



Flyer design by Ariel Mack. Courtesy Native Eyes Film Showcase.

Based in Tucson, Arizona, the Arizona State Museum's collections, research, and exhibits focus on the Native peoples of the greater Southwest. The museum sits on the ancestral lands of the Tohono O'odham Nation. The other prominent tribe in the area is the Pascua Yaqui Tribe. The Native Eyes Film Showcase, started in 2004, is produced collaboratively by Arizona State Museum (ASM), Tohono O'odham Nation Cultural Center and Museum (TONCCM), Pascua Yaqui Computer Clubhouse (PYCC), and Indigenous Strategies (IS). PYCC teaches media skills to their young community members, and IS works with educational institutions to promote Native-specific education. TONCCM's purpose is their community—to promote, preserve, and protect the history and the land of the Tohono O'odham; to perpetuate the culture. For an anthropology museum, like ASM, it is important to work with and show that these Native communities still exist and to further cultural understanding among the museum's audiences. Native Eyes is one program that serves these objectives for both museums and our educational partners.

by Lisa Falk and Jennifer Juan

Mainstream media do not present Native stories from the point of view of Indians, which is exactly what the Native Eyes Film Showcase strives to do. This collaborative program presents films by and about indigenous peoples for diverse audiences: intergenerational, multicultural, and tribal. We screen narrative stories that explore Native American family relations, documentaries about leadership, activism, cultural traditions, land, and water from an Indian perspective, and imaginative shorts from indigenous filmmakers in the U.S., Canada, New Zealand, and Australia as well as select films featuring Native stories by non-Native filmmakers. Screenings are augmented with discussions presented by Native specialists who can address the

content and perspectives presented in the films. Each member of our collaborative programming committee brings different perspectives, resources, community needs, and audiences to the mix. Our combined views along with our willingness to invite other community partners to join us in planning and implementation makes programming more relevant and meaningful.

Our programs give Native youth¹ opportunities to see Native films and make connections to things of importance in their own communities. When youth view films by Indian filmmakers, they have an impact; and meeting Native filmmakers serves as an inspiration. These experiences provoke a realization that they can have a voice in telling their own stories and that these stories are worth telling from their perspective. They can challenge Hollywood's representations of Native peoples and what is documented by non-Native filmmakers. One participant in a program we did for Tohono O'odham elders agrees that film programs have the potential to go beyond a screening, "I think it is important that the youth be involved to watch the movie and participate in discussion and go out and educate the community."² An adult participant who came to a related youth program said it made her "even more committed to working with Native youth in my community—to inspire them to understand that they can make a difference, that they are not powerless."³



Jerry Carlyle holds a newspaper article about the Arizona Water Settlement Act.

Photo by Gilbert Valenzuela, Pascua Yaqui Computer Clubhouse.

Each year the Native Eyes team meets to review films and reflect on how the screening programs can have deeper impact. Our goals include breaking stereotypes; furthering understanding of Native American and indigenous culture, history, and contemporary issues; and providing skill-based workshops that encourage media making and storytelling from a Native perspective. These workshops have included storyboarding, acting, filmmaking, camera and editing skills, and using tools at hand such as cellphones and stop-motion materials to create videos. In addition, to help hone youth's understanding, self-assurance, and efficacy, workshops have also had a call-to-action orientation. They have included examples of social justice efforts and strong Native leadership models.

Sometimes program ideas are sparked from a conversation one of our partners may have with a community member. Two years ago, with the anniversary of the Arizona Water Settlement Act, Jerry Carlyle, vice chairman of the San Xavier District in the Tohono O'odham Nation, was speaking with Melodie Lopez (IS) about the role of his mother in passing this historic water rights act that restored water to the tribe. She queried, "Do your youth know this history?" Upon realizing that most probably did not, they discussed a program to share the history and meaning of water to the O'odham people. As it happened, many films the Native Eyes team was reviewing brought up issues regarding water and leadership. A partnership was sprung.

