



Fostering awareness and understanding of Indigenous People, geology, and natural history of the Methow Valley and beyond!



## E-Newsletter August 2023

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

Dear MVIC Supporters!

While the days remain hot, there is a tinge of autumn in the air. I felt it this morning during a run up Rader Creek and almost wished I had worn a long-sleeved shirt. Something has shifted and the beginning of the end of summer seems close and yet the heat is still ripening fruit and I am thankful for that. It is the Time of Chokecherries - łəxʷləxʷtan, in Nsəlxcin, also known as the Okanogan or Northern Interior Salish language. I love to gather chokecherries, juice them by themselves or with other ripening berries (Oregon grape, Aronia berries and elderberries) and make a jelly, which is delicious and high in antioxidants. They can also be frozen or canned for later use.

A few days ago I tried a couple of fresh chokecherries and was amazed by the chalky yet sweet taste, which was not exactly pleasant but not unpleasant either. I liked it enough to eat several more before moving on. My life in general is like that, and it certainly has been lately. What at first seems unpleasant usually turns out to be nourishing for my life, and two things have shown me this recently. First, I found out late in July that one of my aunts passed away and so I will be traveling back to upstate NY for the memorial next week. I am looking forward to seeing my family, both immediate and extended, and am sad for the loss of a family member. Bitter and sweet. Second, my older daughter (age 12) broke her elbow recently while running down a trail and she needed surgery. While it is a long story and was stressful, it also brought us even more closely together, which has been really sweet.

So the lesson of chokecherries and these life events is that there is often sweetness that comes along with chalkiness, bitterness, loss and difficulty. May I continue to know and taste this the rest of my days!

Wishing you the same,

David LaFever, *Executive Director*

## **Sḵʷnítkw (Noisy Waters) Salmon Ceremony and Canoe Landing**

*Written by MVIC Board Member Sarah Cavanaugh and her daughter River Richards*

A gathering of Canoe Families paddled across the peaceful river from Sharpening Stone to Sḵʷnítkw ("Noisy Waters" also known as Kettle Falls) the morning of Summer Solstice. This is the ancestral territory of the snḡáyckstx (Lakes Tribe) sḵʷyʔitp (Colville Tribe). My daughters and I stood on the smoothed river rock shore looking out at what we once knew as Kettle Falls-Lake Roosevelt. A couple years ago, we had the privilege of camping at the state park nearby. I remember swimming and being mesmerized by the clear blue water, so clean you could open your eyes underwater to see colorful rocks. As Anishinaabe tribal descendants from the Great Lakes with many of our true stories erased from mainstream knowledge, listening to Indigenous voices has always been important to us. I could hardly believe we were just beginning to learn the true story of Sḵʷnítkw. On this Summer Solstice, our perspectives of this place were forever changed by the real living story that long predates the US-Canadian border in this beautiful place.

On this day, we were here with Methow Natives, Methow Valley Interpretive Center, and Room One, helping to serve a feast prepared by volunteers from the non-indigenous Methow Valley community. We were so excited as nine Tribal Canoe Families arrived, having paddled from Revelstoke, B.C. to Kettle Falls, Washington. This journey can be up to 350 miles long and has been traveled for over ten thousand years by the Colvilles, Blackfeet, Nez Perces, Yakimas, Flatheads, and Coeur d'Alenes. We listened from the outskirts of this beautiful gathering of local Indigenous peoples, elders, and supporters as we watched several hand-carved cedar dugout canoes paddle towards the shore we stood upon. Each family took turns asking for permission to come ashore as they introduced their family name and home and were then welcomed, and assisted in

carrying their canoes ashore. Then there was a Salmon Ceremony. You really could sense the ancestral story unfolding as this had been done thousands of times before.

Tribal representatives Steven Seymour and Shelly Boyd interpreted as Canoe Family representatives spoke of their long ancestral connection to Sḵʷnítkw. It was shared that Sḵʷnítkw was always a place of peace and there were never any wars here. In the past, up to 10,000 people would come here to gather and fish, but now it was underwater due to the Grand Coulee hydro-electric dam. Being that Noisy Waters was once the second largest fishery along the Columbia River and that tribes here are known as Salmon People, relying on salmon for over half of their food source, one can imagine how important it is to restore salmon populations. Many more stories were shared, families were honored, songs were sung, salmon was cooked over the fire by local tribal people, and gifts were given.



