

Yakama Women at the Longhouse

Huli-Carried Medicine and Traditional First Food Ceremonies.

Part 1

By Hailey Allen

ABSTRACT

In this article Hailey Allen (Yakama) explores the role of traditional medicine among Yakama women as a vital expression of Indigenous knowledge and a fundamental aspect of Longhouse (*Washat*) cultural continuity. Referred to as the Seven Drums Religion, or Waashat and Washani, the Longhouse Religion of the Columbia Plateau, including the Yakama, is better understood as a spiritual way of life rather than a formal religion. This study employs an immersive, participatory framework, utilizing elder interviews, Longhouse ceremonies, ceremonial runs, and community knowledge, alongside the harvesting of sacred First Foods: salmon, roots, berries, deer, and water. These elements are central to Longhouse practice. Anchored in the metaphor of *Huli*, the Sahaptin term for wind, Allen illustrates how Yakama women embody the cyclical and relational transmission of knowledge, thereby fostering cultural continuity and ecological stewardship through generations.

Introduction

I situate this paper within my lived experience as a Yakama woman, while recognizing that my perspective represents only one voice among many and does not portray the Yakama tribe, or any Indigenous group, in its entirety. My understanding is shaped by the guidance of my elders and by my personal journey. I remain profoundly grateful to occupy the ever-shifting and evolving role of student, with various opportunities to learn from the land, the wisdom of my elders, the guidance and inspiration of the children for whom I write, as well as the future generations. In undertaking this work, I aim to articulate my perspective as an Indigenous woman with respect and humility, while supporting the engagement of Indigenous

young women, adult women, and elder women within our community. I aim to encourage scholarship and activism guided by Yakama cultural values and grounded in Indigenous ways of knowing, supporting a research practice that is both community-centered and generates culturally resonant knowledge.

I approach this research as a woman of mixed Indigenous heritage, descended from the Yakama and Umatilla tribes, with Jewish and African American ancestry. My work examines the roles and contributions of women within the Longhouse tradition of the Yakama community, a community to which I am profoundly connected and within which I have actively participated and learned throughout my life.

Throughout my paper, and in shaping my research approach and methods, I have relied on the remarkable work of Yakama scholar Dr. Michelle M. Jacob, whose book *Yakama Rising* continually informs my work through a Yakama Indigenous feminist decolonial lens. Additionally, inspired by the work of Leanne Simpson, “Water as theory”, I have entered a way of thinking that grounds the wind as my theoretical anchor in order to uncover and understand the relational transmission of Yakama knowledge and traditions. The Sahaptin word for wind is *Huli*, and I use this as my conceptual framework to view and embrace the principles of the wind as a living force that nourishes the continuity and resilience of relational transmission of embodied knowledge, while also accounting for the sometimes harsh and unpredictable impacts of its force.

This project ethnographically explores Yakama women’s traditional medicine through the Longhouse religion (Washat), emphasizing the interconnected, relational, and spiritual dynamics between water, land, First Food Ceremonies, and women’s roles as cultural bearers and keepers of knowledge. I examine how Yakama women and elders have preserved and adapted traditional knowledge and practices in the face of numerous obstacles.

Stories in Motion: Yakama Legends, Women Elders, and Gatherings

Legend of Winaawayáy (South Wind)

In the Yakama oral tradition collection *Anakú Iwachá* (The Way It Was), the story of Winaawayáy (South Wind) conveys themes of

environmental degradation and restoration, spiritual power, the resilience of culture through matriarchal knowledge transmission, the origins of natural landmarks and wind forces, the cyclical patterns of wind and weather, and the importance of mental and physical preparation.

The legend describes the battle between the North Wind (Atyayáaya) and the South Wind (Winaawayáy), both divine beings. Winaawayáy is the descendant of Tick and Louse, who are stewards of Chawnápamípa (Hanford and White Bluffs, Benton County, Washington) –a fertile and abundant land rich with all kinds of animals, roots, berries, and medicines. The story depicts Winaawayáy’s determined efforts to defend the land of the Chawnápamípa from the relentless Atyayáaya, who, alongside his Cold Wind brothers and sister, seeks to freeze, devastate, and ultimately conquer the land and its inhabitants for his own dominion.

Winaawayáy emerges as the bridge between two regions and two worlds—the Plateau and the Coast, Land and Sea. He is a descendant of both the Chawnápamípa and the North Coast, born from the powerful sea creatures of the sacred ocean and the fertile, life-sustaining lands of the Plateau. He inherited the special powers of both lineages. The significance of both places lies in their enduring ancestral presence and deep spiritual meaning, which highlights the vital importance of place-based traditions and practices. The land is revered as part of their ancestry, and all beings in that space are considered relatives.

I intend to draw attention to an aspect of the story that, although not extensively addressed in the text, holds profound significance — the role of the grandmother. Without her wisdom, patience, and determination, their story would have had a very different outcome. Crucially, through the matrilineal connection to his grandmother, Pityachíishya (Ocean Woman), Winaawayáy is trained and prepared. The grandmother is the keeper of medicinal knowledge and the sacred recipes of the ocean. She prepares medicine from the sea's most formidable beings—killer whales, sharks, eels, and walruses. This medicine has a dual nature, both a weapon and a life-sustaining force.

Winaawayáy endures years of preparation guided by his grandparents, which demonstrates the innate but cultivated nature of intergenerational guidance through years of ceremony, discipline, and repetitive tasks. The embodied knowledge is not generated instantaneously; instead, it is cultivated and nurtured through years of relationship with all relatives— the land, water, air, animals, and human lineage.

The time comes when Winaawayáy finally confronts Atyayáaya. With the guidance and medicine from his grandmother, he can stand firm where his uncles and fathers before him had fallen. The triumph ripples through the region, rebalancing the natural world and ensuring that the winds blow in season, and the rivers thaw, and that life replicates and sustains itself. The

battle itself is reflected through the marks on the land—canyons, ridges, springs, all witnesses to these ancestral events, inscribing Yakama knowledge onto the very earth. The story also carries a warning: if the land faces harm again, Winaawayáy vows to return. This exemplifies the responsibility and enduring commitment to protecting the environment that the Yakama people honor and uphold. In her book *The Gift of Knowledge: Reflections on Sahaptin Ways*, the late elder, Virginia Beavert, Yakama scholar and linguist, describes the legends surrounding the landmarks that have been passed down through generations by her grandmother: “Legend Woman is a sacred woman who will grant your wishes. At this place by Eel Trail, she lies on her back near the top of a mountain, her arms outstretched, and is said to be embracing you lovingly. You are supposed to approach her with respect and love” (Beavert 2019)

In this legend, we witness the duality of Huli (wind), with its transformation inherently ambivalent, capable of both healing and harm, renewal and destruction, as well as medicine and toxicity. This narrative illustrates layers of lessons, paralleling the decisions we face when stewarding our environments, also emphasizing the struggle between forces of creation and those of destruction. It demonstrates that through the reverence for matriarchal wisdom, a commitment to ecological care, and the transmission of knowledge across generations, cultural and environmental resilience can endure.

