



# Tribal Food Sovereignty, Security & Systems and USDA Food Programs

May 5th, 2023.







# Culture based on and defined by abundant salmon





# First Foods

**Wiwnu**  
Huckleberries



**Wy-Kan-Ush**  
Salmon



**Choosh**  
Water



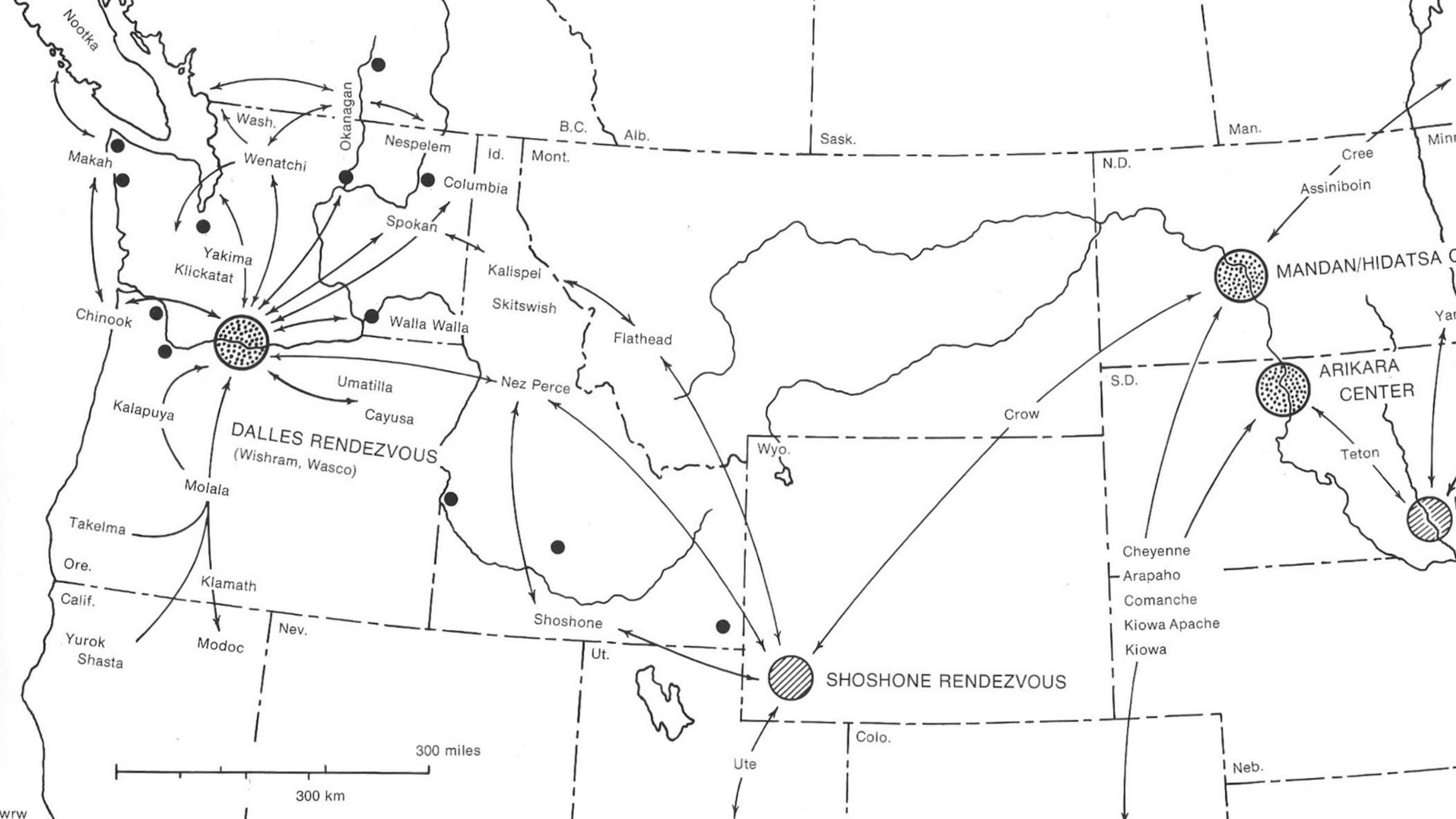
**Camas**  
Camas



**Yamash**  
Deer









# Columbia River Treaty Fishing Tribes





# Yakama Nation Farms - The History of Yakama Ag Plan

## ▶ Yakama Nation Agriculture Plan

- ▶ Adopted by the YN General Council in 2019.
- ▶ Directed the development of YN Agricultural Enterprises.
  - ▶ Development of a diversified plan which includes various produce and fruit crops, pasture crops, livestock production, and potential innovative new ag products, such as hemp.

## ▶ Yakama Nation Ag Development Program

- ▶ Created as a result of a previous, long-term irrigation litigation and settlement.
- ▶ Main/Current objectives:
  - ▶ Assist with the transition of the Farm.
  - ▶ The South Ahtanum Irrigation Demonstration Project (SAID)
    - ▶ Develop/Expand Irrigation, providing piped and pressurized irrigation water to previously non-served lands with potential to house high-value ag crops.



# Yakama Nation Farms - The History of the Farm

## ► Inaba Produce Farms

- 100+ year, family owned/operated mixed-vegetable produce farm located just southeast of Harrah WA.
- The Farm is primarily a Grow, Pack and Ship, wholesale producer to regional food buyers.
- The average active production season is from late April through November.
- Operates on 1,500 acres of active farmlands
  - 1,000 acres of conventionally farmed cropland
  - 500 acres of organically farmed cropland
- The Farm primarily operates on leased Tribal Trust properties, with limited owned parcels.



# Yakama Nation Farms - The History of the Farm



November 2021 - Yakama Nation Announces the purchase of Inaba Produce Farms.