NATIVE EYES FILM SHOWCASE
WATER IS LIFE
3 FILMS, PANEL DISCUSSION AND RESOURCE FAIR
SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 8
12:30 P.M. — 5:15 P.M. AT THE LOFT CINEMA, 2225 E SPEEDWAY BLVD, TUCSON
TICKETS \$10 FOR LOFT/ASIM/TRIBAL COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Resource Fair 12:30-3:00pm
Meet and speak with organizations and US Department working with the environment, water and Native American culture.

My Louisiana Love 1:00pm-1:30pm (USA, 2015, 56 minutes)
The film explores the complex and often contentious relationship between the oil industry and the indigenous community of the Mississippi Delta. Through a series of interviews with local residents, the film explores the impact of the oil industry on the lives of the people who live in the region.

Chasing Water 2:00pm-2:30pm (USA, 2014, 16 minutes)
Photographer Peter Hebrink sets out to document the flow of the Colorado River from source to sea, making from a water source that is essential to the lives of millions of people in the western United States. Hebrink's journey is a quest for water, a quest for a better understanding of the river and the people who depend on it.

Mover on Rio 2:30pm-3:00pm (USA, 2014, 16 minutes)
Aerial locations with Felipe Molina (Yaqui), Loraine Eshelby (Tohono O'odham), Robert Garcia (Tohono O'odham) and a group of young people who are working to protect the river and the people who depend on it.

www.statemuseum.arizona.edu/public/native_eyes

WATER IS LIFE NATIVE YOUTH SUMMIT
DATE CHANGE
SATURDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2015
8:30 A.M. — 4:00 P.M., FREE
SPEAKERS — ART ACTIVITIES — REFLECTION — PLANS FOR ACTION

Elders, tribal leaders and young activists from several Arizona Indian nations will speak about the complicated history of a shared resource and the life-sustaining power of water for their people. They will address issues related to land and water rights that affect the nations today and shape the future. The day continues with students creating art expressing their understanding of water and activism, building a riverbank garden, and interviewing elders. This event is intended to inspire Native youth to find their own voice and to become involved in shaping a future grounded in traditional values.

ALL PARTICIPANTS RECEIVE SNACKS, LUNCH, CERTIFICATE OF COMPLETION & MOVIE TICKET TO NEXT DAY'S SCREENING TO ATTEND: FREE. Open to middle school, high school, college and university students by application.
Application available at: www.statemuseum.arizona.edu/public/native_eyes
Application due November 10, 2015
www.facebook.com/StateMuseum | info@statemuseum.arizona.edu | Call: 520-624-9322

The Water Is Life Native Youth Summit takes place at the San Xavier District Administration Building and San Xavier Cigar Farm, Yuma/O'odham Nation

WATER is LIFE WALK
Surdagi' 'u wud t-shuakud ~ Paastaagatsi ~ Tóó éí' 'índí até ~ Yá'am Yee Híagítsita

JOIN US FOR THIS 7.8 MILE WALK HONORING THE SACREDNESS OF WATER!
Saturday, March 7, 2015 | Arrive by 6:30 am

This Native youth-led walk for water begins with a Sunrise Ceremony. We will walk from the San Xavier reservoir to the Wa:k Híkdan riparian area where we will end with Ceremony and a traditional lunch. Along the way hear presentations by students about water and share in blessings.

PARK at San Xavier District Tribal Council Administrative Building (Just west of the San Xavier del Bac Mission Church), shuttles will take you to the reservoir.

STUDENTS who wish to participate please contact
Melodie Lopez: IndigenousStrategies@gmail.com or 520-477-4867

COMMUNITY MEMBERS who wish to walk with the students please contact
Lisa Fulk: fulk@statemuseum.arizona.edu or 520-624-9322

The Water Is Life Walk is a program of the Native Eyes Film Showcase in collaboration with

Thanks to Havasupai Preparatory and Leadership School, and Cakes for Causes for their support.

