

mətxʷu /Methow Descendants

DONOR UPDATE SUMMER 2024



Donors to the mətxʷu /Methow Descendants have been an important part of the mətxʷu /Methow Descendants' ongoing efforts to preserve traditional culture on their homeland. The following update provides an overview of what the mətxʷu /Methow Descendants have been working on over the past year.

In 2021 the Methow Conservancy purchased 328 acres along the Chewuch River: traditional territory of the mətxʷu /Methow People. In 2022 they returned it to the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation on behalf of the mətxʷu /Methow People. Now, xʷnámxʷnam/Hummingbird offers an important place for the mətxʷu /Methow Descendants to preserve and share their traditional knowledge, skills, and traditions on their homeland. This cultural programming—including traditional food, medicine, dances, regalia, songs, arts, and crafts—and land stewardship is supporting the mətxʷu /Methow Descendants in strengthening connections with their traditional territory and cultural traditions; ensuring that cultural knowledge endures across generations; and expressing and sharing cultural heritage with all area residents—both Native and non-Native—who wish to learn.

WITH COMMUNITY SUPPORT, THE mətxʷu /METHOW DESCENDANTS HAVE:



Formed a board of decision-makers for spending priorities and other choices regarding the use of and visitation to xʷnámxʷnam/Hummingbird. With the Methow Conservancy and the Methow Valley Interpretive Center serving as fiscal sponsor (MC) and supportive allies, the mətxʷu/Methow Descendants have formed their own “board” and have been the decision-makers in how to spend the funds that have been raised. They also decide which grants to apply for, approve or deny photo use requests, and have a voice in which groups are invited to visit the land and buildings.



Held gatherings to welcome mətxʷu /Methow Descendants members back to xʷnámxʷnam/Hummingbird. Fall gatherings in 2022 and 2023 allowed the mətxʷu /Methow Descendants time to discuss their plans for cultural programming on the property. At the fall 2023 meeting, the mətxʷu /Methow Descendants noted that it was the first time in several generations that they had gathered as one band, distinct from the eleven other bands of the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation.

Each gathering results in more mətxʷu /Methow Descendants members being aware of the group and its activities. More Descendants are joining the group; more young people are joining their elders to learn about mətxʷu /Methow history, as well as how to participate in traditional cultural, ecological, and spiritual activities.



Strengthened relationships with ancestral land by spending time at xʷnámxʷnam/Hummingbird. As of one year ago many mətxʷu/Methow Descendants members had never visited either the upper Methow Valley or the xʷnámxʷnam/Hummingbird property. Now, some of them spend time on the land regularly. School groups (both Indigenous and non-Native students) take field trips to learn about the mətxʷu/Methow People, past and present, and interact with elders, who help them understand the context of Indigenous presence on and stewardship of the land.



Established a workshop space at x^wnám x^wnam/Hummingbird where they can teach traditional arts. In addition to purchasing supplies (tule, rawhide, awls, needles, yarn, jute, peeling tools, beads, thread, etc), the mæt x^wu /Methow Descendants replaced the white carpet in the great room of one of the houses with vinyl plank flooring, which is much more appropriate for an arts teaching area in terms of durability, ease of cleaning, etc. They also purchased sturdy work tables and chairs to use for teaching and social purposes.



Hosted a Root Feast at x^wnám x^wnam/Hummingbird. Linked to season cycles and the arrival of spring, a Root Feast celebrates digging the first roots from the ground each season, with camas and bitterroot serving as the centerpiece of these traditional foods, augmented by venison and salmon. The Root Feast at x^wnám x^wnam/Hummingbird was, according to a mæt x^wu/Methow elder, the first Root Festival to be held in the upper Methow Valley since the 1880s, when the mæt x^wu/Methow People were forcibly removed from their ancestral land and relocated to the reservation near Omak.

Prior to the Root Feast, several members of the mæt x^wu/Methow Descendants constructed traditional meat drying racks and dried salmon and venison secured by a young mæt x^wu/Methow man who works in the Fish & Wildlife department of the Colville Tribes. They also shared historic photos of some of their family members drying meat on similar racks.



Raised awareness about the importance of land back efforts and connecting with homelands and traditions. For example, members of the Chelan Douglas Land Trust board and staff visited x^wnám x^wnam/Hummingbird, talked to mæt x^wu/Methow elders, heard about habitat restoration projects the tribal Fish and Wildlife Dept. is planning on, and learned about the land return and subsequent activities. They will use what they learned to inform their own conservation work. The Indian Land Tenure Foundation also visited x^wnám x^wnam/Hummingbird.



Strengthened their voice as a people. A core group of mæt x^wu/Methow Descendants gathers each month to chart a course forward for their use of the property and to address needs in coordination with representatives from the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation. For more than a century, the mæt x^wu People did not own land in the upper Methow Valley, thereby limiting their connection to the land that has been their home since Time Immemorial. Now, they have both a land base and a voice in their homelands.



Digging roots in the Rendezvous.



Field trip to x^wnám x^wnam/Hummingbird.



Preparing tipi poles.



Weaving tule mats.



Learn more about the mæt x^wu/Methow Descendants at www.methowdescendants.org



Additional cultural and governmental information about the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, a sovereign nation, can be found at www.colvilletribes.com