Lon, Wayne and Diane Inaba are maintained as staff to help maintain stability and provide experience/knowledge during the transition of the Farm into Tribal Enterprise.

Lon is contracted thru 2024, Wayne thru 2023, and Diane has not indicated a time table as of 10/1/22.



Farm Business Organization:

Main Oversight Committee - Yakama Nation Roads, Irrigation and Lands Committee

YN Farm Board

Often consults with YN Timber, Grazing, Overall Economic Development





# Yakama Nation Farms

## ► Produce Crops

- Asparagus: April through Early July.
- Late spring crops: Cabbage, kale, chard
- Early Summer crops: Cucumbers, zucchini, and yellow squash
- Sweet Corn harvest started the last week of July.
- Mid-Late Summer/early fall crops: Various peppers, tomatoes, watermelons, melons, winter squashes, onions, concord grapes.

## ► Future Plans

- Maintain high-quality produce production of market ready mixed vegetables.
- Developing community surveys to monitor what crops/products YN Tribal Members would like to see grown for community use.
  - Various berries, different fruit options, increased availability of high demand crops.



# Food Sovereignty and Food Security

- ▶ Tribal communities were hard hit during the recent Pandemic.
  - ▶ Most Reservations are remote, rural and experience higher levels of poverty.
  - ▶ Food Desert despite being in the “breadbasket” of the State.
- ▶ Acquiring IPF put the Yakama Nation at least 10 years ahead in their Ag Planning.
  - ▶ Development of Community food access and nutrition programs.
  - ▶ Increased availability of high-quality produce for families and communities across the Reservation, traditional territories and neighboring regional Tribes.
  - ▶ Ability to re-define the historical impacts of Modern Agriculture on Tribal people.
  - ▶ Turning Ag on the Reservation into a tool that works for the Yakama Nation instead of something that happens around and to the Yakama people and lands.

