GENERATIONS OF KNOWLEDGE:
Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Environmental Science [#1010559]

This project engages underserved Native and non-Native audiences in environmental science content and awareness through innovative traveling exhibits and programs. Traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) and western science are communicated and promoted within culturally relevant contexts as valuable, complementary ways of knowing, understanding, and caring for the world.

The Oregon Museum of Science and Industry (OMSI), and its partners, the Indigenous Education Institute (IEI), the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI), the Tamástslikt Cultural Institute (Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation), and the Hibulb Cultural Center and Natural History Preserve (Tulalip Tribes) are working collaboratively to develop and deliver all aspects of the project.

The Institute of Learning Innovation and advisors from RMC Research Corp. and Native Pathways are conducting the external evaluation using a mixed method, community-based participatory research (CBPR) approach.

Big Idea
“Traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) and western science are both valuable and complementary for understanding the natural world.”

Project Deliverables:
- A 2,000 square foot traveling exhibition designed to engage families at science and tribal museums in the “big idea.”
- A 150 linear foot traveling graphic panel exhibition and on-line exhibition created in collaboration with NMAI and the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service (SITES) for small tribal museums and other venues.
- An activity kit for Native youth in informal and formal settings.

Public Audience Impacts
- Awareness that traditional ecological knowledge and western science offer complementary ways of understanding the natural world
- Attitudes that TEK and western science are both relevant and valuable for understanding environmental issues
- Skills related to TEK to care for the environment, such as observing or modeling, through learning that occurs between different generations
- Skills of the scientific process, such as predicting or measuring, to care for the environment
- Other unanticipated positive impacts

Project Challenges
- Working with advisors and partners from many different cultures and regions
- Defining TEK for public audiences and within the larger OMSI team
- Creating educational experiences for Native and non-Native audiences from many different cultures (the Portland area alone includes over 300 different tribes)