A Yakama Elder's Perspective: Martina's Longhouse Reflections

I sat down for an interview with my stepmother, who has been a part of my life for nearly thirty years. She is a Yakama elder whose lineage spans several longhouse communities, including Satus, Toppenish Creek, Rock Creek, and Wapato. I conducted the interview in person, and although it was not audio recorded, I documented her words verbatim during the conversation to ensure an accurate representation of her reflections.

When asked to recall a childhood memory that reflected being raised in traditional Longhouse or Washat ways, Martina shared, "Having to sit still and not speak. I think back then, you only spoke when spoken to. You had to be disciplined."

Her early connection to the Longhouse was interrupted by boarding school. "It's really tough to remember the first time I went to the Longhouse. We were sent away to boarding school when I was ten." Although her mother played a role in the ceremonial space: "My mom was a cook in the longhouse. Always in the kitchen", she noted, "Us kids probably weren't allowed to go."

That absence continued after her mother's severe car accident. "My dad came and picked us up every now and then, but my grandma took care of my mother." Martina explained that they didn't return right away: "We didn't go until we got back from boarding school." It wasn't until the loss of her father that she attended again: "When my dad passed away when I was 14 was probably when I had to go."

Although she did not initially participate in ceremonial responsibilities within the Longhouse, her early teachings were grounded in intergenerational transmission of knowledge that occurred within the home. She described herself as "a grandma's girl," often sitting beside her grandmother and absorbing teachings through observation and gentle instruction. "I just had to sit next to her and look pretty," she explained.

She described how her grandmother was her first teacher in both language and everyday practices. She recalled learning common expressions in Yakama, including phrases like "time to eat," which were spoken in everyday conversation.

From a young age, she was taught the cultural significance and skill of food preparation. "I was probably 7 or 8 years old when I learned how to boil potatoes," she remembered. These teachings expanded with age; by sixteen, she had developed the capacity to prepare food for ceremonial purposes. "I learned how to cook pies, and my first time was 16 pies," she said. These pies were prepared specifically for a medicine dance being hosted by a neighbor. "I had to drive them down to the neighbor... I just dropped it off, and then I was done for the night."

The early teachings reflect the gendered aspects of cultural responsibility and demonstrate the dual nature of cooking as both a skill and a sacred tradition passed down from grandmother to granddaughter.

When asked about early teachings on how to carry oneself in the Longhouse, Martina reflected

on foundational protocols she learned from a young age. She explained, “We were taught you have to circle the Wash. This is considered sacred. Not everyone knows how to do this. They will sneak in the side doors. Or they don’t know how to do it.”

Even recently, she witnessed these teachings in practice. At a memorial held at Satus Longhouse, she noticed her cousin about to sit down prematurely. “I told her that she needs to go back and stand at the front and turn around so the rest of the memorial family can come up and shake your hand.” These responsibilities, Martina said, are passed through family knowledge: “When my cousins were younger, they said go stand by your nana Martina, she knows what to do. And I thought, no I don’t.”

Regarding Washat itself, Martina described it as a sacred ceremony that can feel unfamiliar to those still learning. She said, “If you know what’s going on, it’s sacred. If you are just learning and don’t know what to do, you feel strange.” Although she “kind of understand[s] what they are saying in our language,” full understanding remains challenging. Still, she emphasized the spirit of the ceremony: “It’s always like ‘welcome my family members and friends.’ I consider it sacred.”

Martina described Washat as an experience of spiritual release: “When you are on the Wash, it’s like when you speak you are releasing yourself.” She added that during the feast, silence is customary: “We didn’t really speak... we just walked around.”

In describing women’s roles within the Longhouse, Martina emphasized their foundational responsibilities: “[They do] everything. They are the diggers, pickers, cooks, serving, and the dishes at the end.” This description of women’s roles reveals the depth of contributions that span from land-based gathering to ceremonial food preparation, with responsibilities persisting long after the completion of formal services.

Preparation for ceremonial gatherings, such as the First Foods ceremony, involves both spiritual and physical readiness of the space. Martina explained that “they water down the wash so that it’s not dusty,” referring to the central dirt aisle of the Longhouse. Women also ensure the floors are cleared and maintained respectfully: “If you borrow the Longhouse, make sure that it is left in the way you had it before.” This respect for shared ceremonial space is not only logistical but spiritual, requiring accountability to the place and people.

Ceremonies require knowledgeable leadership. Martina shared, “You can have a ceremony there, but you would need a leader or someone knowledgeable about the ceremony to prepare.” She recalled our family’s experience: “When we named all the kids [my kids and nieces and nephews] our friend Deland Olney was the one doing the services for the family.” While men are the designated drummers, singers, and ceremonial leaders “on the line,” women also sing, though not in the same capacity.

Respected women lead food preparation in the community. “The head of the line—Bobbi or your kathlah [my grandmother]—more or less Bobbi,” Martina explained. In other Longhouses, such as those in Wapato, she named Winna or Bernice as food leaders. However, she also noted that this role often shifts due to health or capacity: “Bernice has to step back because she has breast cancer. Then it’s passed on to the oldest if they are willing to take on that responsibility—but a lot of the time it’s not worked out like that.”

Leadership within the Longhouse follows a gendered structure rooted in tradition. Martina described how “men are the drummers and singers and perform ceremonies and ring the bell on the drum line. The bell rings in transition between each song and the transition of the service.” Women’s leadership roles are expressed in other ways: as cooks, pickers, diggers, and as those who also ring the bell when leading women in. “Usually it is the head of the line,” she emphasized, revealing the role of elder women in guiding ceremonial rhythm and structure.

In discussing women’s ceremonial roles during songs and dances, Martina explained that “the women go second in the line when the dancing and praying is happening,” situating their movements within a broader sacred order of the Longhouse.

When asked about the First Foods ceremonies and honoring salmon, roots, berries, and meat, Martina described the relational elements: “The salmon represents the water. The meat represents the land, or something similar, while the roots represent the land. The berries are the land too.”

The foods are not just sustenance but also our relatives; they are kin, greeted with gratitude for “showing up” and acknowledged in ceremony as sacred gifts from the land and waters. As Martina put it, “We are grateful that they showed up and are expressing our gratitude.”

