



Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission
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“Being Frank”

Listen to the Heart Beat
By Billy Frank, Jr.
Chairman
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OLYMPIA, WA (6/19/07) - I've spoken about the traditional knowledge of our ancestors for many years because within its teachings are the answers to the environmental challenges we all face today.

The heart of traditional knowledge is respect. Learn to listen and you can hear the rhythm of this heartbeat being passed from generation to generation in the ceremonies and stories of our people. Listen and you can feel its valuable lessons in the collective breath of living things big and small. Feel this heart beat and you will feel your own.

With the many environmental challenges we face, it is critical for tribal and non-tribal communities to understand that we are all connected. That we must work together as brothers and sisters. That if we don't talk together, we can't learn together. These are the things we must do to help our children meet the challenges of the future with courage, wisdom and respect.

There is no greater warmth than that reflected in the eyes of our children as they discover the great wonders of our planet. That's why I have renewed my dedication to environmental education, and I ask you to do the same.

I'm increasing my support of programs such as the Washington Indian Education Association, the Pacific Education Institute and the Environmental Education Association of Washington, which coordinates the E3 Washington program. As co-chair of E3 along with Governor Gregoire and William Ruckelshaus, I hope to help encourage people to understand the connections between the Environment, the Economy and Education for our Mother Earth and all of her inhabitants. I hope to help strengthen understanding between tribes and non-tribal educators and to support the development of environmental education entities throughout the state.

You can be part of the growing numbers who are joining the E3 initiative. There's nothing fancy about the way it works. Educators, natural resource managers and others get together to brainstorm ideas at the watershed level. Statewide summits are held to help the plans come together and support the programs needed to make headway. The truly great thing about this program is that it is joining the inner city teacher with the farmer, the environmentalist with the businessman and the Indian with the non-Indian. A resolution recently passed by the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians strongly endorses this effort.

Tribes are working hard to make a difference in environmental education, and so are others. But none of us can do it alone. We know the resources and enthusiasm—and the traditional knowledge we bring to the table—can make a difference. We support E3 because we want to help all children understand their connection with the world and the lessons of traditional knowledge that have stood the test of time.

We hope you will join the effort, too.



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