# YN Farms Tribal Community Involvement

- ▶ Wak'ishwi Distribution: YN Farms is working with Wak'ishwi Program Staff to coordinate weekly fresh produce distributions for YN Tribal members. Distributions are every Friday, from 7:00 am to 12:00 pm
- ▶ Working to connect with other Tribal Programs and support their events
- ▶ Also working to coordinate distribution events for various villages throughout the ceded territory. We've received several requests for distributions along Zone 6



- ▶ Currently working to develop a distribution program for Longhouses & Shaker Churches
  - ▶ In-Season Yakama Farms produce would be available for Funerals, Memorials, Feasts, etc.
  - ▶ Would function similarly to current YN assistance programs



# Yakama Nation Farms and the LFPA

- ▶ 2022 Yakama Nation Farms becomes the Primary Producer for 2 Tribal LFPA Agreements.
- ▶ Yakama Nation was approved for a \$1.5 million dollar USDA Local Food Purchasing Assistance Cooperative Agreement.
  - ▶ Award is initially intended for use in 2022 and 2023, but due to seasonal limitations in farm production, the planned distributions will be carried out in 2023 and 2024.
  - ▶ Will deliver a total of 68,181 boxes over 2 14-week delivery schedules (2435/week).
  - ▶ Box distributions will be centered on the 5 main municipalities on the reservation
    - ▶ White Swan, Harrah, Wapato, Toppenish, Mabton
  - ▶ Yakama Nation will be submitting an LFPA Plus application to extend and expand the program specifically to tribal seniors and explore utilizing the Yakama Nation Bison Herd.
- ▶ Columbia River Intertribal Fish Commission LFPA
  - ▶ CRITFC represents 4 member tribes - Umatilla, Warm Springs, Nez Perce and Yakama
  - ▶ This award will be used to directly coordinate and fund increased food access among the member tribes. Yakama has agreed to utilize their portion of the agreement to provide food access/delivery to the In Lieu sites and traditional village sites along the Zone 6 fishery.

# Additional Food Boxes

- ▶ YN Farms & Northwest Harvest:
  - ▶ Collaboration with regional hunger organization initiated during the 2020 Pandemic by the Inaba family.
  - ▶ Has carried forward to YN Farms.
  - ▶ The Farm now has a contract to provide weekly produce boxes to NW Harvest through 2024. Ships several thousand produce boxes/week.
  - ▶ Is primarily funded through NW Harvest's efforts to secure State (WSDA), Federal (USDA), and outside funds.





# Looking forward...

- ▶ One underlying concern of all current YN Farms produce boxes is the lack of protein sources available to the box recipients.
- ▶ To date, Shelf Stable Plant proteins, (Legumes and/or Nuts) are not actively produced by YN Farms - However, they can be accessed through outside entities.
- ▶ YN has access to local meat processors, but the system is primarily for custom processing of domestic livestock or small wild game, with very limited USDA certification, and little to no flexibility for large scale food service systems.
- ▶ The expenses associated with utilizing these processors are generally the main limiting factor.
- ▶ Tribal Seafood processing, primarily Salmon based processing, is extremely limited to the Columbia River Basin, and within West Coast fisheries.
- ▶ Very limited access to process beyond the initial raw product.
  - ▶ Needs for Value Added Processing, Shelf Stability, Food Safety and community outreach.

# USDA Programs in Indian Country

- ▶ USDA program contributions have been paramount to advancements made across Yakama Tribal Lands.
  - ▶ Conservation, Innovation, Restoration, and now Food Systems.
- ▶ Still a noticeable need for longer term funding.
  - ▶ LFPA and LFPA plus are listed as one-time Pilot Projects, with a two-to-three-year lifespan.
    - ▶ Perpetual, long-term funding security would provide for better planning and project success.
    - ▶ Ability to 638 contract Food Systems programs
- ▶ Continued Support of Indigenous Meat Processing efforts
  - ▶ Increased need for localized Tribal Inspectors for both livestock and seafood.
  - ▶ Continued development of processing infrastructure.
    - ▶ What do Tribal processing facilities require to meet the unique demands of tribal populations?





Buck Jones, Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission.

[buck@critfc.org](mailto:buck@critfc.org)

Jonalee Squeochs, YN Ag Development.

[Jonalee\\_Squeochs@yakama.com](mailto:Jonalee_Squeochs@yakama.com)

Lon Inaba, Yakama Nation Farms, GM.

[Lon@ynfarms.com](mailto:Lon@ynfarms.com)