responsibility to the Tribes.

The Congressional Perspective

Purpose: To Acknowledge the Contribution of the Iroquois Confederacy of Nations to the Development of the United States Constitution and to Reaffirm the Continuing Government-to-Government Relationship Between Indian Tribes and the United States Established in the Constitution.

Resolved by the Senate (the House of Representatives concurring), that:

Whereas, the original framers of the Constitution, including most notably, George Washington and Benjamin Franklin, are known to have greatly admired the concepts, principles and governmental practices of the Six Nations of the Iroquois Confederacy; and,

Whereas, the Confederation of the original thirteen colonies into one Republic was explicitly modeled upon the Iroquois Confederacy as were many of the democratic principles which were incorporated into the Constitution itself; and,

Whereas, since the formation of the United States, the Congress has recognized the sovereign status of Indian Tribes, and has, through the exercise of powers reserved to the Federal Government in the Commerce Clause of the Constitution (art.I, s8, cl.3), dealt with Indian Tribes on a government-to-government basis and has, through the Treaty Clause (art.II, s2, cl.2), en-

tered into 370 treaties with Indian tribal nations; and,

Whereas, from the first treaty entered into with an Indian nation, the Treaty with the Delaware Indians of September 17, 1778, and thereafter in every Indian Treaty until the cessation of treaty-making in 1871, the Congress has assumed a trust responsibility and obligation to Indian Tribes and their members to "exercise the utmost good faith in dealings with the Indians" as provided for in the Northwest Ordinance of 1787, (1 Stat. 50); and,

Whereas, Congress has consistently reaffirmed these fundamental policies over the past 200 years through legislation specifically designed to honor this special relationship; and,

Whereas, the judicial system of the United States has consistently recognized and reaffirmed this special relationship;

Now, therefore be it Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States in Congress assembled, that:

(1) The Congress, on the occasion of the 200th Anniversary of the signing of the United States Constitution, acknowledges the historical debt which this Republic of the United States of America owes to the Iroquois Confederacy and other Indian Nations for their demonstration of

enlightened, democratic principles of government and their example of a free association of independent Indian Nations;

(2) The Congress also hereby reaffirms the constitutionally recognized government-to-government relationship with Indian Tribes which has historically been the cornerstone of this nation's official Indian policy;

(3) The Congress specifically acknowledges and reaffirms the trust responsibility and obligation of the United States Government to Indian Tribes, including Alaska Natives, for their preservation, protection and enhancement, including the provision of health, education, social and economic assistance programs as necessary, to assist Tribes to perform their governmental responsibility to provide for the social and economic well-being of their members and to preserve tribal cultural identity and heritage; and

(4) The Congress also acknowledges the need to exercise the utmost good faith in upholding its treaties with the various Tribes, as the Tribes understand them to be, and the duty of a great nation to uphold its legal and moral obligations for the benefit of all of its citizens so that they and their posterity may also continue to enjoy the rights they have enshrined in the United States Constitution for time immemorial.

IHS Inclusion Supported

Committees of the U.S. Senate and the House of Representatives have voiced support for inclusion of Indian Health Service programs in the Self-Governance process.

Following is the text of the report on this issue recently published in the Congressional Calendar by U.S. Senator Daniel K. Inouye, Chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Indian Affairs. With a few minor exceptions, the language is the same as that reported by U.S. Representative George Miller, Chairman of the House Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs. Full Senate and House action is expected in the current Congress.

Tribal Self-Governance Project

In 1987, the Congress considered, as part of the amendments to Public Law 93-638, the Indian Self-Determination Act, the Congress authorized the Self-Governance Project under Title III of Public Law 100-472. The Self-Governance Project allows participating tribal governments to enter into an annual funding agreement with the Secretary of the Interior to plan, consolidate, and administer programs, services, and functions administered by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Thirty tribal governments are currently authorized to participate in the project.

