

CHARLENE MATHESON

I am running for Tribal Council because I want the best for our tribe, every single one of us. Everybody who has been around forever knows who I am. For those who are newer to the Tribe, my parents are Don Matheson and Pauline Camille. My father was raised on the Young family allotment in Fife, and got a home across Fife to raise us in. He worked 3 jobs in order to support us. He kept all of us active in the fishing rights battles. My mother is a Coeur d'Alene Tribal Member, but she dove into the Puyallup Tribal community with both feet, providing energy beyond the demands of raising 7 children to help our tribe fight and ultimately secure our Treaty Fishing Rights as promised in the Medicine Creek Treaty.

She served as the secretary/treasurer for the intertribal group that formed – The Survival of American Indians Association. My father served as its President. All of our elders or ancestors who were here with us at the time, risked everything they had to fight for our treaty rights. That is why we still have fisherman today. In fact, that is why there are still fish in the river today!

Because of the powerful role modeling of my parents, I cannot not come forward to offer to devote my life to the service and survival of this tribe. I am announcing my candidacy this year because I believe that our rights as individual tribal members are as threatened now as our treaty fishing rights were back then.

Over the summer and fall, I learned that there are about 800 of us, at least, that know that what I am saying is true, and agree that this is a crucially serious election.

So much has changed over the years. I suppose that's progress. We have been so blessed in being able to rely on our Tribe so that our most basic needs will be met if we are in desperation economics.

As we get better at managing our ability to make money, we have to be really careful to not allow our customs and traditions to be diminished in any way. We must make sure that our values and traditions are taught to our children and to our newer tribal members who weren't raised here who want to know.

We must never, ever reach a place where our most important cultural value of all – cherishing, honoring, respecting and taking care of our elders – is dismissed.

We must do all that we can to protect the most neglected part of our tribal heritage – our reservation.

We must respond forcefully to development and environmental impacts. We need to stop giving our neighboring jurisdictions a blank check to pave over every inch of our reservation and pollute our air and water. The membership should receive notification of Settlement consultations from Fife, Tacoma, Milton, Puyallup and Pierce County. The responses should come from our membership.

I was an affirmative action student back in the day when minorities got extra help in being admitted to quality colleges and universities. I got into the University of Washington (Seattle campus back when that was the only campus) and stayed with it to receive a dual bachelor's degree and a doctoral degree. I am a licensed psychologist and worked many years in that field. I now believe that my work is here, for my tribe, and I have worked here since 2000. Because I have been working here, I know how important it will be for the new Tribal Council to restore the employee morale and safety of all of our tribal workplaces.

I am asking that you educate yourself on the issues that are so important, because they affect every single one of us – even the tribal members who don't live here.

Don't forget to request your absentee ballot before March 25 to make sure it makes it to the election committee by the April 2 deadline. Many, many people do not request an absentee ballot because they plan to vote in person on election day. Too often, tho, something unexpected happens and people lose their voice because they couldn't make it in to vote on election day.

Make sure you know who's who on the candidate list and most important of all: be sure to cast your vote!