The timing of seasonal gathering is inseparable from ceremonial life. Martina explained how the natural rhythms and climate variation shape when certain foods can be harvested. “The weather and the season and how soon the roots come up—if they come up early or late—it makes it difficult to know,” she noted. Berries can be unpredictable “Sometimes they will come up early, and sometimes there are hardly any, and sometimes there are a whole bunch.” These fluctuations require attentiveness and adaptability. She also shared a teaching about death and ceremonial protocol: “See, right now I shouldn’t be out digging roots or picking berries because I had a death in my family... unless I release myself.” She elaborated that “once you release yourself, you do a small giveaway and it’s considered releasing and rejoining. You wait a year.”

It is crucial for those who can go out and dig for roots to do so on behalf of family members who are grieving, sick, or otherwise unable to physically reach the mountains due to financial or health constraints. Martina was fortunate to receive a generous gift of roots from her nieces, who went digging for them. We have been storing these roots in preparation for her sister’s memorial next April. Much preparation is needed for the memorials.



Figure 1

Some of the roots gifted to Martina from her nieces, dried for storage and being preserved for the memorial. From left to right, *Pank'ú* (button breadroot), *Piyaxí* (bitterroot), *Sicáwya* (Root). Photographs by Hailey Allen.



Figure 2

Storage of dried roots (From left to right: *Piyaxí*, *Pank'ú*, *Sicáwya*), corn, and canned salmon for the memorial. Photographs by Hailey Allen.

Intergenerational transmission is a living part of seasonal gathering. “..see I try to share with Tashina [her granddaughter], and whoever wants to listen,” Martina said, referring also to me and my sister: “With you girls.” The act of sharing knowledge is both intentional and rooted in relationality, offered to those who show up with openness and respect.

In describing gendered relationships with First Foods, Martina affirmed that “the men fish and hunt, and the women pick and dig.” However, she also recognized that these roles are flexible and responsive: “The women also hunt sometimes,” she explained. “Bobbi [my great-aunt] went out and got her own deer when they didn’t have any for the longhouse.” These stories challenge rigid gender binaries and highlight the ways women step into roles of leadership and provision, ensuring our ceremonies continue even in the absence of male support.

When asked whether her family had ever experienced a time when ceremonial life was interrupted or restricted by outside laws or policies, Martina reflected on the enduring impacts of assimilationist language policies. “Uhh, kind of sort of,” she began, “like when they tried to make Natives talk in nothing but English.” She explained that these pressures shaped even the choices her grandmother made: “My grandmother didn’t teach me any of the language because she said I lived in the white world and I needed to work in the white world.” The impact of these language restrictions remains a painful memory. “Language was the one sore

spot that I always remember,” she said. Although her grandmother withheld formal instruction, she did share some words at home—particularly when upset. “She did teach me a little of that at the house, especially when she got mad at me,” Martina recalled, noting that she rarely needed repetition: “When she taught me something, I would learn it at once. You were expected to learn something right off the bat.”

Regarding the 1855 Treaty and its broader implications, Martina was clear about her distance from formal tribal governance. “I wasn’t really involved in the treaty,” she said. “I figured if I got on the council, I would read it. But I never got on council and I was never into politics—never have been, never will be.” While many of her relatives, including uncles, her grandfather, and family friends, served on the council, she expressed discomfort with contemporary systems of governance. “I just don’t like that they think their code of ethics or their little watchdogs have the right to pry into everyone’s business. Especially if you drink alcohol—they think they can pry into everything.” For Martina, such judgmental attitudes are not aligned with our traditional values. “Being judged—you aren’t supposed to judge any other person. That’s not how we are.” She pointed out that in earlier times, during my atwai [late] grandfather Russell’s [My great-uncle aka Grandpa] terms on council, there was an expectation of care and community protection rather than surveillance.

Reflecting on the impact of historical trauma and boarding school policies, Martina

acknowledged that recent revelations around unmarked graves brought long-overdue attention. “Yeah, you know, when they finally—how do you say—found all those bodies in the boarding schools, it finally opened up all the white people’s eyes.” Although her own experience at a Christian-run boarding school was not as severe as others, the system still imposed significant burdens. “We had all those chores, and it wasn’t just one [of us], it was all of us.”

She recounted how friends and family, including an archaeologist friend, had visited burial sites, including the one in White Swan. “To my knowledge, they didn’t find anything,” she said. Her mother and grandmother had also attended the White Swan school, which she described more as a day school rather than a full-time residential institution.

When asked about traditional teachings connected to the elements, such as wind, water, and soil, Martina reflected on the importance of being attentive to the natural world. “The wind,” she said, “they say that things can be whispered to you from the wind, and you either listen to it or you don’t. You should always listen to what your surroundings are telling you.” For Martina, listening to the land is not just metaphorical; rather, it is a practice of responsibility and relationality.

When discussing the role of song and prayer in Longhouse spaces, Martina emphasized the layers of meaning embedded within the language and the songs themselves. “If you understand the language, then you understand what they are saying,” she explained, noting that this knowledge

comes with time: “That has to be down the way for knowing.” Songs serve specific functions. “One is a war song, a woman’s song, when you go out and dig, there is a song when you are taking from what the land is giving you. There are probably fishing songs too, I bet.” The songs are contextual, carrying guidance for action and ceremony. Martina credited my great-uncle, the atwai Russell Jim, and other community members, like Jerry Meninick, with passing on the deeper meanings of these songs. “Russell was good at explaining,” she said, “because he wasn’t always speaking the language, he was speaking English too. He would say, ‘To you young ones that don’t understand the language and want to learn.’” She added that Jerry also honored the teaching lineage by saying, “This is what I was told by my elder.”

Martina spoke with deep respect for Yakama women’s perseverance in maintaining ceremonial responsibilities. “They just kept plugging away and doing their job,” she said. Her grandmother was a leader in gathering practices: “picking and digging for a long time.” Martina shared that while her grandmother wasn’t always strict with her, the lessons were still there. “I don’t know why she wasn’t as strict with me. I was like one of her little white girls,” she joked. Still, Martina found ways to teach herself traditional skills like sewing: “I thought, ‘Grandma, you’re going to live forever and you will always sew me wingdresses.’”

She expressed pride that her granddaughter, Tashina, has carried on that skill: “She picked it up so fast. I don’t feel like my daughter wanted to learn at all, but Tashina did.”

