

Hanford: Our Threatened Heritage: How Clean is Clean enough?

Since Time Immemorial:

Through oral history we are descendants of our ancestors with strong ties to the land.

These lands have a spirit and feelings, too. Just like our heartbeat.

The land at one time can be remembered as a clean place to live; all things were pure, the air, the water, the natural foods, medicines and fish and wildlife. Today I am polluted, contaminated and cannot heal or mend.

How clean is clean enough?

They cannot speak; I speak for them.

I see the fish in the river, are they safe and clean to eat for my people ?

I see the elk, deer, coyote and the eagle along the shoreline, are they safe and protected?

I see the many plants near the shoreline, on the hillsides, the dirt, the winds move, are they safe?

Nature closes in on itself with Destruction, Assimilation, and Migration. You damaged my ancestral lands and the natural resources my people gathered.

Our threatened heritage.

This land encroachment and devastation was never meant to be. We have always strived to utilize our natural resources for the benefit of the land and people.

Nature has allowed this faith for my people to restore the strength and carry on our way of life of living off the land and its natural resources.

We are taught, were only here on borrowed time. Our strength comes from the water, the fish, the deer and roots and berries.

Everything put on this earth was here for a purpose. Through oral histories as a child, change has come, for better or worse. The war has come and gone. What promise was made when encroachment arrived? Will it return back to its integrity? How clean is clean enough?

This land has historical meaning to me as a child, it means home. When you think about all the shared stories around the table, you become a part of them and through that you come to an understanding.

Today we face many challenges with our neighbors, we must work together for the advancement of technology and cleanup. The health and safety of all people should be a priority.

We want to return home, walk along the shores barefoot, swim with the fish, catch an eel, hunt again, and gather the plants with my children, my grandchildren and yet unborn.