



NEWSLETTER:  
February 2023

[www.methowvalleyinterpretivecenter.com](http://www.methowvalleyinterpretivecenter.com)

FOSTERING AWARENESS AND UNDERSTANDING OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLE, GEOLOGY, AND NATURAL HISTORY OF THE METHOW VALLEY AND BEYOND!

Hello Everyone!

We are at the point of our seasonal turning where we are between Winter Solstice and Spring Equinox. It is still cold and snowy, but days are getting longer and the sun feels stronger.

I feel the stirrings of spring within and I wonder if the marmots and bears feel that too. Some say that this is a time of year when something deep within begins to stir and that it's a great time to set intentions in motion, quietly, slowly and deeply. Seeds within seeds.

I think of the subtly sweet sap beginning to flow in maple trees in my ancestral home in upstate New York, and my dad tapping, gathering, boiling, filtering and bottling syrup these days. The sweet reward of subtle relationship; of noticing the seeds within seeds and the stirrings within trees. I too feel a subtle increase in energy that wasn't in me just a month ago. I wake up a little bit easier and stay up a bit longer. I'm thinking a lot about what it is that is stirring and awakening within me.

What stirs within you these days?

Of all the work that MVIC does, what do you notice and appreciate the most?

In all sincerity, I'd love to hear from you!

Keep connecting,

*David LaFever, Executive Director*



*ǰʷnámǰʷnam, getting plowed out earlier this winter!*

# Lodgepoles for a Longhouse at x̣ẉnáṃx̣ẉnam

*By Bruce Morrison, Board President*

Late last fall, a group of Methow descendants met at LoupLoup Pass and drove up into the headwaters of Beaver Creek to cut poles. K'saws (Ernie Brooks) chose a stand of thick young larch and prayed that we might harvest from them. By the time his truck was heavily loaded, the first heavy snow of the year was falling. They hauled the poles through new snow to the round barn at x̣ẉnáṃx̣ẉnam, the ranch on the Chewuch that was gifted to the Methow families. The poles were carefully stored there as winter set in and snow piled up.

As temperatures warmed at the end of January, K'saws and his family were eager to begin the work of peeling them in preparation for building the frame of a longhouse in the spring. Jimmy and Elaine Timentwa shared their vision and joined in. Rob Crandall was a welcome part of the team. The round barn was chilly but we sharpened our draw knives and hatchets, following the elder's lead as we got to work. Strips of bark flew, creating a swishing rhythm as the bright, fresh wood emerged. The task was tiring, but all took turns holding and turning the poles as the peelers worked their way from butt to tip over the big sawhorse the Brooks family had brought.

Hours passed and the pile of bright clean poles slowly grew. We were more than ready for a break when it was time for sharing the food we had brought, but Elaine had stories to tell. Everyone sat quietly as she told of her ancestors' distress as they lost their homes here to the settlers and sawmill. When we ate our soup and cooled pizza, it was with hunger, sadness and gratitude that the Methow people were back, and this new work had begun.

We left the barn that day with less than half of the poles peeled but agreed to come back in a week with more hands to finish the task. When we came back to the barn the next Saturday, it was with a sense of camaraderie and gladness as more friends rolled in. To the Methow families, this ranch and its round barn are now recognized as theirs. Erecting a longhouse frame here will come as fulfillment of many prayers.



There remained a dauntingly large pile of smaller poles, but K'saws sharpened tools as we set to work. Elaine showed the stamina of her lineage as she deftly swung her hatchet. The shifts of holding and peeling wove us together, giving respite and encouragement to sustain us, pole after pole. Coats came off as the work warmed us. The pile of shiny bare poles became larger than the rough barked remnants in the shadows. Homemade donuts kept us going into the afternoon when we came together again for Elaine's tuna sandwiches with camas bulbs. We spoke of distant tribes and times. K'saws told a story of his ancestor hunting buffalo with the Crow tribe, on his short sturdy horse, before rifles were used. Soon after the meal, the last of the poles were peeled and the long pile of golden ones lay ready to dry, awaiting the retreat of the snow and for these same hands to lift and tie them into the longhouse frame. Already, dreams inhabit the space within, a shelter for elders and children as the past is carried forward into our future.