Flyer designs by Ariel Mack.
Courtesy Native Eyes Film Showcase

Conceived of as a one-time event, this resulted in two years of programming. We offered a series of public screenings, panel discussions, resource fairs, a walk for water and daylong workshops for Native elders and youth to learn about and reflect on the meaning of water in their community with the hope of inspiring involvement and action around these pressing contemporary and cultural issues. The programs also shared Native perspectives on this shared resource with the broader Tucson community. These programs, titled *Water Is Life*, encompassed many aspects related to water—including foodways, traditional prayers, gardening, farming, art expressions, science, and community history and lifeways. Without planning it, the program also created an opportunity for cross cultural sharing and collaboration among tribes. In fact, a participant who brought a youth group to the *Water Is Life Walk* cited her primary reason for their attendance was “to encourage a youth group to attend and partner with other entities and to encourage learning about other’s culture and common theme of water, and to know others.”⁴

One inspiring moment during the first year’s fall youth program was when we went to the Wa:k Híkdan, a sacred riparian area⁵ made possible by the flow of water gained via the Arizona Settlement Water Act. Upon arrival Vice Chairman Carlyle led everyone in a traditional O’odham prayer in O’odham during which each reflected inwardly about the morning’s presentations about water. A few feet away, Felipe Molina, a Yaqui elder, shared a traditional Yaqui song in Yoeme in honor of water and our coming together. It is unusual to have this cross cultural sharing of prayer traditions happening in unison with participation by all in attendance. This opened the door for a feeling of connection between the two tribes, which modeled respect of each other’s traditions and allowed us to talk about common values and concerns.

The day ended with youth and adults working in small groups to discuss issues in their communities, what was important to them about water, and actions they could take related to this topic. In reflection, one student realized “that even being an urban Native there are roles I can still fulfill to help with water rights.”⁶ High on the groups’ action item lists were listening to elders, teaching others, gardening, and a walk to raise awareness of the many roles and sacredness of water. This gave the Native Eyes team our marching orders to continue working with the community for a spring program.

In March, Native students, families, elders, and political leaders came together for the *Water Is Life Walk*. This walk was designed by students and elders working with us, and tribal administration

choosing and clearing the path. Members of the broader Tucson community joined with members of the Tohono O'odham and Pascua Yaqui tribes at dawn to walk eight miles along the Central Arizona Project (CAP) waterline, ending at the Wa:k Hikdan. Along the way, students presented about political issues affecting traditional Yaqui lifeways due to the lack of clean water access for their brethren in Mexico and about the use of water to support O'odham farming and ceremonial practices. Elders from San Xavier joined us near an old abandoned water tank. They told stories about how in the past, when water was plentiful, this land supported cattle ranching, which is no longer possible in a dry desert. A shared meal of traditional foods grown on the San Xavier Coop Farm (sustained by CAP water) along with more stories and prayers closed the walk. Learning about our shared concerns and similarities in traditions linked to water taught us how important it is to listen to each other's stories and that we can work together to ensure our future.

