

Collaborative Research: Learning In and From the Environment through Multiple Ways of Knowing tv(LIFEways) | AWARD #2218904 (IEI) and #2218903 (OSU)

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Community Partners: Name: Native Pathways and the Reimagine Research Group, Swinomish Indian Tribal Community, Oregon Museum of Science and Industry, World Forestry Center, and a national park network in the Pacific Northwest.

What is the motivation and goal of your project?

Deepening understanding of how Indigenous ways of knowing (IWK) are currently included in outdoor learning environments, such as parks, reserves, and nature centers. The project uses a co-designed research, application, and learning process to cultivate and disseminate practices that center IWK. LIFEways is based on the premise that Indigenous stewardship has sustained communities on these lands since time immemorial and can inform foundational practices that engage Native community members in their traditional knowledge, and help non-Native audiences learn from the environment in authentic, respectful ways.

Audience: Native community members using their traditional knowledge to help non-Native audiences learn from the environment in authentic, respectful ways. Interpreters and educators at state and national parks, nature centers, outdoor schools and similar who seek to center Indigenous voices in their work.

How does your project consider/address equity and who is included? LIFEways seeks to counter settler-colonial narratives of Indigenous erasure, which are prevalent in outdoor environments such as national parks. The project addresses equity concerns by centering Indigenous voices, perspectives, cultures, histories and ways of knowing in outdoor education and any settings in which we can “learn from the land”.

Key Achievements: What have you accomplished to date? What are the broader impacts to the field? In a series of virtual and in-person meetings we have clarified our goals, shared perspectives and learned from one another. We have also prepared a series of studies on efforts and projects that center Indigenous voices.

What have you learned (including learnings about what didn't work)? There are deep fundamental differences between Native ways of knowing and Western ecocentric philosophies that are sometimes underestimated. Our work requires relationship-building, mutual trust, and open-mindedness. It is important to understand that centering Indigenous voices requires deep and respectful listening.

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Fig. 1: The core LIFeways team at a recent meeting in Portland, OR.

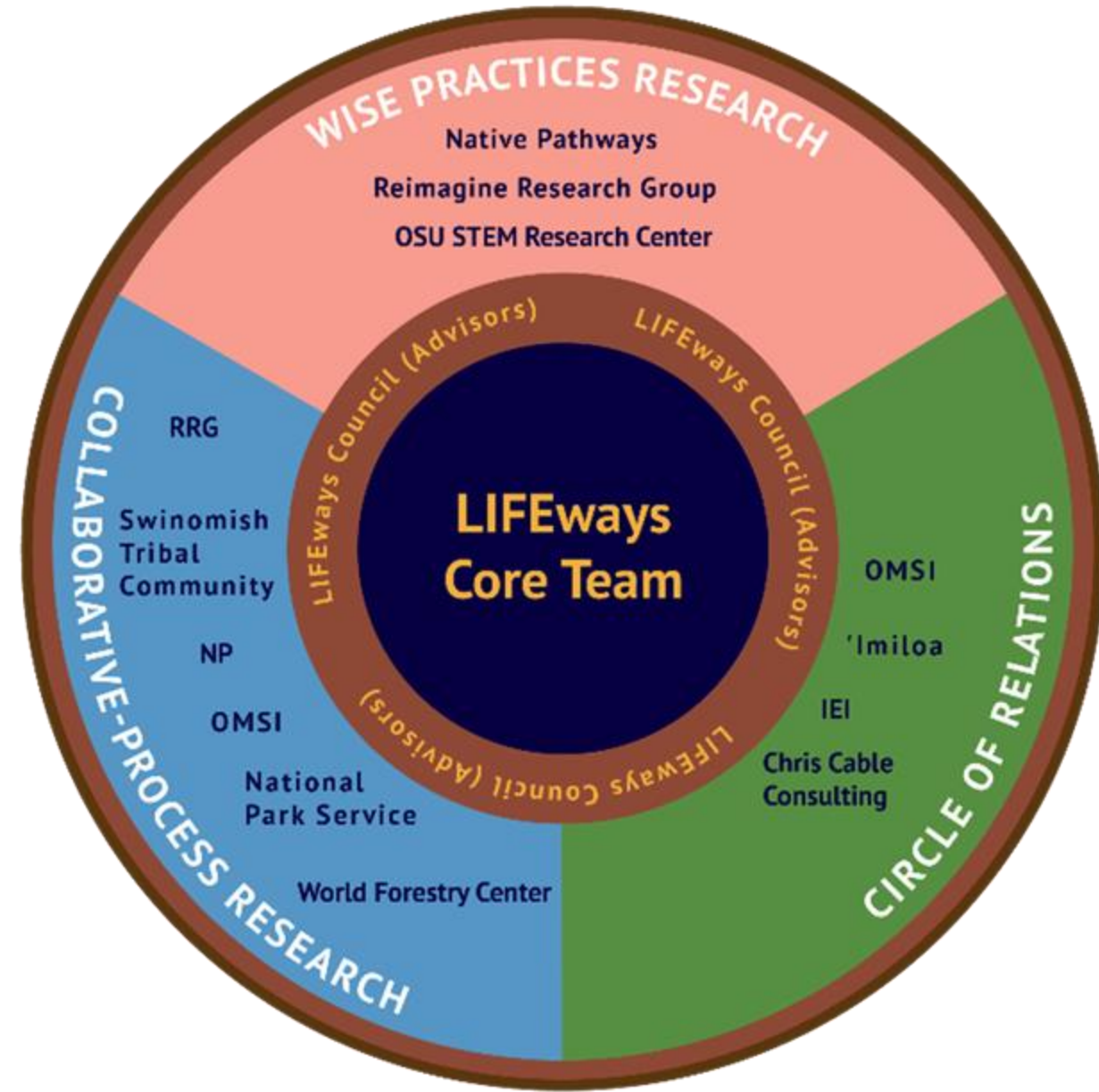


Fig. 2: The original model for the LIFeways project was based on three main pillars; two represent research efforts and one (the Circle of Relations) represents community- and relationship-building.