The Committee is persuaded that many of these tribal governments are now ready to expand their Self-Governance programs to include programs, services and functions of the Indian Health Service. For example, the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe Indians, has experienced great on-reservation economic and population growth in recent years that has critically overburdened its IHS on-reservation clinic and strained the tribal government's capacity to deliver essential health care and rural ambulance services. When Mille Lacs has requested increases in IHS funding to meet this new need, the IHS has claimed an inability to respond because the new need does not show up on the IHS historical needs-based formula. Such a situation is ready-made for the planning and administrative flexibility of a tribal self-governance health program in which a tribal government like Mille Lacs is

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SOVEREIGN NATIONS

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Self-Governance is a tribally driven initiative intended to provide tribal governments more control over their own destinies. The project fosters the shaping of a "new partnership" between tribal governments and the government of the United States. We believe that excellence in related communication and education is fundamental to the achievement of these goals.

Note to contributors/editors:

We encourage your input, but cannot guarantee acceptance due to time and space constraints inherent in the publication of this newsletter.

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A Memorial to Thomas Jefferson

Like the words of many of the "founding fathers" of the United States, those of Thomas Jefferson still ring true today. The following Jefferson quotation, etched in the marble walls of the Jefferson Memorial in Washington, D.C., seems particularly relevant in view of the changing relationship between the U.S. and the Tribes.

"I am not an advocate for frequent changes in laws and constitutions, but laws and constitutions must go hand in hand with the progress of the human mind. As that becomes more developed, more enlightened, as new discoveries are made, new truths discovered and manners and opinions change, with the change of circumstances, institutions must advance also to keep pace with the times. We might as well require a man to wear still the coat which fitted him when a boy as civilized society to remain ever under the regimen of their barbarous ancestors."

(IHS Inclusion continued from page 3)

authorized to obtain planning funds and to negotiate for its fair share of IHS agency-wide resources to meet its modern needs.

The Committee Amendment now authorizes the tribal governments participating in the Self-Governance Project to plan, consolidate, redesign and administer programs, activities, services, and functions administered by the Indian Health Service pursuant to an annual funding agreement with the Secretary of Health and Human Services. Funds for annual funding agreements are allocated out of all of the funds available to the Indian Health Service and are provided to a tribal government on the basis of what the particular tribe would have received in funds and services in the absence of the annual funding agreement.

The Committee expects the same level of commitment and support from the Secretary of Health and Human Services and the Director of the IHS that has been demonstrated by the Secretary of the Interior and the Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs.

The Committee Amendment directs the Secretary of Health and Human Services to make planning and negotiation grants to participating tribal governments. The Committee is aware of the negotiations between several tribal participants and the Indian Health Service for the development of self-governance compacts. The Committee strongly supports the establishment of an Office of Self-Governance in the Indian Health Service in order to facilitate the development of the research and data necessary to the development of self-governance compacts. The Committee expects the same level of commitment and support from the Secretary of Health and Human Services and the Director of the IHS that has been demonstrated by the Secretary of the Interior and the Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs. Successful completion of at least one year of planning under a planning grant is a condition precedent for each of the thirty participating tribal governments in order to enter into compact negotiations with the Indian Health Service. Successful completion of a planning process will help ensure that the framework necessary for a tribal government to negotiate a self-governance compact is in place. The Committee believes that planning grants are essential for tribal governments to undertake the internal governmental planning, the budgetary and legal research, necessary for the self-governance negotiation process. The Committee views the planning process as a crucial prerequisite to successful project participation. The Committee expects the Indian Health Service to expeditiously process these grants so as not to adversely impact or unnecessarily delay the negotiation process.

Finally, the Committee notes that the Indian Health Service and the Secretary should seek to allow the Self-Governance Demonstration Project its fullest and broadest implementation. If there is a question as to whether a particular activity, program, service, or function is eligible for inclusion in the project it shall be resolved in favor of inclusion. The Committee intends this section to be interpreted by the Department in a way that facilitates the inclusion of a program or activity in the project and effectuates the full implementation of the project.

The Committee Amendment includes a new section which provides for a waiver of the Paperwork Reduction Act in carrying out any study or survey authorized or required under the Indian Health Care Improvement Act.



I Look At My Children...

I look at my children
And can't help but think,
About the days that await them
In our ancestral link.

Will theirs be a future of peace and esteem?
Will it be happy? Will it be sad?
Will it bring goodness
Intermixed with the bad?

Will it bring pride
In the people we are?
Or will it bring fear
And false shame from afar?

I think of my children
And of what is to be,
And I know what I want,
I want them to be free.