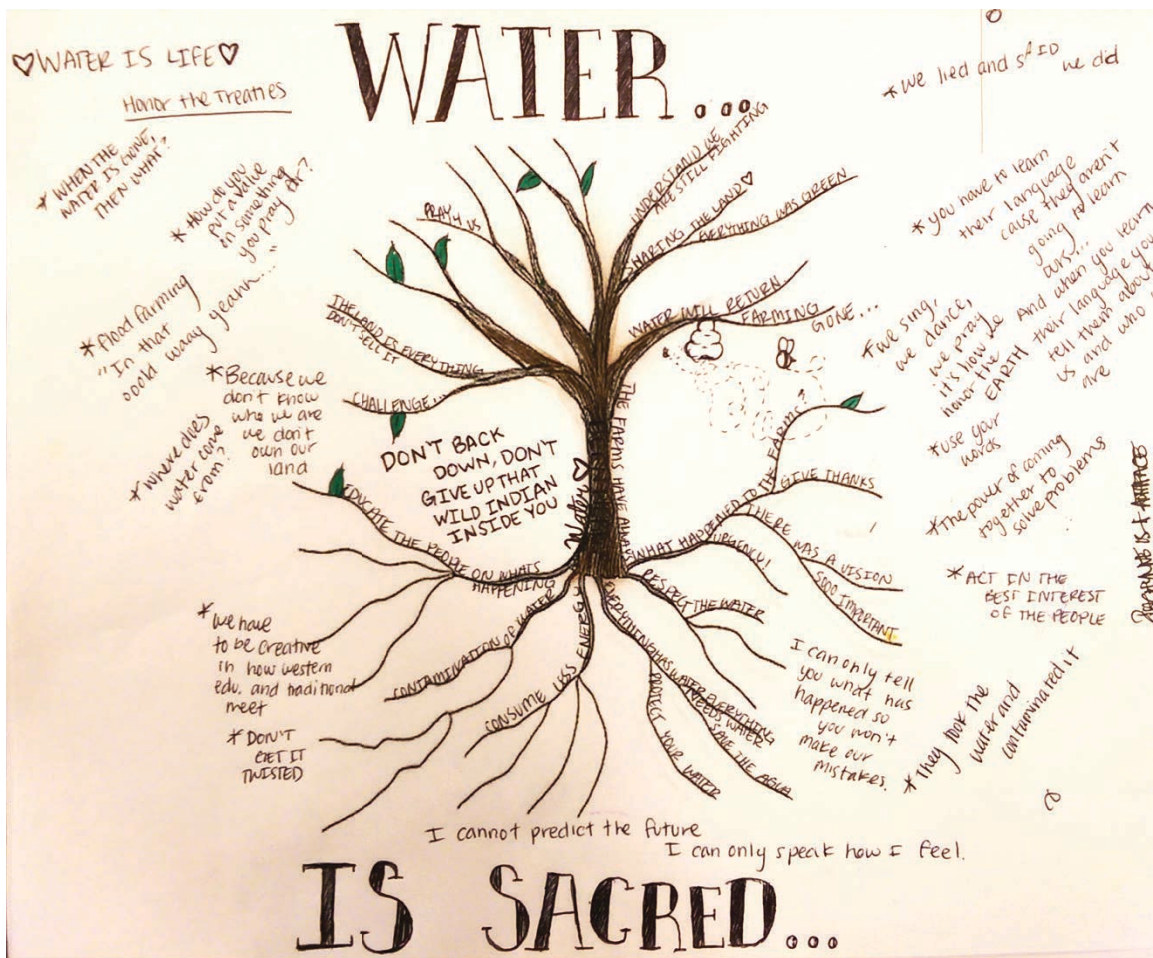


Photo by Lisa Falk, Arizona State Museum.

Overall, Native students who attended the youth workshop and Native and non-Native attendees at the walk found it satisfied a different style of learning and connection than more science-based discussions of water. The program helped them understand a deeper, cultural base to water issues and inspired them to get involved with their community and issues that affect culture and shared natural resources. One student stated, "It made me want to be more involved in my tribe and culture, it totally changed my view on water. It was amazing and eye opening." The programs opened their eyes to different ways of thinking about contemporary problems and how they affect distinct groups. The value of this orientation was expressed by attendees: "I was uplifted by the communal, spiritual response to water as our source of life vs. the more mainstream scientific intellectual approach to water only." "I am passionate about seeing through the eyes of Native youth leaders and elders given the urgency of our water crisis and the fact that spiritual, communal values must define our response to the crisis." One university student stated that as a result she now conducts "scientific research and presentations organized in a way that is rooted in indigenous views of water: cultural and traditional uses."⁷

Others who already work on water issues found new connections that would help in their work. They appreciated the access to different cultural and generational views of water. "I've been intensely active with water for a long while, but the walk made me hungry to participate more with Native youth water leaders. It also led to community members discussing the need for a youth-led water conference." "I was inspired by the speakers, and the connections I made during the walk have led to numerous shared projects between the organization I work for and the communities in the San Xavier District."⁸

We found that everyone who came to these programs, whether or not they were the primary intended audience, found personal meanings and connections that inspired them. The value of multigenerational programming was emphasized: "Bridging the youth with elders and adults is necessary for empowerment and knowledge." "[I realized] that perhaps I can gain strength and lend strength to others, that this is trans-generational work." This is an important lesson to museum and



Tree Notes by Pachynne Ignacio, Baboquivari High School, Tohono O'odham Nation.

other cultural programmers from outside communities. Too often our programs are only intended for one age group.

