



Canoe Journey Restores Connections and Celebrates Life-Giving Force of Water

By Bill Sterud

Chairman, Puyallup Tribal Council

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Beginning on July 28, the Puyallup Tribe will celebrate its 25th year of participating in the Canoe Journey. As we gather with thousands of our relatives from all over our region, and as far north as Alaska and Canada, we will put our canoes in the water to travel and connect with one another as our ancestors did so long ago. During this weeklong gathering, we will celebrate and honor the water that sustains us. We invite you to join us in our effort to bring more balance to the Salish Sea. Please join our Canoe Journey events and learn more here puyallup-tribe.com.

This year, we are blessed to host about 120 canoes and dozens of tribes to our shores as we celebrate the theme of Honoring our Medicine. Our elders have always taught us that water is a powerful medicine—a life-giving force that sustains, heals, and protects us. And as we see with Canoe Journey, where more than 15,000 will gather on our shores to greet the canoes, the water also provides connection between Native peoples and the land.

The Puyallup Tribe is one of the most urban reservations in the country. We know intimately the effects of industry and development on our culture. So we must balance city living with the need to protect the way of life our ancestors practiced before freeways and industry transformed our land. Coast Salish tribes have always moved through the region along the water, and we are dedicated to practicing this ancient tradition. Reclaiming our traditions is a commitment we practice every day to make sure that our children, and their children, can enjoy these waters after we are gone.

Today, the tips of our canoes touch the sand of beaches polluted by chemicals from upstream contamination. These same pollutants poison our tide flats and seep into our shellfish beds. Just like tribes across the nation, we live with the result of declining fish supply as salmon habitat gets degraded and salmon passage is blocked by roads. With every new development, like the Liquid Natural Gas plant, we are faced with a battle to protect our waters, our lifeforce, and our medicine.

We gather with our fellow tribes during the journey to honor and celebrate our shared bond. We are all working to preserve the ways, lands, and waters of our ancestors. And we do this because it is sacred to us.

So, as our natural resources are being depleted, and our waters are being threatened by continued spread of industry on our shorelines, we will gather in a ceremony to honor the medicine of the Salish Sea and all the waters we rely on. We are inviting our canoe family to bring their traditional medicine to share, whether it's a bottle of water from the Columbia River or a shell from the shores of Vancouver Island, to be introduced to our waters and honored in prayer and communion. It's a powerful way for us

as the original peoples of this area to share our medicine, help restore some balance to our environment, and offer thanks and healing to the water that gives us so much life.

Bill Sterud has served on the Puyallup Tribal Council for more than 37 years, taking the role of chairman and vice chair on several occasions. He was most recently re-elected chairman in 2016.

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