**“Glen’s Parallax Perspectives”** is a series of TV programs offering fresh ways for people to see issues such as foreign policy, social and economic justice, governmental functioning, the environment, and so forth. We provide voices and viewpoints that are rarely heard in mainstream media.

**Mainstream media, politicians, and culture see the world in conventional ways. Therefore, in order to solve problems, we need to see things in fresh ways.** Glen Anderson created this TV series to help people see things differently so we can solve problems at all levels from the local to the global.

This series title refers to “***parallax***,” which is the view you get by looking from a different perspective. For example, put one finger in front of your nose and another finger farther away. Close one eye. Then open that eye and close the other. Your fingers will seem to move. This is called a “parallax” view. **This TV series invites you to look at issues from fresh perspectives.**

Each program airs three times a week (currently every Monday at 1:30 pm, every Wednesday at 5:00 pm, and every Thursday at 9:00 pm) for the entire month on Thurston Community Television (TCTV), channel 22 for cable TV subscribers in Thurston County, Washington. TCTV is part of Thurston County Media. You can see their schedule at [**www.tcmedia.org**](http://www.tcmedia.org)

**You can also watch the program described below through your computer** at [**www.parallaxperspectives.org**](http://www.parallaxperspectives.org). All episodes of “Glen’s Parallax Perspectives” are posted on this blog’s “TV Programs” part and also in one or more of the categories listed in the right side of the computer screen. Also, see information about various issues at the category headings at [**www.parallaxperspectives.org**](http://www.parallaxperspectives.org).

**🡪 I saved this document in Word format with live links.** If this document does not load or print properly for you, please e-mail me at [**glenanderson@integra.net**](mailto:glenanderson@integra.net) and I’ll promptly send you the links you request.

**🡪 This document includes a few more pieces of information that we did not discuss during the interview.**

**🡪 Please invite other people to watch this video and/or read this thorough summary at these parts of my blog,** [**www.parallaxperspectives.org**](http://www.parallaxperspectives.org)**: “TV Programs” and “Environment” and “Judicial.”**

“Let’s Recognize Legal Rights for Nature”

Glen’s Parallax Perspectives TV Series

January 2022

**Glen introduced our topic and our guests, Kai Huschke and Elliott Moffett:**

The January 2022 interview on “Glen’s Parallax Perspectives” gives us a fresh perspective – and proposes a fresh solution – for some environmental problems that are serious but are not being solved by conventional methods.

Very often, when people want to protect the environment by filing appeals in governmental hearings or in courts, the environmentalists’ cases are dismissed because – even though the **environment** is being hurt – those **individuals** themselves are not hurt by the damage to the environment, so their cases are dismissed because those individuals lack **legal “standing.”** However**, if we recognize legal rights for the environment** (*e.g*., a river, a forest, or an ecosystem), that entity would have **legal “standing”** and could protect its interests in court.

In the U.S., Latin America, and elsewhere, a movement is growing to recognize legal rights for nature.

This TV interview explores the concept, why it is so important, and some successes in pursuing legal rights for nature. We encourage organizing further progress.

Two guests explored this topic:

* Since 2008 Kai Huschke has worked as a Community Organizer in the Pacific Northwest for the Community Environmental Legal Defense Fund (CELDF, [**www.celdf.org**](http://www.celdf.org)). He works to strengthen local democracy by helping local areas pass Community Bills of Rights. He also works to promote legal rights for nature.
* Elliott Moffett has long been a very active member of his tribe, the Nez Perce, and has helped it work on a variety of tribal government and environmental issues. Grounded in 16,000 years of sustainable living in the Northwest, he and his tribe have been organizing to help our region’s population and governments to respect Mother Nature in very practical ways. He introduced himself with his language’s greeting and with his Native name. He participated from the reservation of the Nez Perce tribe, of which he is a member, but he said that today he is not speaking officially on behalf of the tribe, which conducts its own communications activities.

He said he is the president of Nimiipuu Protecting the Environment ([**www.nimiipuuprotecting.org**](http://www.nimiipuuprotecting.org)), a non-profit organization that includes indigenous people and others who want to protect Mother Earth. The organization began in 2013 in response to the “megaloads,” giant truckloads of materials that big oil companies wanted to transport on highways through his reservation on the way to exploiting Canada’s tar sands. Tribal members focused on how to protect their treaty rights and Mother Earth, so they organized and conducted a series of rolling blockades. The tribe also went to court to stop the “megaloads.” Their efforts stood in solidarity with Canadian First Nations and with Mother Earth. This is how this organization started.

