

Special Guest Biographies:

Ramona Peters

Organizer, writer, potter, elder, Ramona Peters is a Bear Clan member of the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe. Ramona Peters grew up on Cape Cod among the people and landscape that she has sought to protect through her activism and her art. Ramona works with clay and other natural materials making ceramic vessels. She uses and teaches the ways of the ancestors with a sense of awareness to collaborate with the elements of fire, water, earth and air. She chose to revive the lost form of Wampanoag pottery which she describes as “bringing a long relative back home”. Ramona uses her art form to nourish tribal community members about ancient practices. Often times upon returning home she finds freshly dug clay on her doorsteps from community members. She says, “In the old days someone known for his/her gracefulness and careful way of walking through the world was assigned the job of carrying the family cooking pot.” She finds joy in teaching others and has a deep desire to use her knowledge as a form of healing. Ramona recently retired from being the Tribal Historic Preservation Officer for her tribe where her work focused on repatriation, indigenous rights, and historic preservation, spiritual and cultural endeavors of the Wampanoag. She also serves her tribe as a traditional Chief & Councilor, a member of the Mashpee Wampanoag Woman & Medicine Society, and a former member Mashpee Tribal Council Board of Directors. She also sat on the Board of Directors of Cultural Survival, and international indigenous rights advocate NGO, serving indigenous communities throughout the world. In 2010, Ramona was honored by the First Peoples Fund with their Community Spirit award. “Ramona embraces the essence of her cultural heritage...in her humble yet forthright way, she demands that her own people, the wider community with which she interacts, and humanity, face themselves spiritually, and in relation to their own histories.” - Ellen Lutz, Executive Director of Cultural Survival, nominator, Executive Director of Cultural Survival, nominator. Ramona is also the founder of the Native Land Conservancy, the first Native American driven land trust east of the Mississippi River. In June, 2017, they made history by signing the first cultural respect agreement with a conservation organization on Cape Cod to guarantee her peoples access for harvesting, holding ceremony and honoring their ancestors.

Charles Sams

Charles F. (Chuck) Sams III is Director of Communications at Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation. Chuck is a member of the Cocopah Nation with family ties to the Yanktonia Sioux and Cayuse Tribe. He is long dedicated to bringing land back into trust for tribal nations in order to protect both sovereign rights and natural resources. Chuck is also recognized nationally for his extensive work in salmon restoration and his dedication to Native youth, especially in reconnecting them with the way of the salmon. After graduating from Pendleton High School, he joined the U.S. Navy, graduating with honors from the United States Navy Intelligence Training Center A School. From 1988 until 1995 he served as a Navy Intelligence Specialist, receiving a Navy Achievement Medal in 1991 for combat operations during Desert Storm. He graduated from Concordia University with a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration, Management, Communications, and Leadership. Chuck Sams' career-long commitment to conservation began in 1992 as a policy analyst for the Confederated Tribes of

the Umatilla Indian Reservation's Special Science program. He also developed and managed the first AmeriCorps programs in New York City; with the Earth Conservation Corps' Salmon Corp program, where he continued his work with young people as Executive Director; and later with the non-profit Community Energy Project working on energy and water conservation, where he also served as Executive Director; and as Executive Director of the Columbia Slough Watershed Council, restoring and protecting the Columbia Slough and its watershed. In 2000 Chuck received the U.S. President's Service Medal from the White House and Points of Light Foundation for his work on salmon restoration in the Columbia River basin. And Chuck was again honored in 2011 Ecotrust Indigenous Leadership Award finalist for his dedication to the repatriation of conservation and cultural lands to tribes. From 2006 until 2010, Chuck worked with the Trust for Public Land as National Director of the Tribal & Native Lands Program. Assisting over seventy tribes and native communities, he helped develop strategies to reclaim Native lands. Chuck is also a founder of Indian Country Conservancy, a national non-profit dedicated to re-acquiring conservation lands and rebuilding Native nations.