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**Or, you can print the membership form and mail it with your check payment to:  
Methow Valley Interpretive Center, PO  
Box 771, Twisp WA 98856**

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## Winter River Dance

*By Jennifer Molesworth, Board Secretary*

It is February and the Methow River and her tributaries are icy and cold but they are not sleeping. Beaver chews on cottonwood and aspen, skidding poles into the safety of the water to feast on the live bark. Beaver ponds and tangles of sticks provide refuge for fish and opportunity for others. Otter, or was that a mink, sleds along the snowy banks dropping into open water looking to crunch on a crustacean, or a fish or two, leaving fishy scat on the snow. Kingfisher, perched up high, looking down into a black pool hoping to spy a fish. Dipper walks under water looking for insects or a small fish, stepping out to bash her prey against a rock before gulping it down. Mergansers swim with heads down in the water like upside down periscopes - yep, looking for a fish or two. Larger fish, perhaps a voracious bull trout, are also looking for fish to eat. Everyone is looking for a fish to eat. The fish they are eating could be young salmon, trout, or

whitefish, sculpin, or minnows. To avoid being easy daytime prey, wintering juvenile salmon have adapted a mostly nocturnal lifestyle, and rely on abundant cover to stay safe.



In January, at Spring Creek near the Winthrop Hatchery, recently reintroduced coho were spawning - it was late for them to be doing this. Maybe the long hot summer-fall delayed their spawning or maybe they are adapting to life in the Methow. Mergansers fed nearby, perhaps waiting for a stray egg or two, or maybe feeding off alevin emerging from salmon redds with eggs from fall spawning salmon.

In the Methow and tributaries, down in the river bottom, nestled into the spaces between the gravel, the 3000 or so eggs that adult salmon buried in redds in late summer and fall have transitioned from egg to alevin. Alevins are baby salmonids that still have their yolk sac attached. The alevin feed off the yolk sac while their mouths develop. As they deplete their yolk sac and grow they transition to what we humans call fry. As the fry emerge from the gravel, they start to develop camouflaging parr marks that will help hide them from all those predators. Slow moving water and lots of cover is critical to survival at this stage. The fry begin to feed on the flocculent bits of their dead parents, plankton and insect larvae.

Around April, as stream flows begin to increase the fry become parr. These young offspring of Spring and summer Chinook, coho, steelhead, still seek out habitat with lots of cover provided by log jams, overhanging banks, and beaver dams. This gives

them plenty of cover to hide in and allows for lots of substrate for food to grow on. Spring Chinook, Coho and steelhead parr will stay in the Methow and tributaries for one year (sometimes longer) before beginning to transition to smolts and the 600 mile journey to the estuary and then the sea. Summer Chinook parr begin to migrate to the ocean in their first spring riding the melting snow down the Columbia.

Out at sea these anadromous fish grow big and strong feeding on the riches of the Pacific Ocean or Salish Sea, preparing for the return journey to the Methow. Out of the several thousand eggs left by each spawning pair of fish only one or two fish will make it back home to the Methow to spawn and to keep the winter dance of the river alive.

For more on salmon, [check out this video](#) on Chum salmon life cycles, or [this one](#) from the Colville Tribes on what salmon and salmon fishing means to tribal fishermen.

## Immersing Kids in Nature and Culture

By David LaFever, Executive Director



In 2022 we began a collaboration with Sarah Fox and the Nature Immersion program that she designed and has now implemented in various educational settings, including at Paschal Sherman Indian School on the Colville Indian Reservation. This collaboration resulted in the award of an Outdoor Learning Grant from Washington State's Recreation and Conservation Office in the amount of \$155,000 to implement this innovative program in environmental education and social-emotional learning.

The Nature Immersion program provides opportunities for 6th - 12th-grade youth to participate in culturally responsive, environmental education in wilderness skills, land stewardship, and equine-assisted learning. Under the facilitation of Sarah Fox and Morgan Moomaw, students engage in experiential and place-based learning that supports social-emotional learning, peer collaboration, and land-based connection. Through this nine-month immersive program, students will:

- Engage in project-based, experiential learning that works across a variety of academic subjects;
- Learn and collaborate with elders and knowledge keepers on the development of cultural skills, language and other traditional land based practices;

