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Final Research Paper

Cultural Adaptation Through Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Climate Change

Hello my name is Talonna Nelson and I am a member of the Karuk Tribe of California. I go to school at the University of California Santa Cruz and I am double majoring in Psychology and Legal Studies with a combined minor in American Indian Studies and Environmental Consciousness. I am interested in helping the Federally Recognized tribes of the Klamath Basin, Yurok, Hoopa, Karuk, Klamath tribes, and Quartz Valley Indian Reservation, because we are all tied together through the Klamath River. I am directly **effected from drought and climate change** as well as my people and the landscape, and I want to **learn how to prepare for future climate change issues**. I was inspired to do my research project on **culture loss** because I feel that through new generations being born, culture is being lost by lack of practice in the home. Another reason I wanted to focus on climate change as a factor to **culture loss** is because our people are being modernized. Those who don't notice **culture loss** are not seeing the effects of climate change. **Basket weaving, hunting, acorn gathering, and fishing are very dependent on the seasonal patterns**. With climate change going on, the temperatures are rising and the plants and animals are suffering because of it. I got the opportunity to be an intern for the Klamath Basin Tribal Youth Program this summer and it opened my eyes to the issues all the tribes face from climate change and what non-native people are going through. Through this internship I got the privilege to see firsthand the issues that are in the Klamath Basin. **HOW? Living in such a small community I also discovered how sheltered each tribe can be from the different landscapes and forests that make up the basin**. I would have never known how different each landscape could be until we traveled all over the basin and seen for ourselves. **Different plants and animals are effected differently through climate change which is a problem because there can never be one right answer. There is drought, climate change, and fire majorly impacting the way the basin naturally runs. The Klamath River that connects the six federally recognized tribes is getting sick. The climate change has made it to where the water temperatures are rising and the fish are suffering. Not only are the fish suffering but so are the other animals and people thriving off the river as well. There are many issues that have contributed to the river HOW?**

With my research I intended on asking individuals within the communities of **how they viewed culture loss through climate change**. I soon found out that Native Americans are very resilient when it comes to preserving culture over time. **As Native Americans have had to travel from season to season in order to survive off the land, they learned different ways to live off the land. They also practiced different traditions in different places so that if one place were to be non-inhabitable they had other grounds to perform culture on**. I found this very unique because **culture wasn't lost all those years ago because it was constantly practiced and lived**. Culture loss

gets tricky in colonial times because Native Americans were not allowed to practice traditions.
HOW?

HOW? The seasons are changing, the animals are confused, the plants and fruits are premature. The drought on top of all this is even more devastating because there is no water for anything to survive off of. Modernization, drought, and climate change are the major factors that are leading to culture loss. Though there are programs that can teach traditional ways, climate change is the game changer.

With lack of water and temperatures rising, traditional culture can become harder to practice and learn. For stick games, the sand men and boys play in becomes too hot to stand on. This creates a problem because if it's too hot then players can be hurt from the hot sand and the games will be canceled. With the youth of different tribes being reintroduced to the old game of sticks, players are more than eager to get out on the field and start playing or practicing. When the weather conditions become too harsh, this tradition can't be played or practiced normally in the summer season as usual. In modern days, players can now use socks so play in for a bit longer until the sand becomes too unbearable.

Culture preservation is always a priority among Native American tribes in the Klamath Basin. Climate change effects are a constant struggle when it comes to restoring culture and tradition. This year, climate change and drought mixed together with numerous wildfires has made everyone that lives in the Klamath Basin a little worried. There isn't enough water in the rivers and tributaries for the fish to survive, creating another fish kill like the one in 2001. QUOTE The lack of water has made mandatory water restrictions on the people who live along the water sources but for those who live in the cities, they don't see the actual damage being done within the basin. QUOTE

Language is a very important factor toward culture loss and preservation. The Karuk language is based on description. No one word means one thing, therefore; as descriptions change so does the language. If there are no longer salmon in the river, the descriptions for seasons change as well.

When talking about culture loss we have to think about the changing world going on around us. When I talk about culture loss I am focusing on the changing climate around us. We need to look upon our elders for traditional ecological knowledge or knowledge that has been passed down for many generations on issues we are facing today because it is in no doubt that we as a native nation haven't experienced before. I am going to ask those who are full of experience in native culture what has been done to preserve cultures and traditions through modern society as well as climate change and their personal views on how to better our tribes and make them stronger.

Climate change has been a major impact on the new generation's tribal teachings of traditions. All time low water levels have led to droughts and those have led to stressed plants that don't want to produce anything from flowers to nuts to berries. Though we have elders in our communities that are working hard to teach our youth, they are simply not interested in how our people used to live the old ways in which their grandparents were brought up. It has been hard in my generation to participate in ceremonies and workshops due to school but that has also affected me in my wanting to learn. I want to be in those workshops and I want to be participating in the ceremonies and passing my knowledge down to the youth in my family but I am simply not there. I feel that climate change is a factor to loss of culture but I feel that modern society has a bigger part of the blame. School is a must in this country otherwise the guardians of the youth get into trouble. School takes away many hours of the day just for education and then if youth are interested in sports then they are committed to staying after school to practice those sports. This is an entire days' worth of pre-planned activities that leave no time for actively learning in the community because there is always homework and chores to be done once youth are home from school.

I am trying to learn the ways in which culture has been restored through the hardships that Native Americans have already faced.

Culture loss is an important subject to think about with ever changing climate change. Through climate change, seasons react differently to weather changes. Because we are seeing climate change, we have to look at what we can't see. The forests around us know how to adapt to weather changes but for the people that are being effected as well, they too have to know how to adapt. No doubt, our ancestors when through some tough years of weather change and our people are still thriving in culture and practicing tradition.

Climate adaptation through the cultural perspective is the key idea for culture loss. Through my research I have found that culture is not lost through climate change, but it is adapted into the new weather patterns and our people have learned to cope with climate change. Elders have stories when there were no berries or fruit came early and birds ate the cherries before they were even ready yet. Change is something indigenous people have learned to live with. The changing seasons mean for a new place to live because the resources would run out if people lived in one place year round.

Through my research I learned a little more about culture and how it is preserved. I thought all my life that once things changed, that they changed forever. With this internship I learned that through the Klamath tribes, salmon in the upper basin did change forever and that wasn't a factor due to climate change. There's nothing that can be done for the tribes that no longer have salmon to live off of.

Culture preservation is rising in the youth within the communities. Through my research I found that climate change doesn't really effect harvesting, gathering, and hunting traditions like I viewed it to.

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Klamath Water, Klamath Life

The Water Wards of the Northwest

BY WINONA LADUKE

http://www.earthisland.org/journal/index.php/ej/article/klamath_water_klamath_life/