Glen said people in the U.S. do deeply appreciate the smart, vigorous activities that tribes in the U.S. have been organizing to protect the environment, and also the bold work that Canadian First Nations have been doing for a number of years and are still doing, including now especially in British Columbia.

**We summarized the concept of Legal Rights for Nature:**

Glen said this interview will flex back and forth between both guests because each one has a lot of experience, wisdom, insights and practicality to share.

Glen said that just a moment ago he had summarized very briefly why we need to recognize legal rights for nature. Now he asked Kai to flesh that out a bit further so the TV viewers will better understand why we should recognize legal rights for nature.

Kai said “survival” is a one-word summary for why we need to recognize legal rights for nature. He said the path that the human species has put itself onto is a dangerous path that threatens our species. He said nature needs legal rights because humans must recognize that we are nature – and nature is us. Our survival as a species require that we vigorously protect ecosystems. Our legal system uses the concept of “rights” to protect what we choose to protect. Therefore, we must profoundly protect ecosystems. The healthier our ecosystems are, the healthier we humans will be. He said we need a major shift in our legal system – and an even more profound transformation in our cultural mindset. Indigenous culture already has that wisdom. He affirmed what Elliott had said about Mother Earth. Mainstream society needs to ground ourselves in that perspective.

Glen agreed that this major shift needs to occur both at the level of our intellect and at the level of our heart. It needs to be grounded in our consciousness, our culture, and our spirituality. He said profound respect for Mother Earth must be experienced in all of these interconnected ways, just like every part of our environment is interconnected with every other part.

Glen invited Kai to provide a brief overview of how his organization, the Community Environmental Legal Defense Fund (CELDF, [**www.celdf.org**](http://www.celdf.org)), is supporting legal rights for nature.

Kai said CELDF’s support for the rights of nature is expressed in several ways. It’s practical and operational through public education, outreach, workshops, trainings, and other ways to lift up the concept. CELDF promotes it through organizing locally, regionally and internationally to influence public policies, legislation, and so forth. CELDF helps the public understand that our legal system is not adequately protecting the rights of nature now, but instead is actually facilitating the destruction of nature. CELDF helps ordinary people develop and promote bold remedies. CELDF also takes legal actions to speak for trees, rivers, bears, and other components of the natural world. In 2006 CELDF helped to pass a law recognizing legal rights of nature.

Glen said that during this interview both Elliott and Kai will be fleshing out insights and examples of this fresh alternative.

**Elliott shared some indigenous groundings for Legal Rights for Nature:**

Glen said Elliott’s people have deep roots respecting the integrity of nature and respect for nature. He asked Elliott to discuss further – beyond what he said in his introduction – how he and his people respect the sacredness of Mother Earth and all of her interconnections.

Elliott said that as an organization they try to follow as much as possible the traditional teachings. The communicate with the tribe’s elders and other people who speak the traditional Nimiipuu language. This helps to keep them grounded in their cultural background, so what the organization does will always be consistent with their traditional principle that they are stewards of Mother Earth. He said his organization has appreciated working with Kai’s organization, which has been very helpful.

He said the Nez Perce have been in their part of the country for about 16,000 years, according to the archaeological evidence. During this time they have developed a relationship with Mother Earth and recognize that she is sacred and provides them with everything that they need. In return for that, the people respect the sacredness and take actions that respect and support the interrelatedness of all things, including plants, animals, air and water. His organization and the tribe act upon those values and incorporate them into governmental behaviors. The fact that they have continued for 16,000 years is proof that their way of living is valid and sustainable. It meets the people’s needs.

Because of this, they can see when things go wrong. He agreed with Kai’s statement that things nowadays have gone wrong with human relations with Mother Earth. Now people need to speak up and act upon the best traditions.

Glen said that all of the people who share Planet Earth with Elliott’s people need to learn from his people and to listen better to Mother Earth so we can become more consistent and cooperative and collaborative instead of trying to dominate.

**We summarized recent progress for Legal Rights for Nature:**

Glen said he has been following this issue for several years, and he is delighted that it has made progress in some South American countries and even in the United States. He asked Kai to summarize some recent progress in other nations and in the U.S.

Kai expressed appreciation for the fresh insights we are sharing during this interview, because they differ so much from the Western colonial view that nature is property – a thing with no rights of its own. Recognizing that nature should have rights is a fresh approach to Westerners, but it connects with indigenous thinking and ways. Western law needs to transform accordingly. Kai said this transformation has been happening in various parts of the world, including in the U.S. He said a lot of progress has been made for recognizing legal rights for nature in the recent past, and especially in the past five or six years.