When asked about what teachings she hoped younger generations would hold on to, Martina offered both humor and sincerity. “Just do as you’re told and don’t ask questions. Just get in line,” she laughed, then added, “No, Bobbi is a good teacher—she is a really good teacher. And I felt like I taught you girls [me and my sister] a few things when you were growing up.” Her teachings extended beyond ceremony into everyday acts of care and cultural continuity. “When I make jam, I can use it all year long—for pies or birthdays.” She recalled teaching Tashina how to sew a slip: “I said ‘easy peasy,’ and she said, ‘yeah right.’ Then she did it, and she was like, ‘Ohhh yeah, that is easy peasy.’”

Martina described the many Longhouse communities her family has ties to: her uncles were at the Satus Longhouse, her grandmother’s side was at Toppenish Creek, and her paternal grandfather (her *tila*) was at Rock Creek Longhouse down by the river. “They have salmon and root feast and powwow and horseshoe tournament,” she said. On her father’s side, the family came from Wapato Longhouse. “See, that’s why Bobbi says I come from a strong Longhouse family,” she laughed. In past conversations, Martina has been jokingly called “Longhouse royalty,” a title she humbly accepts with humor and pride.

Sawict Digging in the Yakama Mountains

This duality of *Huli* also manifests in the present through lived experiences on the land. When I’m on the land with my Elder and the

younger generation of teachers and wisdom keepers, I witness the shifting roles of the teacher—sometimes it’s the Elder, sometimes the land itself, and sometimes it’s my little 2-year-old cousin. With her dirt-covered fingers, she points excitedly at each stalk of Indian carrots (Sawict) poking up from the ground, gasping, “There’s a baby one, there’s a baby one!” and proudly exclaiming, “I did it!” as she helps me pull the root from the earth where she spotted it. She gently rips the Sawict from its stalk, then coos with tenderness, “Aw, that’s a baby,” to each root we harvest, no matter its size. They are all her babies; they are all precious to her. She loves the land with a reverence that fills me with overwhelming pride and admiration—for her pure, instinctive love for the mother who cares for us all. She places each root in my basket, then looks up and runs around, pointing out the next one to meet, admire, and receive its medicine.

My great-aunt is an innate storyteller, embedding profound teachings within each reflection. These stories carry lessons that continue to unfold, revealing themselves over time. She embraced me with a hug and sat us at her dining room table in her cozy home, which resembles that of my great-grandmother, her sister-in-law.

As we drove into the mountains, my Aunt Bobbi reflected on how she had not entered the sweatlodge in many years since she was a child until one day, with my grandmother, she finally returned to the practice at a camp in the hills. Bobbi talks about her first experience and how sweet, understanding, and gentle my

grandmother was in her teaching. The lodge was built in the traditional way, and the ceremony followed the teachings of separation and respect between men's and women's roles.

In her book *The Gift of Knowledge: Reflections on Sahaptin Ways*, the late Elder, Virginia Beavert, Yakama scholar and linguist, describes this practice.

The women sweat separately from the men, and they use their own female herbs. Also, women do not sing in the sweathouse, they just talk. Each one gives thanks to Grandfather Sweat, and talks about their problem...The women from our land do not sweat together with men. Women do their things separately, especially with their medicine and perfumes for different uses. Just for cleaning their body they use an ordinary medicine, only for perfuming themselves...but the other sweat, where you use sacred medicine, that kind is kept secret. It is treasured for use for important things, in important ways. They pay a lot for this teaching [how to identify, gather, prepare, and use these medicines]. That is what the Elder teaches them. (p.96).

Here, we witness the lesson of continuity through *Huli*. Bobbi's memory illustrates how ceremony moves through space and how those committed to keeping it alive are continually rebuilding the sacred.

Vine Deloria Jr. describes the profound importance of space for Indigenous peoples',



Figure 3

Digging Sawict. Photograph by Hailey Allen.

“American Indians hold their lands—place—as having the highest possible meaning, and all their statements are made with this reference point in mind.” (Deloria, 2023, p. 55) he further clarifies this distinction between Western and Indigenous worldviews to highlight the centrality of land in Indigenous thought.

He states, “When one group is concerned with the philosophical problem of space and the other with the philosophical problem of time, then the statements of either group do not make much sense when transferred from one context to the other without proper consideration of what is taking place.” (Deloria, 2023, p. 55).

In these memories and experiences, I am remembering that *Huli* is not only breath or wind, but a living force moving through space and ceremony — nourishing my soul through kinship and reshaping and refining my sense of knowing

with each encounter with the land. Through the land, I remember how to breathe again, and how to restore the relationship to the land that colonialism attempted to rupture. Through the laughter of my little cousin, the stories of my great-aunt, and the memory of my caring and kind grandmother, I am reminded that medicine lives in the land and lives within us, through our breath, in our hands, in our dreams, and in our remembering. This is the beauty and tenderness of returning to the land and carrying the teachings forward for the next generation, to heal, mend, and rebuild what was severed, and to keep the sacred alive through stories and traditions.



Figure 4
Ku'pin used to dig roots. Photograph by Hailey Allen.



Figure 5
Preparing for digging. Ku'pin and Waapas (Root digging baskets). Photograph by Hailey Allen.



Figure 6
Kiutus Jim Race T-shirts the last couple years (2024 & 2025). Photograph by Hailey Allen.

The annual Kitus Jim run is far more than a typical race. It is a living ceremony embodying the endurance, memory, and resistance of the Yakama people, carried forward through the presence and leadership of Yakama women,

whose roles remain central to sustaining its ceremonial dimensions. Situated on the ancestral land of my family and carried forward by extended family, it embodies interconnectedness, relational medicine, and ceremonial resilience, reflecting a multilayered practice that resists colonial and destructive forces threatening the Yakama people's existence.

As a Jim descendant, my participation is personal and ethnographic. The name carries a legacy spanning decades, demonstrating the resilience, brilliance, grit, and endurance the run represents. Running has always been a ceremonial practice in my family; like First Foods and other traditional practices, the run enacts Indigenous endurance and the spiritual strength needed to counter colonial erasure and ecological disruption.

My great-uncle, the atwai, Russell Jim, reminds me that endurance is more than physical survival; it is a miraculous strength of spirit. In the documentary "A Quiet Warrior," by the late filmmaker *Jeanne Givens*, my great-uncle comments on the remarkable strength of wild horses. He describes how they can run all day long, remarking, "the horses were magnificent... [they] had the ability to run all day...they seem to reach deep down into their heart." That is where true health, in every sense, spiritual, physical, emotional, and relational, resides in the heart. Although this year I ran an uncomfortable race, I carried his words with me, repeating to myself, "reach deep down in your heart." I ask for the courage and strength to delve that depth and embrace that strength. This act of

resilience reminds me that survival is inseparable from struggle, and endurance does not exist in isolation; instead, it unfolds through the land, the spirits around me, and the family that runs alongside me, both in body and in memory. A ceremony marks the completion of the Kiutus Jim run. After the run, we have a raffle giveaway for each race participant, a salmon ceremony, and teaching. My great-aunt Bobbi can always be seen in the kitchen, providing the salmon and preparing the meal for the entire crowd. I watch her moving through the space with ease—she knows exactly what is needed, barely speaking, and is deep in her service. The women in our tribe are always working hard. Always moving, always preparing, always making sure everyone is taken care of. However, it is more than just cooking. I think about the food and the medicine that is added to the food. It's more than a meal. The thoughts and feelings that Aunt Bobbi holds while preparing this food—that's part of the medicine too. The care, the intention, the energy she carries all get transferred into the meal. That is what we eat, that is what nourishes us.

