

THE SALMON, WATER and TRIBAL SURVIVAL

(simplified version - approx. 12 min.)

(MUSIC begins and goes under)

In the past, it was the salmon who sustained and nurtured the tribal way of life. The salmon was revered as more than food. To the salmon were offered prayers like this one:

Welcome, Friend Swimmer.

We have met in good health.

Welcome, Supernatural One.

You, Long life maker.

For you come to set me right again.

As is always done by you.

Now pray take my sickness

and take it back to your rich country

At the other side of the world.

(MUSIC ENDS)

By taking a closer look at the salmon's current struggle to survive as a species, we shall see how politics can shape the future of both the salmon and the Indian tribal way of life.

It is a story about conflict. About the struggle against overwhelming odds. About common sense and the will to survive.

It is the story about the environment...

the streams....forests....and lands of the beautiful Pacific Northwest.

(PAUSE) (MUSIC ENDS)

It is the story of tribal survival
in the modern world.

We could begin our story in the courts,
where so many Indian battles have been fought....

In a recent fishing controversy where emotion
filled headlines captured the attention of an
easily misled public....

(PAUSE)

But first, let us examine the life cycle of
the salmon itself. To the salmon, the influences
of modern man and industrial society have increased
the hazards encountered in the migrations from
spawning grounds to the ocean and back again.
The sources of many of the the salmon's native
streams are on tribal lands. Just as the salmon's
life cycle has been disturbed, tribes have
encountered strong resistance to the exercise of
tribal government authority.

(PAUSE)

The construction of dams for hydro-power,
irrigation, flood control and transportation has
collectively eliminated more than half of the spawning
and rearing grounds. So many salmon have been
destroyed over the past few years, every major salmon
run originating in the Upper Columbia River Basin
is now being considered for classification as
endangered species....

Equally potent threats to the survival of the salmon are visible along the salmon's migratory path. Logging operations, industrial development and growing numbers of ocean fishermen have left their toll on the salmon's numbers. But it is not the struggle of fish against the forces of man which concerns us here. It is the struggle of man against man to dominate the lifeblood of the salmon--WATER. This struggle is a political and economic one. Powerful federal, state and private industry interests are continually jockeying for control of the precious water resource. Indian tribes must assert their right to a voice in these matters. It is perhaps not coincidental that it is the battle to control water which has destroyed salmon runs and threatens the traditional economies of Indian tribes in the Pacific Northwest.

Agriculture, power companies, industry and municipal interests compete against each other to use water for their own purposes. Even a superficial look at the tug-of-war for water control shows that the salmon has been sacrificed to provide water for irrigation and power. Tribes must learn to compete with these external threats to the salmon. For as the salmon loses, so does the tribe.

It is easy to see that the struggle to protect the water and salmon is a political one.

But it is perhaps not so easy to see how the politics of water and fish can directly influence the future of the tribal way of life.

(PAUSE)

Let's take a closer look at the politics of fish and water. There is a continual jockeying for authority to regulate these vital natural resources. Federal, state, tribal and international agencies have assumed jurisdiction over various aspects of the water ways and the fish that inhabit them. In many cases, these regulatory powers are overlapping and it is yet undecided who really can do the best job of regulating these resources.

So what happens?

State and federal legislative bodies have enacted laws and created over fifty agencies to regulate and advocate the use of waters in the Northwest. The efforts of these governments to EXPAND their authority has forced Indian tribes to take a back seat in the American political system. Unless tribes act SOON to broaden their influence and authority in these areas, the tribal way of life itself may be going the way of the salmon. All tribes in the Northwest must act together to protect tribal interests.

This means that tribes must study the ways of intergovernmental politics and use the support of

Indian peoples and friends to guarantee a tribal way of life for future generations.

Now we will take a closer look at the Northwest Congressional delegations. It is here that the power of federal politics can be clearly seen. The influences of these men on committees of the U.S. House and Senate cannot be underestimated. Their power is most obvious in the committee assignments where the primary processes of Congress occur. The Northwest Delegations are strongly alligned to exert a great deal of control over natural resources and Indian affairs.

(PAUSE)

The little hammers in this chart represent committee chairmanships. In the Senate, the delegation controls the committees on Appropriations, Energy & Natural Resources, Foreign Relations and Indian Affairs.

In the House, they chair committees on Ways and Means, Taxation and Agriculture....while maintaining strong representation on Interior and Insular Affairs, Merchant Marine and Fisheries committees. In addition, because of the influence the delegations wield in areas such as foreign affairs and national defense, it has a great deal of leverage with colleagues and the President.

(PAUSE)

To get a clear picture of how the threads of political power extend into other areas of our life, we might look at the associations of the two senior members of the Northwest Delegations. For instance, individuals associated with Senator Henry Jackson now dominate Indian Affairs, the Bonneville Power Administration, the Seattle Office of the U.S. Attorney, regional offices of the Economic Development Administration and Department of Health, Education and Welfare. Former members of Senator Warren Magnuson's staff chair Trade & Maritime commissions and occupy important positions within the Department of Commerce, National Park Service and the Bureau of Reclamation.

Such ties are important to recognize...for while laws and policies may be developed through public processes...they are carried out and interpreted through administrative actions and agencies. All of these administrative authorities exercise enormous power over the lives of tribes, their water and fish. It is no accident that senators and congressmen have sought to weaken Indian control and diminish the Indian resource base. The dangers of the Northwest Delegation should now be perfectly clear...

One way or another, Indian tribes must find ways to influence the political process and deal with the presence of these political powers. As allies, the

support of the Northwest Delegation could be invaluable. As enemies, their power could be devastating.

To remind ourselves how these processes have left out Indian tribes in the past, we must look again to our friend the salmon.

If you look closely at this flowchart of fish and environment policy-making, you will see that something important is missing....the TRIBE.

(PAUSE)

In a changed version of the same chart, tribal governments and their constituencies have taken their place in the political system which has been dominated for generations by federal and state governments. Unfortunately, such a place for tribes is not assured by either public support or federal laws. To the contrary, tribes have been virtually left out of the decisions which affect the lives of Indian peoples. All too often, tribes have relied on the courts to maintain the rights of the tribe. We can no longer afford to subject each and every matter to the scrutiny of the courts. This is because court decisions often provide only victories over narrow legal questions while leaving the broader issues unsettled.

So what do we do next?

The answer is no so complicated as it seems.

First, Indian tribal governments must recognize their strength and build upon it. This means working together to make tribal government work for the tribal people.

This map shows tribal lands and should serve to remind us of the great wealth and resources being constantly sought after by political and business interests. Vast timber stands, large coal fields and rich agricultural lands lie within the boundaries of Indian reservations. Individual tribal citizens must recognize the importance of political activity and actively support the tribal leaders in their efforts to preserve and protect the tribal way of life.

(MUSIC begins)

(MUSIC under)

As Indian people, we must work together against those who would destroy our way of life. We must join with other tribal governments to create a showing of collective strength which will force state and federal policy-makers to listen to our side of the story.

Indian tribes must strengthen the political basis of support both on and off the reservation. This

means a day-by-day effort to preserve the tribal way of life. It means listening to the people and working for them in the arena of American politics.

Tribal people must stand united in the face of these political realities. Together, Indian peoples can carve a permanent place for tribal governments in the American political landscape. The future of our children and our children's children depends on us.

(MUSIC)

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