*Welcoming the canoe families to land.  
Photo by David LaFever.*



## Become a MVIC Supporter!

*Your support is our lifeblood. Share our journey as we deepen connections to this place and its people.*

As we start nearing the end of summer, remember that GiveMethow starts in October. Please keep MVIC in your minds and hearts when it comes time to give, or choose to [give now!](#)

Click [HERE](#) to become a supporter of MVIC, or give by check. Checks can be made payable to MFI/MVIC (Methow Field Institute is the umbrella 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization for MVIC). Send your check to: PO Box 771, Twisp, WA 98856.

Interested in being a business sponsor of MVIC? [Fill out an interest form](#) and MVIC staff will get back to you right away, or get more information by writing to us at [mvinterpretivecenter@gmail.com](mailto:mvinterpretivecenter@gmail.com).

If you're already a supporter, we appreciate your generosity!

It was a true gift to learn and witness such beautiful strength of the sn̓áyckstx and s̓x̓w̓y̓it̓p and tribal representatives who traveled here. Today, there is much work to be done towards restoration of salmon on the upper Columbia. Advocates shared about the removal of the Elwha River dam in Washington State in 2012, which resulted in the return of salmon in huge numbers. The fishery at S̓x̓wnítkw̓ is gone for now, but it may not be gone for good. While solutions are still being sought, a good place to start is by listening to tribal voices on the Columbia River, as this is intertwined with the living essence of these waters and lands over thousands of years. To know the true story of the original caretakers who love the land can be the first step in learning how the land should be cared for. May we all learn and find a way together, led by the voices of those who have a long-standing indigenous relationship with this place.

## Calling Salmon Home at Coyote's Falls

*By Jennifer Molesworth, Board Secretary*



*Coyote's Falls and Enloe Dam on the Similkameen River. Photo by Jennifer Molesworth.*

It was a hot day in June and we took the steep road down to the dam blocking the natural flow of the Similkameen River, to where People from both sides of the border, Canadian and American, came together to call the salmon to return. Families gathered for an ancient rite. Words were spoken, songs were sung and drums were drummed. The salmon responded



*Drummers at the Salmon Ceremony at Coyote's Falls on the Similkameen River. Photo by Madeleine LaFever.*

by leaping from the water right in front of the line of drummers. It was June, so we were calling Chinook salmon (ntitiyx in the native nsyilxcən language) home. Sockeye will migrate later, in early fall.

I had never seen Enloe Dam before nor the falls that are masked by the dam's concrete face. sən'k'lip i skwants, or Coyote's Falls is the Indigenous name of this place. It's not so big as dams go, but not so small either. The reservoir created by the dam is about one and a half miles long and not very wide. If you look at it on Google Earth you will see just a slight swelling of the river bed relative to the upstream and downstream reaches. Below the dam there is a cascade of falls. The sediment held back by the dam contains a wedge of sediment that is polluted from mining waste containing heavy metals like arsenic and cadmium.

Enloe Dam has been in place for about 100 years, has not generated power since 1958, and blocks passage to approximately 300 miles of salmon and steelhead habitat. Many Indigenous people who live on both sides of the US-Canada border want to see the dam removed and river access to salmon restored. sən'k'lip i skwants too would be free again to challenge the salmon of the Similkameen to climb high.

## The Nature Immersion Program

*By Sarah Fox, Director of the Nature Immersion Program*

The sounds and strong smell of students scraping deer hides. The gathering of medicinal plants such as rose petals, cottonwood buds, arnica and yarrow to be made into teas, tinctures and salves. The sensation of rubbing a native plant salve, that you made, onto your own skin. The wrapping of bandages around fake injuries during a Wilderness First Aid course. Listening to elders as they share cultural understanding and traditions. The laughter and fun of doing all of this and so much more with your friends, with your cousins. And perhaps most importantly, the smile and delight in your eyes as you realize how much your culture matters and that you are honored for simply being yourself. The Nature Immersion Program!

In autumn of 2022, MVIC was awarded a \$150,000 Outdoor Learning Grant through the Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO). MVIC served both as the fiscal sponsor and grant administrator for this grant that supported the on-the-ground work done by Sarah Fox and Morgan Moomaw, who had put together the program and wrote the grant proposal. Implementation of this program occurred on and around the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation (Colville Indian Reservation) at places such as Paschal Sherman Indian School, Omak High School, Okanogan Middle School and more.