I listened to my great-uncle, Robert Jim (the other Bobbi Jim), speak about this special place and the gatherings that once took place here. He discussed his grandfather, my great-great-grandfather, Kiutus, and how he was a great runner. The stories of the games that once took place here, and the special gatherings that occurred, can still be felt in the air. The Huli lifts these memories and brings them back into this space. The memory returns to the space, and we experience the transmission of knowledge through his breath. His teachings offer a renewal

of our sacred space, a remembering. Storytelling and memory preserve cultural continuity, and the space functions as a living repository of ancestral epistemologies, sustaining identity and adaptive capacity across generations.

During the run, we pass near the cemetery where many of my family members are buried. We were here just a couple of months ago to clean and decorate their graves. Every Memorial Day, we go to multiple Indian cemeteries and clean the soil, remove older offerings that have been broken or weathered, and replace them with the new meaningful items (pinwheels, American flags for veterans, flowers in glass vases, and small mementos such as animal figurines, jewelry, or other personal objects.)

The run takes place on the 4th of July, a deliberate choice. The Yakama Nation once masked the holiday as a patriotic celebration of Independence Day, using it as a cover to gather for ceremony during the Indian assimilation era, when the U.S government outlawed ceremonial gatherings and prohibited large assemblies.. This patriotic display served as a loophole, allowing them to hold ceremonies while deceiving the American government into believing they were celebrating Independence Day. Jacob (2021) captures this strategic resistance in her book *Fox Doesn't Wear a Watch: Lessons from Mother Nature's Classroom*:

My Nez Perce friends remind me of the history of Indigenous resistance to settler state oppression that's linked to the Fourth of July. As Indigenous dances and gatherings were

outlawed as 'savage' practices, Indigenous peoples brilliantly began 'celebrating' on the Fourth of July, and Indian agents responsible for controlling the Natives assumed such celebrations were motivated by patriotic fervor, evidence that the Natives were appropriately assimilating. (p. 41).

In this way, the Kiutus Jim Run is not just an act of endurance but a dynamic expression of *Huli*, the wind, that carries memory, resilience, and movement forward. Like *Huli*, these practices shift and adapt yet remain constant in their presence and force. Integral to this continuity are the women, whose labor often remains unseen yet foundational. The women prepare the meals, sustain the ceremonies, and carry the medicine embedded in each act of care. In this way, their efforts are similar to *Huli's* in that they circulate quietly yet mightily to ensure that the teachings, memories, and ceremonies continue. Their hands and their breath generate and nourish the community, creating the winds of resilience that continue to blow.

Elder Insights: Rene Brown on Longhouse Traditions

I spoke with elder Rene Brown, a respected Wapato Longhouse member who was raised in the Longhouse and later became head of the women's line. This excerpt highlights her reflections following the Huckleberry Feast services on July 27, 2025, focusing on her early experiences, responsibilities, and teachings within the Longhouse.

As part of our conversation, I asked her to reflect on her early experiences in the Longhouse and what it meant to be learning as a young girl. I asked, *“Can you share a memory from when you were younger, growing up in the longhouse...or what it meant to you, when you were learning?”* She shared: “A good memory would be when I was probably about Sugar’s age—she’s five. We were standing on the floor, and my eldest aunt, Amelia, came out and showed us how to dance.”

She paused for a moment, pondering her childhood and growing up, being raised in the Longhouse with our traditions, then shared: “Be still, and not be talking, and not playing... learning to go dig and pick for the first time was an amazing experience.”

Children weren’t allowed to dig or pick until they could care for themselves. “You couldn’t do any of that until you could comb your hair... Once a child could comb their hair and brush their teeth on their own, then they could begin learning to dig and pick.” Families still try to uphold this tradition.

When asked about the responsibilities she held during the ceremony as a young person, Rene reflected on how her involvement began to shift at an early age. She explained how she moved from the main ceremonial hall to the kitchen. This space would become central to her contribution within the longhouse community.

“I got introduced to the kitchen. So I’ve always been in the kitchen since I was about ten years old,” she recalled.

From that point forward, Rene began assisting with food preparation and other kitchen-related tasks, which became her primary responsibility during ceremony.

“I’ve been in the kitchen helping—getting the servings ready, wiping down the salt and pepper shakers... setting out the serving plates. There’s six plates. That was one of my big responsibilities.”

As she grew older, Rene’s role became increasingly central, and she eventually assumed leadership within the kitchen.

“Now that I’m older, the kitchen became mine... it was mine.”

Health issues have since passed these duties to others.

“I haven’t been able to do it because I’ve had two back surgeries. So it’s been passed down to other folks, and they do it.”

When I asked Rene what she had been taught early on about how to behave or carry herself in the Longhouse, she paused and reflected.

“It was more of a... we were just expected to. It wasn’t really taught—it was a look that they gave you,” she said.

Rather than being given direct instructions, the traditional method of learning for children was through observation and subtle cues. Glances, presence, and modeled behavior communicated the expectations of discipline. Rene explained that formal longhouse teachings were directed

more toward the drummers, and children were expected to remain respectful and quiet.

“When I was growing up, children were meant to be seen and not heard,” she said. “That was a big thing.”

She noted the shift in cultural teachings and expectations over time and acknowledged that younger generations, including her own grandchildren, did not necessarily understand the traditional ways and earlier expectations.

“My granddaughter and the others in this generation don’t know what that meant anymore,” she observed.

Rene shared that when she was young, children weren’t allowed to attend funerals until they had reached a certain level of maturity and understanding. She recalled the first funeral she was permitted to attend, it was her Tila Henry’s, when she was around twelve years old.

“I think the first one I remember was maybe I was ten... ten or twelve years old. That was the first one I actually got to go to.”

Rene described the discipline in the Longhouse as “pretty strict.” She pointed out that people once considered the playful or casual behavior seen today inappropriate during her childhood.

