

Tulalip
Northwest Coast of Turtle Island
July, 2005

COMMUNIQUE NO. 21

Let's Make The Set!

This is a call to action by the Canoe People of the Tulalip Nation whose way of life is fishing. This instruction takes charge of the moment. This call can be applied to all the Native nations of Turtle Island. This call to action became a theme for our annual Council. It reflects the urgency of our times. It applies to the loss of our languages, lands, rivers, jurisdictions, sovereignties, cultures, ceremonies, children and the health of Mother Earth.

When the canoes of Nisqually, Puyallup, Suquamish and Tulalip arrived in Tulalip Bay it lifted our hearts. It was inspiring to see the protocols of the Sea Nations. We observed how the Tulalip people sang the canoes in; we observed their exchanges of greetings from each canoe, their request to land ashore. The songs were strong and reflected the pull of the paddle.

The honor and respect between nations was honor and respect to the Great Seas from whence all life comes. It was good to see the young pullers in the canoes keeping their traditions, and flexing their strength. There was instruction in the protocols and songs important to the identity and health of the nations. There was in these protocols reminders of who we are, our relationships to one another and the respect we have for life, lands and the oceans. Water is the first law of life, and process is instruction.

Two eagles attended our meetings every day, perched high on the tops of the tall pines by our arbor – and they spoke often. Clear skies made brilliant by our Eldest Brother Sun gave us beautiful days with soft winds, and Grandmother Moon in her full power lighted our way at night. These great powers were a constant reminder to our delegations from the Four Directions of our responsibilities as human beings to give thanks for this creation and to preserve and protect it for future generations.

All of this was in stark contrast to the discussions held after our sunrise ceremonies each day. The leading issues were the rapid and alarming growth of drug and alcohol addiction in our youth and children, in particular the use of methamphetamines (ice). It was noted that parents were also involved and grandparents were more and more becoming responsible for caring for the grandchildren.

The discussion revolved around the fact that life today is a lot easier without the need for children to contribute to the welfare of the family. Today there is a lack of discipline and character building, the kind that went into carrying wood, carrying water, looking after gardens, and hunting and fishing for subsistence that was the Elders' lifestyle as youth. Responsibility is an issue. We must find a way to restore it.

Drug and alcohol counselors said that they were burned out from the constant cycle of young addicts returning again and again. Some of the recycling comes from parents in denial of the addictions of their children. The counselors work was also hampered by threats from parents against the counselors for exposing the addictions of their children.

So then, Set The Nets! and:

1. Demand more direct action from Native leaders and community leaders to face the reality and promote community discussion followed by actions to locate and stop community people dealing in drugs.
2. Begin serious rehabilitation programs to save the youth.

The youth had two requests to the Elders of our Circle:

1. Teach us the ceremonies.
2. Give us direction in life, tell us what to do.

So then, Let's Make The Set! to:

Educate our communities and ourselves to the dangers of drugs and alcohol, and then take community action that communities can agree upon. To wait will only produce more gangs and a tighter grip by drugs on our territories and communities.

We must keep up our ceremonies and teach our youth how to run them – share our knowledge and be generous with our time.

One More:

Our Uncle from Greenland says: the ice is melting faster and faster in the North causing great changes to take place that will determine the future of life as we know it. He told us this: "I met Nanook the Great White Bear on an island far from land. There were two of them, one smaller than the other. They were hunting but there was no ice to hunt from. They were standing at the edge of the sea looking north. Their only chance was to swim to the ice in the north, some 280 miles or more. Today I wonder if they survived."

As things are today Nanook faces extinction, some say in 40 years. Some say in 20 years they will be gone. Who is to blame? We will cry but who will care? Uncle says the ice is melting in the North, but the hardest ice in the world to melt is the ice in the heart of men.

So then, Let's Make The Set! and:

Make a stand with our relatives from the North. We must challenge the destructive policies of the Bush Administration against nature.

We must defend the lives of future generations against a predatory Grandfather who places a higher value on profits than the lives of his Grandchildren.

We must relearn the values of community and sharing, and promote equity and bring balance back into our lifestyles.

"The Eagles and the Ravens dropped us feathers"