Free to be Indian,
Free to express
The people we are,
In our speech and dress.

Free to take pride
In our land and our sky,
Free to live long
And to comfortably die.

Freedom to worship
The Creator we know,
And freedom to decide
Where we come and we go.

When I think of these things
I know first and last,
That the key to our freedom
Extends from our past.

So I look toward tomorrow
And the answer is here;
It exists in the lessons
Our ancestors held dear.

From these we gain strength,
And the power to see,
We must be Indian
...Everlastingly.

Lower Elwha Wins a Long-Fought Battle

Editor's Note: Often in the past, Tribes have had to take lonely stands in their struggle to survive. A case in point is the stand that has long been taken by the Lower Elwha S'Klallam Tribe, in favor of removing two dams on the Lower Elwha River, which were illegally built without fish passages or permits decades ago. Tribal members and their representatives have spearheaded the effort for many years, often standing alone. But their persistence paid off. Over time, the Tribe successfully enlisted the support of government agencies, Congressional representatives, environmental and fishing organizations and other Tribes and Indian organizations. Late last year, Congress passed legislation authorizing feasibility studies, and the possible removal of the dams. The actual task of restoring the great Elwha fish run is monumental, but so was the passage of the legislation. It seems more than a coincidence that the Lower Elwha Tribe is the newest Self-Government Demonstration Project Compact Tribe. Tribal officials see the increased self-determination and resources Self-Governance will provide as essential to the challenges ahead. The specifics of the budgeting process remain to be seen, but participation in Self-Governance will clearly increase both the level of funding and management responsibilities for the Tribe. The following articles present some of the views of Elwha S'Klallam Tribal members on Self-Governance, restoration of the Elwha River, and the future.

An Elder's Perspective

"I have seen the water rippling with giant fish, from one side of the river to the other," reflected Beatrice Charles, elder of the Lower Elwha S'Klallam Tribe of western Washington. 'Aunt Bea', as her fellow tribal members affectionately call her, served as star witness in a recent Congressional hearing which helped lead to federal legislation authorizing studies for either alternative fish passages or the removal of the two dams on the Lower Elwha River. "I know what it's like to have a lot of fish," she said.

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"Aunt Bea"



The days of the Lower Elwha Dam and the Glines Canyon Dam (above) are likely numbered, thanks to the tenacious efforts of the Lower Elwha S'Klallam Tribe.

What Self-Governance Means to Lower Elwha

Elk was always picking on smaller creatures, when one day Wren flew into Elk's nostril. Elk cried for Wren to please get out. But Wren wouldn't leave until Elk promised to stop bullying the younger animals.

This brief Indian legend, and others like it, are used to convey a lesson to the children of the Elwha Tribe, through its cultural education program. The lesson here obviously is for big kids not to bully smaller kids. Other such lessons involve everything from getting a good education to staying away from drugs and alcohol.

"S'Klallam means 'strong people'," said Jamie Valadez, cultural coordinator for the Elwha Tribe. "I want the children of the Tribe to know this, and to feel good about who they are."

She explains that this type of strength, which is being taught in the Tribe's Cultural Education Program, is the strength that will produce strong and productive Tribal citizens. The program uses such tools as arts and crafts instruction, the conveyance of legends through plays and story telling, sports and recreation and preventative education and field trips to teach the children of the Tribe about their heritage.

"It is working well with the kids we have, which is about 10 to 20 percent of the 150 kids who belong to the Tribe," she said. "But we need to accommodate more kids, year 'round, with reliable transportation."

Jamie looks forward to a day when more and more S'Klallam children will be able to write their own language, as well as sing and dance to traditional songs. "Not too long ago, a

Klallam band in Victoria, Canada, gave us back a traditional song. We need to have the wherewithal to learn from one another this way...whether we're learning arts from the teachers of another Tribe, or being enlightened to our own history by our own elders. We've got to get back into good memories about our Tribe, and we need to do it in a big way."

Jamie is already preparing program justifications for Tribal Council review in implementing Self-Governance at Lower Elwha. Tribal Council Member Alfred Charles sees the day when the leader of each of the departments in Elwha's Tribal Government will be able to write justifications for their annual budgets, and thus be individually responsible for supporting the professionalism of the Tribal governmental process. "This will not only save us work," he said. "It will increase our efficiency and enhance the skills of each department head."