“My grandchildren over there acting kushúm [wild or unruly]—you couldn’t do that. The elders would be sitting there with their whip stick.”

She motioned to the space around us, recalling the way elders enforced discipline, often without needing to say a word.

“They would just give you a look,” she said, conveying how powerful that silent teaching could be.

When I asked Rene about the role of women in the Longhouse, she emphasized the clear ceremonial boundaries that define responsibilities along gendered lines. “Women are not allowed to touch the drum at all,” she explains, describing it as a sacred object designated explicitly for men’s ceremonial responsibilities.

She continued by explaining the division of roles within the Longhouse during the ceremony. The kitchen, where women work, is not separate from the ceremonial space; rather, it is a vital and foundational aspect of it. This distinction reflects a structure in which roles are differentiated, yet deeply interdependent. As Jacob (2013) explains, referencing Ackerman’s study of Plateau gender norms, the social order is one of “complementary but equal” roles. Rene reinforced this worldview when she explained, “When we’re in the kitchen, women aren’t allowed to go hunting or fishing.” These activities are reserved for men, whose role is to provide and prepare food as part of their ceremonial obligation. “Men provide, and they bring it back to us,” she said.

Rene described the ceremonial protocol that takes place when game is brought into the longhouse kitchen. “When they bring back the deer, they have the head already cut off. We’re not allowed to have those. We’re not allowed to see those,” she explained. The animal is gutted beforehand, and only the body of the elk is brought to the women. “That’s something the

men are supposed to do. That's ceremonial for them, not for us," she noted.

This illuminates the importance of men's active participation in Longhouse ceremonies and traditions. Maintaining a harmonious gender balance requires that men also show up and learn these cultural practices. In this way, Yakama feminism depends on men to follow through, uphold, and carry forward the traditions, embodying the complementary roles essential to the collective cultural integrity of the community.

When I asked whether women are allowed to handle fish, Rene clarified that they are, but only after the men have completed their ceremonial role. "After they bring it to us, yes, you can," she said.

Reflecting on gendered protocol within ceremonial space, Rene described how people once clearly maintained relational boundaries in the Longhouse. "Back in my day," she explained, "you weren't allowed to touch the men." She recalled how deeply people practiced this respect: "I had one uncle, Uncle Will. Nobody, nobody ever touched him. Men had to be respected in that manner at all times."

Despite the formal expectations, Rene remembered with warmth the special relationship she had with her uncle, which gently bent the ceremonial norms. "He would let me hug him," she said. "Everybody's like, 'What are you doing? Why are you hugging him?' But I was allowed to be able to do that. And I mean, that was special to me as a child growing up. And he'd actually hug

me back in public." For her, these moments were significant and reflect both familial bonds and the careful negotiations of respect within strict cultural expectations. "Me and my late brother were very close to him," she added. "So it was nice that we got to do that with him, you know, be a part of the family."

When asked if those ceremonial boundaries had shifted in recent years, Rene acknowledged the changes. "Yeah, now... now men go around and hug," she noted. "And men don't sit on the men's side anymore. Even men come and sit with the women, women sit with the men." This shift in spatial and relational etiquette marks a generational transition. "You never used to be able to do that," she emphasized. When asked when she began to notice the shift, she reflected, "It started changing, probably... gosh, I wanna say maybe twenty years ago. Around about twenty years ago, everything started changing."

"You hear the drummers now. Our drum line.. because a lot of them have passed on. So the drum line is different. They're trying to teach the younger generation how to do that." When asked how she felt the younger generation was doing with the drums, she replied: "It's different. It's different."

She continued, comparing current practices to those from her upbringing: "It's just like with the women...with the pickers and the diggers. It's different now. Times are a lot different than what it used to be when I was growing up. I mean, it used to be very strict. Now it's laxed."

Rene described some of the shifts in expectations:

“They can have phones. They can talk to their children. They can have their grandchildren.”

When it was noted that “it just feels different,” Rene responded:

This reflection explores the flexibility and dynamic shifts that enable the resilience of tradition and culture to continue. These shifts enable changes in societal standards, creating a flexible structure and function. This concept is like the wind, which can shift and change the environment and circumstances, with the adaptability of the environment allowing it to adjust its function and continue thriving. Similarly, oral stories are often employed because they allow for flexibility and the coexistence of multiple understandings, teachings, and practices. They reject the rigid, compartmentalized ideals of Western ideologies and epistemologies, making space for multiplicity and adaptation over time.

I asked Rene about women’s roles during songs and dances in the Longhouse, knowing that women do not drum. She responded without hesitation: “Yeah, we’re not allowed to drum. Women just, I mean to be honest, we stand on the sidelines. I mean, we got to support the men.” She further described that the role of women in this setting is “to stand beside them, more or less, not interrupt them.”

When asked about the First Foods Ceremony, Rene spoke with reverence and clarity. “The

First Foods is extremely important to us as Native people,” she began, “because it brings us nourishment.” She described it as a time of renewal at the “very beginning of spring,” marking the arrival of “the first salmon, the first roots to dig, the deer, the elk.” She reflected, “It’s our first coming out, to be seen again... so that we’re open and out.” She emphasized not only the ceremonial significance but the practical importance of gathering and preserving foods: “When we go digging and picking, that’s also important—that we preserve the food to carry us through for the wintertime.”

Rene noted the gendered divisions of labor around food preparation as well, especially in the past: “If they’re drying the deer and elk meat, the men do that. So, the women don’t normally take care of that.” But she observed a shift in contemporary practice, adding, “Now you see a lot more women... Like in my day, we didn’t have a lot of them doing that.”

This shift illustrates the ongoing need to preserve and sustain our ceremonies, which at times requires a departure from traditional practices. During our interview, Martina described instances when the absence of deer for the ceremony necessitated that women hunt. Our community traditionally relies on men to provide the meat. When this responsibility is not met, it significantly disrupts our ceremonial practices, necessitating that women occasionally assume this role to ensure the ceremony’s continuation. A similar pattern is observed in fishing, where women have increasingly taken on roles and responsibilities that are becoming more gender-inclusive.

I inquired about the protocols for grieving the loss of a loved one, referencing what Martina had shared about waiting before returning to the mountains. Rene affirmed that traditionally, individuals are expected to wait a whole year before resuming certain ceremonial practices and responsibilities. “You’re supposed to step back,” she explained. During this time, one is not permitted to go into the mountains or to digging areas, as doing so would be considered taboo. “You go out there and you’re digging the roots, you’re picking the berries—and those berries and those roots won’t never come back again.”

