

ACES 2016 Tuesday Evening Town Hall
December 6, 2016 | 5:15pm-6:45pm | Grand Ballroom 2

Title: *Nexus of Indigenous Knowledge and Ecosystem Services*

Description:

Since the 1990s conservation and development experts have known that they need to understand “indigenous knowledge” if their projects and policies on and near indigenous communities and lands are to succeed. Initially located in fields that focused on agricultural production systems and sustainable development, and then moving to fields that focused on biodiversity conservation, what we call an ‘expert knowledge of needing to know’ has emerged much more broadly across the sciences. What do we mean by an ‘expert knowledge of needing to know’?

Between the three of us we have decades of experience working with, living and learning in indigenous communities. Part of that experience, for each of us, has been working with scientists who wish to conduct research on indigenous lands or carry out well-intentioned projects on indigenous lands. We are collectively struck by how often we see that scientists understand that what indigenous people think, know, and do is important; indeed many of the scientists we know understand that it is crucial. Yet the level of fundamental misunderstanding of what “indigenous knowledge” is, as well as the fundamental misunderstanding of how, methodologically, researchers can access local knowledge systems, also strikes us.

In this town hall first, we will work with participants to help create a more robust understanding of what “indigenous knowledge” is and what it is not. Along with this we will facilitate a broader discussion of how indigenous communities come to know and then use what they know to relate to ecosystems and social systems. Next, we will work together to illustrate what methodologies for understanding indigenous life ways and systems of belief both help outsiders understand how people produce knowledge, and how they then deploy that knowledge through their practices, as well as how they might approach these questions in ways that are respectful towards indigenous worlds. Finally we will bring all of this together in a specific discussion of how indigenous ways of knowing, ways of expressing knowledge, and ways of living practices of knowledge articulate with ecosystem services approaches.

Town Hall Leaders:

Paige West is the Claire Tow Professor of Anthropology at Columbia University. She has worked with the indigenous peoples of New Guinea for the past twenty years and is the co-founder of the Papua New Guinea Institute of Biological Research and the founder of the journal *Environment and Society: Advances in Research*.

Jim Powell is an Assistant Professor at the University of Alaska Southeast (UAS), where he teaches natural resource policy, sustainability, and local governance. Jim is an Affiliated Research Faculty at University of Alaska Fairbanks, International Arctic Research Center’s Scenarios Network for Alaska and Arctic Planning. His research includes indigenous knowledge and institutional response and adaptation to climate change in Alaska, Greenland, and Yukon Territories. Before his appointment at UAS, Jim spent 28 years in environmental management, focusing on community-based environmental issues, water quality, and wetland issues. Among

his other appointments, Jim was the Special Assistant to the Commissioner of the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and was also an Assistant Director for the Division of Environmental Quality at DEC. His public service includes nine years on the City and Borough of Juneau Assembly including Deputy Mayor. Jim has a PhD in Natural Resources and Sustainability Science from the University of Alaska Fairbanks, a Master in Public Administration from UAS, and a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Studies from Eisenhower College at Rochester Institute of Technology.

Jon Waterhouse

Native American, Jon Waterhouse works with Indigenous cultures within some of the most remote watersheds on the planet. Beginning with a request many years ago from Indigenous Elders to “Go out, take the pulse of the River”, he has now logged thousands of miles by canoe in remote regions of the world. Spending time around campfires listening to the rhythm of life and wisdom of the ages imparted by place-based peoples. The journey is growing into a global network connecting traditional Indigenous cultures to one another, as well as to contemporary scientists, through science and Indigenous Knowledge. Working together, utilizing some of the latest scientific data collection techniques and high tech equipment, blended with knowledge viewed through the Indigenous lens and developed since time immemorial, this combination of the contemporary and Indigenous scientists is resulting in a more colorful and complete view of the natural world achieving a deeper understanding of planet systems and the state of environmental health as well as our own. This combination of two world-views is working to identify our shared challenges and common goals, and is becoming a catalyst for global community action for the future of humankind.

Waterhouse retired from his 20-year US NAVY career as a chief petty officer, he is a National Geographic Explorer, Grantee, and Education Fellow Emeritus, a presidential appointee of Pres. Barack Obama, Ecotrust Indigenous Leader Awardee, and Indigenous Peoples Scholar at Oregon Health and Science University.

Session Agenda:

5-minute introduction by moderator
45 minutes town hall discussion
10 minutes for additional follow-up questions

Audience:

The target audience is all of the at ACES attendees.

Conference Themes:

The conference theme is linking science, practice and decision making with a goal of having a dialogue across the many disciplines of ACES attendees with a focus on implementation.

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