Budgeting at the Tribe, like most, has historically been a centralized process. But program managers are now being trained to manage their own programs, and the process is thus being decentralized. The Council will now be able to devote more time to the consideration of specific budget requests that will come hand-in-hand with researched justification.

Charles credits Self-Governance for improving the Tribe's opportunities to increase efficiency, and he sees improved government-to-government relations between the Elwha Council and local, state and federal levels of

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(Self-Governance continued from page 5)

non-Indian government as a resulting benefit.

"We're already seeing this happen," he said. "Local city and county governments are listening to us like they never have before. They are far more open-minded to Indian problems and rights, and we are able to help them better understand Indian ways."

He said this improved relationship is especially important with the growth of the Tribe's economic base. "I've had to watch the fish runs in our river die over the years," he said. "But as we were able to show non-Indian agencies and organizations that we are serious about improving management of the river, and we're not out to get rid of them, they came out of the woodwork to support us. It has been amazing."

He said you would be hard-pressed to find a smokehouse full of salmon on the Reservation these days, but that, with the cooperation of government at all levels, he is now confident the day of full smokehouses will return. "Hopefully it will be in my lifetime," he said. "If not, that's alright. At least our future generations will benefit."

Patty Elofson, Lower Elwha Business Manager, said the likely removal of the dams will increase the Tribe's law enforcement responsibilities, as more houses will be built on the Reservation and as the Tribe's responsibilities in flooding and dam safety issues increase. She said that with increased revenues made available by the Self-Governance process, the Tribe has already been able to negotiate the hiring of an additional police officer. Also, one additional FTE has

already been secured for the Tribe's social services program.

She said the Tribe stands to gain another 1,000 acres of trust property, in the Lake Aldwell area, as the waters recede following removal of the dams. Tribal planners are already working on plans to assure the highest and best use of these lands, with the intention of managing it in a way that will complement the bordering Olympic National Park.

"We're going to be needing land for housing development, too," she said. "We already have approval to build 44 more houses for Tribal members. And we're going to be needing from 75 to 100 more. We're also looking into a resort area purchase, and other investments in tourism."

"It is time for us to roll up our sleeves and really go to work," said Carla Elofson, Tribal Chair and Self-Governance Coordinator. "Self-Governance will be a reality here. We want it to succeed. It will mean more vocational training, along with cultural education for our children and our adult Tribal members." One of the objectives of the Tribe is to maximize the number of Tribal members who are employed by the Tribe. Already, more than 60 percent of the employees are Tribal members or spouses. "Self-Governance will mean a lot to our cultural program, our social programs, employment and our economic development," she said.

"We have recently signed a Gaming Compact, had a River Restoration bill pass, and now have signed a Self-Governance Compact. Our Tribe has made remarkable progress this last year," she said.



Carla Elofson

Swinomish Tribe Moves Toward Self-Governance...Cautiously and Deliberately

Robert Joe, Sr., (WaWalton - or Soaring Eagle), Chairman of the Swinomish Tribe in western Washington, is a cautious man when it comes to the welfare of his Tribal members.

When the Swinomish Tribe decided to become part of the Self-Governance process, it used a somewhat novel approach by using a Self-Determination planning grant, then applying for a Self-Governance negotiations grant. Chairman Joe emphasizes that the Tribe is limiting the application of the process, and is making every effort to ensure that the Tribal Government can return to Self-Determination contracting through the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) with these programs, if need be.

"I can see where the Self-Governance program will help us achieve greater self-efficiency in governing our Tribe, if we proceed carefully. But we're trying to look ahead with this thing. Overall, I think the BIA has done a credible job of representing the interests of the Tribes over the years, and I don't want us to limit our options for the future. If we need to revert to the Bureau for help with our Tribal programs again, I want that option to be there. I want to avoid loose ends, keep our purpose in sharp focus and assure accountability."

To Joe, the purpose of Tribal government is

clear - to serve the overall interest of Tribal members, to provide the best possible opportunity to get good education, and to encourage the greatest possible diversification in economic development.