Instead, others step in to care for those responsibilities. Rene recalled how, after her brother passed away in 2023, people brought her family roots and berries. “They’d go up and dig the roots, and then they bring them in garbage bags so we could feed them and take care of them, so we’d be ready for the memorial.” She added that they brought “gallons of berries,” emphasizing the collective effort involved in honoring this time of mourning.

When I asked about the impact of treaties on ceremonial practice and cultural continuity, Rene was candid. “I’m going to be 110% honest,” she said. “I’m 54 years old, and I’ve never, ever read the treaty in my life.” Although she recalled her mother urging her to read it when she ran for Miss Yakama Nation in 1989—“you need to read the treaty, you got to understand what it’s about”—Rene admitted, “I just kind of glanced through it... I don’t know what it entails.”

Her understanding of treaty rights has since expanded through her work in the federal system, where she now encounters the practical implications of those rights. “I see a little more of what our treaty rights are and what we’re supposed to be able to do,” she noted. While these rights have some bearing on her life today, she acknowledged, “It affects me in some instances, but not in all of them.”

We discussed the broader disruptions that policies like treaty enforcement and boarding schools have had on ceremony, language, and intergenerational knowledge. Rene reflected on the challenges: “I don’t know that it’s actually really affected us to that extent here on the reservation,” she said initially. But then she added, “I can understand a little bit of Yakama... I can speak a little bit when I speak to my granddaughter, but that was my choice.” She acknowledged that the interruptions caused by suppression of ceremony and language had a generational effect: “Once that stopped, it’s no longer that you’re allowed to do that anymore—and that’s really hard.”

Rene also acknowledged the distance some individuals feel from ceremonial life, particularly those whose families were directly impacted by boarding schools or displacement. “There are some people that... come because they’re like, ‘I don’t know what I’m doing. Can somebody please help me?’” she shared. The vulnerability of those seeking reconnection reflects both a disruption in the transmission of knowledge and demonstrates the resilience of our culture and the desire of those who seek to reconnect to what was lost or severed in their lineage.

Rene noted that some community members, particularly those whose families were removed from traditional practices, may be unfamiliar with the Longhouse or its ceremonies. She shared, “There are some people that... come because they’re like, ‘I don’t know what I’m doing. Can somebody please help me?’” She described one enrolled Yakama man in his sixties who “has no idea what longhouse is about, what the church is about” because “he didn’t grow up in that” and “it was off the reservation.” Rene expressed her willingness to support his learning, saying, “He really wants to be part of it, to have that traditional feeling. So we’re trying to give him that experience and that exposure.”

Regarding cultural reconnection, Rene explained, “We have people that are coming in and we’re trying to learn and trying to teach and they’re willing, they’re eager. They want to know what it’s all about.” She identified language as a significant challenge, stating, “The language barrier... not too many of us speak the language.” While she “can understand it,” she “can’t speak it fluently,” and “those folks that are coming, they can’t understand or speak it.” She noted that “a lot of the people that are here, they don’t know, you know, they don’t speak it other than Deland, the leader. He speaks it, but there’s nobody else here that does.”

Rene described Deland’s journey, saying, “Deland came to us and he had never spoke Yakama before,” but “he wanted his Indian name, his grandmother passed away. He wanted his grandmother’s Indian name. And he said, ‘I’m going to learn how to speak[the] language.’ And

he did it.” She added, “He went to college, picked up the language class, and he learned it within a year.”

Rene emphasized that learning the Yakama language is deeply valuable when practiced in relation. “It’s good to have when you’re learning as long as you’re being able to talk to somebody else,” she explained. Reflecting on her own experience, she shared how her mother encouraged her to speak only to her in their native language: “She would tell her.... don’t talk to me in English. I only want you to talk to me... in Ichishkiin.” This method, although meaningful and expressed through action, was not without its challenges. “It was different because I wasn’t understanding because she’d have to repeat it all over,” Rene recalled, noting that her difficulty with pronunciation added another layer. “It was very frustrating for her because I couldn’t grasp my tongue, the dialects, because there’s 14 different dialects.”

Rene elaborated on the diversity of language across the Yakama Nation. “There’s 14 different tribes and bands in the Yakama reservation... here in the Wapato Longhouse, we say *chush*; over at Priest, they say *chush*. On the river, they say *cheesh*... each one has got a different dialect.” While some dialects are still actively spoken, she acknowledged that “some are not spoken.” She added, “Elders from the river—there’s not too many of them left. And um, one’s over at Priest Rapids, um there’s quite a few left over there that the children are picking it up. So, they’re learning it. So, yeah, our children here are trying to learn and we’re trying to know.”

When asked what she felt was most important for younger generations, Rene responded directly: “To learn the traditions, to follow our traditions... just be open-minded.” She described how she works to pass on this knowledge, particularly to her granddaughter. “She’s willing to learn, and I help, you know, I teach her... we’re sitting at the table today, and she was like, ‘ooh piyaxi [Traditional Root].’”

Rene noted that while many young people want to learn, distractions like gaming often interfere. “The younger generation does kind of want to learn more, but at the same sense, there’s this gaming thing going on.” She shared how one grandson is involved with drumline but struggles to stay focused. “He just keep showing them backwards. But I try to push him and... assist him to staying in that line.” Another grandson, she noted, “doesn’t want to... he went to stay in the room and play games. All day long. It’s like, you can’t do that.” She expressed concern: “He should have been here today to pour water, ‘cause he’s a water pourer, but he wasn’t here.” Reflecting on generational change, she shared: “The tradition is slowly slipping away from them.” She emphasized the importance of early teaching: “But you teach them at this age... then it might stick.

Gathering with Care: Tmáani (pick berries, harvest fruit) in Practice

This next section reflects on my personal experience going into the mountains and participating with the women on the line for the Yakama Longhouse. My atwai grandfather (great-uncle) Russell Jim founded our Longhouse, the

White Swan Community Center. His wife, my great aunt Barbara Jim, is now one of the lead women, alongside my Kathlah (grandma) Carol Lucei, overseeing ceremonial and food gathering practices, coordinating the setup, cleaning, organizing, arranging the women on the line, and ensuring everyone has the necessary traditional clothing.

Growing up and attending the Longhouse, I always felt incredibly connected to the land and the religion, surrounded by immense love from family throughout the Longhouse community. I received the opportunity and honor of joining the women’s line for diggers and pickers only this past year. This presents an exceptional opportunity that carries significant responsibilities. Engaging in this work transcends mere routine; it involves forging a deep connection with the land.