We also discovered that meaningful programs have a life of their own. If they truly resonate, the community may want to continue them, but it might not be for the same reasons or in the original format that the museum intended. And this is okay, in fact it means you went beyond "surface" programming. It opens the door for true community partnerships.

We thought we were done with *Water Is Life* after the walk. A call from the San Xavier Farm Coop initiated our second year of programming. They liked what had been done and wanted to explore another program. At the meeting of our now very diverse and plentiful partners, *Water Is Life* evolved to include a specific day for elders to share memories related to water; a second youth daylong workshop that incorporated hands-on art making, cooking, and farming activities into the program; another public screening of new films with a panel discussion and resource fair. Without realizing it, this second year would cement a relationship with members of the Cherokee community in Oklahoma.

At the elder program, held at San Xavier, we started by screening a powerful film, *Cherokee Word for Water*, that exemplified using community values to solve problems, and held a discussion with Charlie Soap, whose work with Wilma Mankiller was memorialized in the film. After a lunch of

traditional foods prepared by the San Xavier Farm Coop, placards on the tables promoted further discussion. These had historic photographs from the TONCCM's archives matched with culturally relevant questions related to water. The elders shared their memories, each building on the comments of the other: "Youth should know water is important for everyday living—for animals, plants and human beings." "Plants and animals that come when it rains: wild wheat, rabbits, javalinas, rattlesnakes. All of these are significant to the O'odham." "We drank (everybody drank) *šu:daḡi* from the *ha'a*. It tasted fresh and cold. We had one inside our house and under our shade *wa'tho*." "I learned from my grandparents that you take a new child in its first rain, naked, and bathe them, blessing them."⁹ At each table college students, Farm Coop workers, and Native Eyes team members jotted down the memories of the elders, which were taped to a River of Memory on the wall—our version of a community timeline. These thoughts would flow into the youth workshop held a month later.

At the first year's youth workshop we had speakers from four Native nations: Tohono O'odham, Pascua Yaqui, Navajo, and Hopi. They each brought different cultural and knowledge perspectives to the table: elders, political leaders, water specialists, and young activists. We also heard from national leaders LaDonna Harris (Comanche), Charlie Soap (Cherokee), and filmmaker Juliana Brennan (Comanche) about becoming involved and taking action. Because the second year was being offered at the initiative of San Xavier Farm Coop, there was more emphasis on O'odham, but everyone also wanted to include their Yaqui neighbors. Native Eyes team members made an effort to encourage attendance by outside tribes and pan-Native students. Students came from the Pascua Yaqui community in Tucson and Guadalupe (an hour away), from the Ak-Chin Reservation (also an hour away), various communities on the large O'odham Nation, including from the Tohono O'odham Community College (TOCC), and pan-Native students from the University of Arizona and Tucson high schools. While aimed at youth, adult community members and elders from across the Tohono O'odham Nation asked to join us and participated in the discussions following each speaker. They felt it was important both to talk to and listen to the youth.



Drawing by Shamie Encinas, San Xavier Farm Coop.
Photo by Lisa Falk, Arizona State Museum.



Elder Questions

At the elders program we paired questions with historic photographs on table tents. These were placed on the lunch tables and talk turned to these after the meal. Here is a sample of our questions:

RAIN

- The smell of rain, *şegai*, reminds me of...
- What memories come when it rains?
- When it rains, I think of...
- When it rained, I remember my family used to...
- My parents/grandparents told me the rain meant/was...
- As a child, what did you do when it rained?
- Which plants and animals only come when the rains come? Do any of these hold special significance to the O'odham?