Through the years, the Swinomish Tribe has made great strides in these areas. The Tribal Council has strongly supported education at all levels, from pre-school to college and vocational training. In its economic development program, it has ventured into leasing programs of various kinds, ranging from recreational vehicle camping facilities and housing to a fish plant, a restaurant and a log storage area.

The Tribe's unemployment rate over the past several years has dropped from more than 50 percent to less than 25 percent.

Robert Joe is a strong advocate of economic planning. "I always want us to be in the process of implementing new employment and self-employment opportunities. Whether our Tribal members are fishing or dealing cards in our casino, everybody can get excited about something, and if we keep broadening the choices, the odds are better for each of them to find out what that something is. It's those 'magic moments' in life, such as when one of our people discovers the career that helps put them on the road to success, that keep me motivated as their

Chairman."

Such motivation has led the Swinomish Tribe to significant achievement in government-to-government relations in recent years. The Tribe was an active participant in the development of the Centennial Accord, which established a formal government-to-government relationship with the state of Washington in 1989. It has established a similar relationship with nearby Skagit County and it recognizes the need to develop the best possible government-to-government relationship with the federal government.

Reason enough to venture, however cautiously, into the Self-Governance Demonstration Project.



"Just as a strong net is woven a strand at a time, a Tribe must proceed cautiously, a step at a time, in changing the way it deals with the federal government."

- Robert Joe Sr., Swinomish Chairman

The TCC Challenge – Self-Governance Adds a New Wrinkle

How's this for a challenge?

Coordinate the implementation of Self-Governance programming for about 11,000 Tribal members at 41 Tribes, in a region of 235,000 square miles...in the rugged interior of Alaska? Only nine of the Tribes are accessible by road, and the airfare to some of them exceeds the cost of a trip to Hawaii.

Challenges just don't seem to come in small packages in that part of the country, but such is the challenge being tackled head on by the Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC), based in Fairbanks. It's not really a totally new challenge, because TCC has operated for decades, primarily coordinating Indian Health Service (IHS) programs for its member Tribes.



Peter John of Minto, Alaska, traditional chief of the Tanana Chiefs Conference.

The TCC was initially formed in 1915 to press for the land claims of the Tribes. It eventually grew to be an organization of, by and for the member Tribes, concerned with delivering a wide range of services to Tribes and Tribal members, as well as serving as a unified advocate for their positions and their needs.

But Self-Governance has added a new wrinkle because it, by definition, requires that the Tribes all develop an efficient administrative capacity. And, with the Tribal villages ranging in population from 11 to 900 people, and with economic, language and cultural diversity casting a similar span, the order is a tall one. Top of the heap of specific challenges is communication. The ability to disperse and receive current information quickly is a must in self-governance.

"We do face some tough challenges," said TCC President Will Mayo. "But they're outweighed by the benefits we hope to obtain for the Tribes."

"Thank God for fax machines," Mayo added. The advent of fax machines and computers has already meant a great deal to efficient communications in the region, although many of the Tribes are just now acquiring them for the first time.

Still, there is sometimes just no substitute for personal visits in such an operation, and so the travel plans being made by Mayo and his staff are somewhat hectic for the next several weeks. Each and every Tribe will be visited in the effort to implement the Self-Governance process.

"We hope to complete the full Self-Governance Compact negotiations process in the first quarter of 1993," Mayo said.

"Many of the member villages are seeking enhancement of their Tribal government capacities," said Ed Rutledge, TCC's director of planning and development. "I see the development of efficient administrative processes as one of the primary benefits to the Tribes in this effort."

TCC wants to provide a full compilation of services to all its member Tribes, ranging from health and human services to natural resource management and economic development support.

TCC has concentrated much of its developmental effort on health services in the past, establishing a central health center and vision

and dental clinics in Fairbanks, as well as health clinics at most of the Tribal villages. Obviously, the organization's main source of funding in the past has been the IHS.

"I think those services will be positively impacted by Self-Governance," said Rutledge. "Good health programs are of obvious importance. But it is high time for the Tribes, themselves, to have more say in how those and all other programs affecting them are operated. That's what this process is all about."

"We still have a long way to go," Rutledge continued. "Most of these Tribes still have 90 percent unemployment rates. There are incredible needs for improvement in economic development, as well as every other facet of life."