As one of the leaders from the women’s line expressed, it is about “breaking your soul open to the berries,” allowing the land and self to intertwine. It requires the humility to embrace the healing, the medicine, present throughout the entire process. My teachers emphasized that keeping a good heart—and maintaining positive, grateful thoughts and feelings—is essential. We learned that the feelings and thoughts we experience while connecting with the land and gathering medicine must be respected and honored. This energy that we carry is absorbed into the medicine. If harmful thoughts occur during any part of the process (gathering, cleaning, preparing, or serving), then that energy will cling to the medicine and turn it sour.



Figure 7

Chcháya (Juneberry) Bush. Not quite ready to harvest. These come before the Huckleberries and Chokecherries. Photograph by Hailey Allen

Tmísh (Chokecherries) of the Yakama Valley

I was preparing to go picking with the Swan sisters from the Longhouse when my 8-year-old daughter woke up early and asked where I was going. I reminded her, as I had before our visit, that this was a big opportunity: I was meeting the women to go berry picking. She jumped up, rubbing her sleepy eyes (we had traveled late the night before to Yakima and had only a little sleep) and said excitedly, “I want to go too!”

We got dressed, packed our lunch, and headed out to meet the women. Waiting in White Swan at the Cougar Den, we had breakfast and shared our excitement. I expressed my gratitude that she chose to take on this role, noting that by beginning her engagement with the living practice at such a young age, she would accumulate experience and knowledge to share with younger generations. It was a beautiful moment of learning together, the *Huli* in action.

After meeting up with the group of women, we headed into the valley for a day of picking chokecherries. Birds accompanied us along the route, flying, dancing, swooping, and twirling.

We spoke to the birds while my daughter smiled, trying to capture photographs of this interaction, absorbing and attempting to preserve the moment and the environment’s medicinal qualities—the place where our ancestors have been for centuries and beyond. We marveled at the rolling hills surrounding us. The day was beautiful and unusually cool for early August in this semi-arid region. I experienced a profound somatic response, an awareness of my body’s cells vibrating with ancestral memory, a reawakening of our DNA in relation to this place, and a reinforcement of the deep interconnection between land, body, and heritage. We were grateful for this opportunity to pass on and participate in our traditional ways.

A few days before meeting the women, I spent the day harvesting *wisik* (blackberries) in Ferndale and dedicated the evening to making jam for the first time, canning the jars as gifts.

This process of gathering and preparing gifts was infused with intentional care, reflecting a longstanding family practice rooted in the Indigenous principle of reciprocity—a continual cycle of giving and receiving that sustains relationships.



Figure 8
Tmishaash (chokecherry bush), White Swan, Washington.
Photograph by Hailey Allen

I presented the blackberry jam as an offering of gratitude and reintroduced myself to the women, as it had been many years since I had seen them. For the last decade, I had mostly gone to the Wapato Longhouse, while these women, family by marriage, were from the White Swan Longhouse, which I had rarely visited except for my children's pawanikt (name-giving ceremony) the previous summer. The act of giving, although modest, was important, especially as my daughter observed and absorbed this practice. The gifting acknowledged the interconnectedness between people, the land, and our ancestors. It also recognizes that we honor the privilege of gathering from the land and take seriously the responsibility to honor these gifts through generosity.

As we assembled for chokecherry picking, we formed a line along the dirt road, each holding their first cherry, a single chokecherry carefully grasped between the thumb and index finger of the right hand, arranged from oldest to youngest and facing east. We paused for prayer, song, and to introduce ourselves in Ichishkiin with our Indian names. We were grateful for the t'ixwt'xw (rain) sprinkling upon us, a gift that cooled the day, nourished the land, and quenched the first foods and medicines.

We spent the day picking, sharing stories, and my daughter made new friends. The women's ages ranged from just over one year old to elder matriarchs, reflecting intergenerational knowledge and cultural continuity.



Figure 9

My daughter, Ava Lien cleaning and drying her *Tmish* (Chokecherries). Photograph by Hailey Allen

Conclusion

At its core, this process has been dynamic and unrestrained, unfolding in cyclical rhythms and at its own pace. Guided by my heart, this cyclical and iterative process has enabled immersion in the research experience, shaping an approach that extends beyond observation and offers a reflective and reflexive ceremony. Through the fieldwork of berry picking, root digging, ceremonial runs, and elder interviews, I gained boundless knowledge, which provided a foundation for experimental and participatory research to become Indigenous scholarship.

This framework was understood and reflected upon through the lens of an Indigenous woman, making significant contributions to the academic exploration of Yakama culture. This research evolved into a ceremonial act, blossoming into an act of resistance that confronted and rejected colonial mechanisms of cultural erasure and eradication. By writing from within our cultural frameworks, we contribute to scholarly knowledge, sustain and transmit Indigenous teachings, and empower the women of our communities to take up this work.

These lessons enriched my understanding and illustrated the rich and sacred medicine that ceremonial research can offer. This was all made possible through the support and guidance of the women of the Longhouse and the elders who so graciously offered their hearts and shared stories, reflections, and immersive experiences with me, for whom I remain forever profoundly grateful.

Huli embodies knowledge as vitality, sustaining cultural resilience through intergenerational teachings and ecological stewardship. Through Yakama legends, ceremonies, and oral history, I have demonstrated how *Huli* propels the flow of knowledge and healing as a form of resistance to colonial disruption, highlighting Yakama women as critical bearers of resilience. I have found that, through the reverent stewardship of the Yakama women as keepers of traditional knowledge and positioned as the generative nourishment of the community and land, the stories, ceremonies, and practices of gathering and teaching have created a

collective effort toward healing historical wounds and reaffirming our sacred relationship to the land. I saw hope and vitality reflected in the eyes of the elder women and the leaders of the women's line. Their gratitude, like Huli, flowed

through the Longhouse, carrying the strength of their hearts and their commitment to honoring and preserving our traditional ways, reinforcing and nurturing a vibrant and hopeful future for the Seven Generations ahead.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Hailey Allen**

Hailey Allen (Thx) is Yakama and Umatilla and recently earned a BS in Public Health, with minors in Political Science and American Indian Studies. A former CWIS summer intern, she now joins the organization as the Kiaux Russell Jim Public Health Research Fellow, where her work focuses on women's traditional medicine. Allen's path was shaped by her great-uncle, the late Yakama elder Russell Jim—a longhouse leader and environmental protector—whose commitment to community deeply influenced her approach to research and public health. Grounded in an Indigenous feminist lens, her scholarship centers on women's roles within the Yakama Longhouse. In *Women at the Longhouse: Part One*, she explores how medicine, ceremony, and First Food teachings sustain cultural knowledge across generations. Allen is also a mother of two, a distance runner, co-founder of Huli Boardshop in Ferndale, Washington, and a professional visual artist on the ArtsWA Public Artist Roster, creating bold, layered, abstract portraiture that centers Indigenous women.