WATER

- My parents/grandparents told me water meant/was...
- Where did your grandparents get their water? Your parents? Your children/grandchildren now?
- What changes have you seen in water in your community?
- Did/does your family have a special water-related tradition/ritual?
- Can you remember the taste of water from the *şu:dağĭ ha'a*? Describe it. What are the memories you have about/around *the şu:dağĭ ha'a*?



Held on Tohono O'odham land, one of the most emotional experiences was when Felipe Molina and his brother played and sang Yaqui ceremonial songs about butterflies and water in Yoeme. They invited those who wanted to come forward to be blessed with the water from their water drum that had been embodied with the spirit of the songs. Everyone came forward.

Again we shared a meal of foods nurtured by CAP water and grown at the San Xavier Coop Farm. Afterward we went to the Farm and put thoughts to action. Lead by Clifford Pablo, an elder and teacher at the TOCC, students dug in the earth to create a rainwater catchment garden area for fruit trees. Working with the Farm Coop's chef they participated in a cook-off using traditional ingredients, judged by Vice Chairman Carlyle and Charlie Soap. They interviewed elders about their memories of how water was a part of their lives. They learned introductory basketmaking from Terrol Dew Johnson, an award-winning O'odham basketmaker. They made beaded bracelets with clay beads embossed with Native water symbols and discussed cultural symbols with Andrew Vigil-Emerson, a young Navajo artist, and worked on a graffiti wall, spray painting messages about water. They also read, discussed, and added to the River of Time water memories. A popular activity was screening t-shirts with members of the 1519 Rebellion, a Yaqui artist collective, that said Water Is Life, *şu:dağĭ 'o Wud T- duakud* (O'odham), *Va'am Yee Hiapsitua* (Yaqui) that would remind participants of the day's ideas.

Reflecting on the day's activities, a student wrote, "Art does play an important role to communities because it provides visual healing, spiritual boost and harmony and cultural connection." Another stated, "Art is a wonderful medium of expression which

can be used as an outlet for internal and external struggles. Art can be used to express community issues without words; a silent message.”¹⁰

In our evaluation, we found that 60 percent of participants at the first youth workshop and walk felt as a result of attending these programs they became more involved with their community and strove to learn about their community’s history, cultural traditions, or issues surrounding water and were more inclined to take on leadership roles or social action projects. Traditions and cultural beliefs will only be maintained if the young value them. These programs were a start at connecting the youth to their elders and to the stories of their communities. The shared memories, songs, and traditions also connected youth to language as they heard O’odham and Yaqui words sprinkled through the talks and activities, such as *ṣu:daḡi* (water in O’odham). Those from other Native Nations went home hungry to learn their traditions and related words. For us, we know that future Native Eyes programs need intergenerational connections bringing youth, elders, and the broader community together.

Cultural programs that derive from the wellspring of the heart take us in amazing directions of sharing and understanding. At our first year’s *Water Is Life* programming, Charlie Soap from the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma emphasized communities working together to overcome problems creatively. He called on the spirit of his wife Wilma Mankiller and the Cherokee tradition of *gandugi*, people coming together to solve a problem. This was powerful and probably inspired the *Walk for Water*. The second year, Charlie returned to join us at an elder’s program that so inspired him a month later he returned with a crew of Cherokee to participate in the youth program. Their experience inspired the beginning of community and family gardens back on the Cherokee Reservation in Oklahoma. Closer to us, the San Xavier Farm Coop is exploring a young farmers program.



PLANTS

- Did your family ever gather wild plants? What plants did you harvest? What did you have to do to get them? What time of year did you gather them?
- What did your grandparents grow? How did they garden?

BASKETS

- Who was the first person you saw make baskets? Where did they gather their materials? Are these still available today?
- Did your family ever have to travel a long distance to get materials for baskets?

Photos on pp 56-57 by Bernard Siquieros, Tohono O’odham Nation Cultural Center and Museum.