In addition to its base operation in Fairbanks, TCC serves its 41 member Tribes through subregional offices in the communities of Holy Cross, Tok, McGrath, Galena and Fort Yukon, as well as Fairbanks. The major watersheds that comprise the region are the Yukon, Koyukuk, Tanana and Kuskokwim rivers. Across the region are found a diversity of Native cultures and language dialects. In the midst of the diversity, a common thread is the fact that these are rural Tribes, heavily dependent on traditional subsistence lifestyles. A shared concern of the Tribes is the constant battle to protect their subsistence rights in the face of challenges ranging from sport hunting interests to extreme preservationists.



The Conference region covers an area equal to about 37 percent of the State of Alaska, and is substantially larger than the State of Texas.

"The cultural diversity of the region points to a real need for Self-Governance," said Rutledge. "The Tribes need to be able to find common ground where they can negotiate solutions to their problems and be able to represent their own Tribal interests in the process. Self-Governance will help them develop the administrative ability to do so. The process should also aid in the development of improved government-to-government relations between the Tribes and the state and federal governments."

Mayo hopes Tribes will be able to take more action on whatever their individual Tribal priorities are, such as economic development, support for elders, cultural preservation, or youth programs. "Whatever direction things go, the Tribes will make the decisions," Mayo said. "Maybe they will choose to continue their participation in regional programming through TCC. Maybe they won't. For now, our course is clear. We have to do all we can to communicate the opportunities and options available to the Tribes, and help them develop the administrative abilities to make the best possible decisions for their own Tribal well-being."

Elwha (continued from page 5)

Aunt Bea, 73, likes to talk about the days when the giant fish still came to the river. The Elwha, with headwaters in what is today the Olympic National Park, begins high in the majestic snow-capped mountains of the Olympic Peninsula and empties into the Strait of Juan de Fuca, an ocean borderline between the United States and Canada. As Aunt Bea will tell you, the runs of 100-pound-plus salmon have provided a major source of food, trade and culture for the S'Klallam people for thousands of generations.

"I remember when the fish were bigger than I was," said Aunt Bea. "Now where are they?"

She reminisces about her life on the river, sometimes eating salmon three times a day, and holding big feasts and ceremonies celebrating the great fish. Then she remembers that year-by-year, following the construction of the Elwha and Glines Canyon Dams, the fish became fewer and fewer, eventually all but disappearing.

"We were deprived of our culture...and of our food that the Creator put here for us to use. We were deprived of our very means of existence," she said.

It was never easy for representatives of the Tribe to make this stand. "Year after year, our voices were not heard," said Aunt Bea. "Nobody ever listened...until now."

And now, finally, it seems the proverbial dam has broken, and the dams on the Elwha River are soon to be history. Restoring the salmon promises to be a very tough, time-consuming task. But if the tenacity and steadfastness shown by the Tribe to date is any



indication, there is genuine hope.

As for Aunt Bea, she has already tackled restoration of the Tribe's culture. Just as the gradual diminishment of the salmon run led to the demise of this culture, so hopefully will the restoration of the salmon run come hand-in-hand with a resurgence of the Tribe's language and traditional custom.

She, and her aunt, Adeline Smith, are busily teaching the S'Klallam language to the children of the Tribe. They realize that times have changed, and people have changed, and that things will never be what they once were. But, they also realize that increased knowledge of the Tribe's past will correspondingly strengthen the self-esteem and positive identity of its people.

Aunt Bea was six years old when last she spoke the S'Klallam language in day-to-day conversation.

"That's a long time ago," she said. "But it's

slowly coming back."

In addition to cultural education for Tribal members, she says she hopes the Tribe will be able to invest more in the development of a cultural center to help convey traditional knowledge, and accurate history to the outside community. "It aggravates me that non-Indian people are so poorly informed about us," she said. "I have even heard some say there were no Indians here in this area. I beg to differ with them. I was here, and so were my people. They took all the best from us. But we were here before them."

Asked what she considers the most important single objective in restoring the strength and pride of the indigenous people of the Elwha watershed, she promptly replied, "restoring the salmon."

"I may not live to see it," she said. "But I hope our efforts today will help my grandchildren, and their children, to see it. The Elwha salmon run is the identity of the Elwha people."

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