### Upcoming MVIC Event



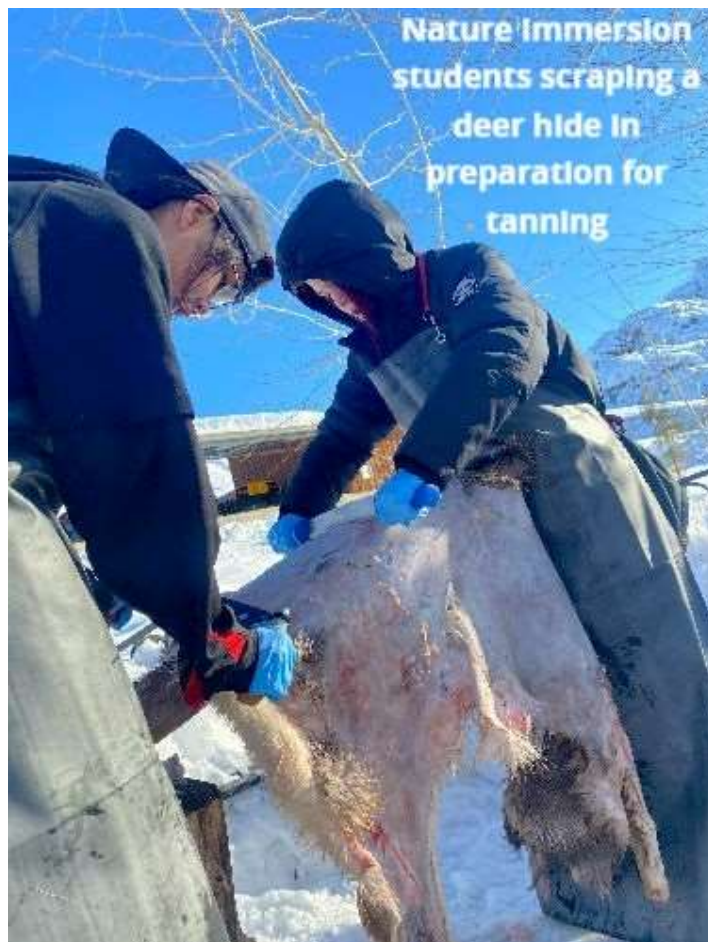
Coming in April! The Winter's Tale film screening, with Wenatchi Tribal Elder Randy Lewis: An MVIC fundraiser. Date and venue TBD, so stay tuned!



- Participate in lessons and outdoor field trips that will provide students with social-emotional learning that encourage environmental literacy, connection with land and group cohesion;
- Engage in practical skills that will help expand outdoor exploration and build positive relationships with peers and adults.

This program is rooted in culturally-responsive pedagogy, experiential education, and both place-based and learner-centered learning. During the 9-month program, students will learn a variety of skills including shelter building, fire making, winter crafting and storytelling, wilderness medicine, medicine making and wild foods, weaving and cordage, hide tanning, bow making, wood carving, flint knapping, stone, bone, and wood tools, bird language and falconry, animal tracking, naturalist skills, map reading and orienteering, root digging, backpacking skills and more. The program also models and encourages social-emotional skill sets necessary to live, thrive, and be in service to others. Empathy, compassion, reciprocity, and equity are all altruistic characteristics found in communities that operate under equality and selflessness. These critical qualities are arguably key features to living healthy, happy, and meaningful lives within our communities. Through a vast deployment of soft skills such as mindfulness, respect, and gratitude, we encourage participants to exemplify the attributes which allow for true connection to occur.

So far this school year, the Nature Immersion Program has served 70 students from Paschal Sherman Indian School, in grades 4-8. This includes over 50 hours of instruction time from Sarah and Morgan, with much more to come. In addition, the program will start monthly sessions with Okanogan High School's Native Club and the Foundation for Youth Resiliency and Engagement in Omak.



Nature Immersion  
students scraping a  
deer hide in  
preparation for  
tanning

### Leaving a Legacy

We hope that the work that the Methow Valley Interpretive Center does touches your life in a positive way.

We recently set up a fund so that we are able to receive endowment donations. If you believe in the work that we do and are interested in setting up a planned gift to the Interpretive Center, we would be happy to answer any questions you may have, or let you know how to get started. Please contact us at [mvinterpretivecenter@gmail.com](mailto:mvinterpretivecenter@gmail.com).

We thank you for your continued support.



Our 2023 book club, discussing  
Diane Wilson's *The Seedkeeper*

## **Methow Valley Interpretive Center**

**Now open for winter hours**

**Saturdays 12 – 4 pm**

210 5th Ave, Twisp, Washington

Mailing address: PO Box 771, Twisp WA 98856

Ph: (509) 997-0620 Email:

[mvinterpretivecenter@gmail.com](mailto:mvinterpretivecenter@gmail.com)

[www.methowvalleyinterpretivecenter.com](http://www.methowvalleyinterpretivecenter.com)