Let's back up. Why did the museums work with the community to create these rich programs? We were invited. And then we took the backseat. We let the community partners tell us what was important to them. They identified topics and helped secure speakers who could address these from a Native perspective. They had ideas of activities relevant to where they live and work. We helped keep the discussion focused and brought additional human and financial resources to the table. We took care of project logistics that required materials and resources from the outside, while our community partners stepped up to take responsibility for the site-based logistics. We were able to make broader connections by linking the films into the programs. The partnership deepened the discussions at the public screenings because the community members and youth came to town to join us. They were able to express that while concern for water is universal, there are specific community and culturally based stories, uses, and concerns. This expanded the conversations and understanding by all participating in the screening programs.

What made it work? Native Eyes did not ask for anything from our community partners. The intent was solely to work together, creating a true partnership. What followed was because of the relationships and respect for each other that were forged.

Unexpected results included adding oral history interviews to the San Xavier Community Archives and the TONCCM collections, as well as metadata on the photographs used at the elders program. For the community and museums alike, the information shared by the participants also points to possible new programs such as making pottery water jugs and traditional foods tasting, cooking, and gardening programs that will also add to our knowledge of these practices and can be linked to museum collection objects, photographs, and documents. It opens the doors for folklife documentation projects taken on by the community members and can give direction to filmmaking workshops. The community might turn to us to partner with them, or perhaps they will want to do them on their own. But if called upon, we are eager to work and learn alongside them.

Museums can be a catalyst for communities to come together to design something authentic. The invitation to continue *Water Is Life* gave this Native Eyes program legitimization from the community, and for us outsiders made us realize that museum programming can be meaningful and go deep. If museums want to have real connections with their community, they have to embrace equal partnerships. Museums need to step back, provide resources, help with organizational planning of programs, but let the partners shape the intent and content of programs. Museums need to acknowledge the expertise of their community partners. All partners need to practice respect for what each brings to the table. This should be the norm as the result can be powerful, meaningful programs that honor cultural knowledge and link unique communities together.

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***Jennifer Juan** is the Education Specialist at the Tohono O'odham Nation Cultural Center and Museum, in Topawa, 90 minutes from Tucson. She holds a Museum Studies Certificate from the Institute of American Indian Arts. They have been working together on various museum projects for over ten years.*

Endnotes

1. For our programs we consider young people from 6th grade through university PhD students to be youth.
2. Native Eyes Elder Program, San Xavier District, Tohono O'odham Nation, 11/5/2015.
3. Native Eyes Evaluation Survey for Water Is Life Youth Summit and Walk, 9/2015.
4. Native Eyes Evaluation Survey for Water Is Life Youth Summit and Walk, 9/2015

5. Riparian refers to land usually along a flowing river bank. In Arizona it is used to refer to lands that are fed water, whether naturally or piped in to create the same environment.
6. Native Eyes Evaluation Survey for Water Is Life Youth Summit and Walk, 9/2015.
7. Native Eyes Evaluation Survey for Water Is Life Youth Summit and Walk, 9/2015.
8. Native Eyes Evaluation Survey for Water Is Life Youth Summit and Walk, 9/2015.
9. Elder comments from River of Memory activity, San Xavier, 11/5/2015.
10. Native Eyes Water is Life Youth Summit Evaluation, 12/5/2015.

URLS

Native Eyes Film Showcase http://www.statemuseum.arizona.edu/public/native_eyes
 Year 1 Water Is Life 2014 http://www.statemuseum.arizona.edu/public/native_eyes/native-eyes-2014.shtml
 Year 2 Water Is Life 2015 http://www.statemuseum.arizona.edu/public/native_eyes/native-eyes-2015.shtml
 San Xavier Farm Coop <http://www.sanxaviercoop.org>
 San Xavier Farm Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/San-Xavier-Co-Op-Farm-194464287256029>



Tree Notes by student, Hiaki High School, Pascua Yaqui Tribe.

Photo by Lisa Falk, Arizona State Museum.