Now that the first grant cycle has been completed, it's obvious that under Sarah's direction, the program was a wild success. Between November 2022 and June 2023, The Nature Immersion Program served 109 youth between ages 10 - 18 from Paschal Sherman Indian School, Omak High School Native Program, Okanogan Middle School Native Club, Foundation for Youth Resilience and Engagement (FYRE) in Omak, Highlands High School in Omak, and Lake Roosevelt High School in Grand Coulee. The Nature Immersion Program spanned three school districts and ten

grade levels, emphasizing eco-literacy, cultural and traditional skills and crafts, land stewardship, and social-emotional learning. The objectives of the Nature Immersion Program were to:

- Engage in place-based, experiential learning that works across a variety of academic subjects to support and improve attainment of grade level standards and improve academic growth;
- Learn and collaborate with elders and knowledge keepers on the development of cultural skills and other traditional land-based practices;
- Participate in lessons and outdoor field trips that provide students with social-emotional learning, environmental literacy, place-based connection, and group cohesion;
- Engage in wilderness skills that build confidence in outdoor exploration and promote positive relationships with peers and adults.

Nature Immersion held three camps between April and June, with two out of three camps centered on elders and cultural knowledge keepers as core instructors. There were also three field days for youth to work with and engage with forestry, wilderness medicine and wilderness recreation professionals from Colville Tribal Forestry, National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS), and North Cascades Learning Center. Nature Immersion facilitated field days and camps in cultural skills which included: deer processing, butchering, cooking on fire, traditional root harvesting, traditional food preparation, medicine making (teas, salves, oil infusions, hydrosols), weaving soft fiber baskets, rawhide tanning, traditional crafts, Traditional Ecological Knowledge pole harvesting and debarking, storytelling, plant identification, local indigenous language (nsyilxcən), ethical harvesting, tule weaving, cultural horsemanship, and gourd making.

A collaboration with Healing Hearts Donkey Shelter and Refuge allowed Paschal Sherman Indian School youth to participate in an equine-

## Upcoming MVIC Events

Sunday, October 22, 5pm-6:30pm at the Methow Valley Interpretive

Center: Ralph Dawes presentation on the melting of the Okanogan river glacier.

Coming this fall and winter...

November (exact date TBD): Twining Sally Bags class

MVIC Winter Book Club: Stay tuned for the book title!

Stay current with our upcoming events by following us on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#)!





*Native students learning how to scrap deer hides.  
Photo by Sarah Fox.*



*Early spring root digging as part of the Nature Immersion Program. Photo by Sarah Fox.*

assisted learning program that blended mindfulness, social-emotional skills, equine care, and equine management and training methodologies. The curriculum centered on social and emotional learning (SEL) and engaged students in sessions that explored self-awareness, social awareness, relationship skills, active listening, clear communication, boundaries, empathy and recognition of emotional triggers. They say that equines are a mirror for our emotional selves, mimicking and responding to our feelings and emotions. Working with these intuitive and empathic beings can alter perception and provide opportunity to experience unwavering love and loyalty. Through purposeful engagement with equines, this program cultivated deeper wells of resilience and connection through trust, respect, reciprocity and compassion.

The first year of the Nature Immersion Program and MVIC working together was a resounding success. We regularly received positive feedback from the RCO program and were strongly encouraged to apply again this year. Should we be awarded another Outdoor Learning Grant, work will begin in September as we continue to honor indigenous culture, empower native students, deepen connection with place, and promote well-being and wholeness with all who we work with.

2022-2023 Nature Immersion Statistics	
Total students served	109
Ages of students served	10-18
Total school districts served	3
Total instructional hours	390
Students served, by school	
School	Students Served
Paschal Sherman Indian School	70
Omak High School Native Program	16
Okanogan Middle School Native Club	5
Foundation for Youth Resilience and Engagement (FYRE) in Omak	6
Highlands High School (Omak)	4
Lake Roosevelt High School (Grand Coulee)	1

### **Leave a Legacy!**

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

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 help you get started. Please contact David LaFever at [mvinterpretivecenter@gmail.com](mailto:mvinterpretivecenter@gmail.com).

### **Come and visit us!**



The Methow Valley Interpretive Center is now open for Summer hours:

**Fridays: 4th Fridays of the month 1pm-7pm (May-Sep),  
other Fridays 1pm-4pm (Jun 30-Sep 1)**

**Saturdays 10am-4pm**

**Sundays 12pm-4pm**

**Admission is always free, but donations are much appreciated!**

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