He mentioned the example of Toledo, Ohio, where a new law protects the legal rights of Lake Erie’s ecosystem. Litigation is underway now about legal rights for the ecosystem where wild rice grows in the land of the White Earth Band of the Chippewa Tribe in Minnesota, because a pipeline endangers that area. In the northwestern part of the U.S., the Klamath and Nez Perce tribes are working to respect the legal rights of their sacred rivers. Legal rights for rainforests and rivers in Colombia were recently protected in court cases there. In Northern Quebec a new law protects the rights of the Magpie River.

On December 2, 2021, an Ecuadorian court upheld an ecosystem’s rights to protect itself from regarding mining. Kai said Ecuador was the first nation to adopt a legal construct for the rights of nature, and now we are seeing it play out. He said Ecuador’s courts are actually enforcing the new legal rights with strong language affirming the rights of ecosystems exclusive of humans. He said judges are boldly affirming nature’s regenerative rights for nature’s sake. He said this sounds radical to people who are immersed in Western legalism.

**Overview of Community Environmental Legal Defense Fund (CELDF) and its work:**

Glen said he has long appreciated the work being done by the organization for which Kai works – the Community Environmental Legal Defense Fund (CELDF – [**www.celdf.org**](http://www.celdf.org)). Glen said he has enjoyed donating financial support for a number of years. He invited Kai to tell us about the organization and what it does.

Kai said that about 25 years ago they started working in the typical areas of environmental law, and then they started supporting local “community rights” to protect nature. They supported local level “community rights ordinances” to assert and protect those values. CELDF educates people, helps people organize locally, and provides legal support. They have successfully gotten enough funding that they can provide those services for free.

He said a lot of CELDF’s work is about transforming paradigms of power to support local democracy and ecosystems and the rights of nature. Decision-making needs to be grounded at the local community level. This local emphasis is different from our hierarchical systems of government and legalism. He said our hierarchical legal and governmental systems have been centralized and organized – and captured – by the greatest economic powers that have been hurting our environment. We’re seeing serious damage being caused nowadays because the dominant political and economic powers see nature as a thing – as something to be controlled, enslaved, extracted and destroyed – instead of understanding nature as Elliott’s people and other indigenous people do. We must understand that we are part of nature and we must take responsibility to protect nature.

He said a lot of CELDF’s work is about empowering and supporting people to help them organize to change the colonial structures that dominate us now. He said communities of color understand the colonial system, so CELDF’s work is needed for educating white communities. Nowadays CELDF is bringing may different organizations and constituencies together into effective coalitions. We need stronger grassroots movements, he said.

**The Snake River:**

Glen said many people throughout the Pacific Northwest have been concerned about the suffering and decline of salmon and orcas that eat salmon. One remedy that some people have been urging is the removal of dams from the Snake River, so salmon can return to their spawning areas and continue the cycle of life. Increasing salmon population would also increase the food supply for orcas and people.

He asked Elliott to inform us about this, because his tribe has traditionally lived in a very wide geographical range in the Snake River area, and his tribe has thousands of years living harmoniously and sustainably in that environment.

Elliott said the tribe has its own name for the Snake River and its tributaries. He said his tribe was known as river people before they were known as horse people (with Appaloosa horses). He said that instead of referring to cardinal directions (north, south, east, west) they expressed relationships as up-river or down-river, so, for example, he was known in their language’s term as an up-river person.

He said that they have worked through their tribal council – their tribal government – to advocate for the rights of the salmon and the snake river in the legal system. He said for many years the tribe has devoted resources to fight legal battles and protect treaty rights. He said their fisheries program is as good as any state or federal fisheries agency. The coho salmon had been extinct locally, but the Nez Perce brought the coho back so well that this year people were allowed to catch coho.

They have also been bringing back gray wolves.

They have used ancient teachings and modern science to protect habitat and bring back traditional species. Their treaties include responsibilities along with rights. The treaties took away some land but also guaranteed their traditional way of life and responsibilities to protect ecosystems and enjoy salmon fishing and all of the benefits that salmon have provided for their culture.

Glen expressed appreciation for the excellent ways in which our region’s tribes have not only been perpetuating their traditions but also understanding and practicing good science. This is a great mixture of old and new that have helped sustainability in our region.

**The Salish Sea (Puget Sound, Strait of Juan de Fuca, etc., in Washington State):**

*A technical glitch occurred for just a few seconds. While Glen was asking the next question the video (not audio) showed Kai talking. When Glen asked the question, Kai’s answer did appear correctly on the video and audio.*

Glen said more and more people in our geographical area recognize that the waters of Puget Sound and the Strait of Juan de Fuca (south of British Columbia’s Vancouver Island) are a contiguous ecosystem that has increasingly been called the Salish Sea, based on a traditional word identifying the cluster of indigenous tribes in this region. He invited Kai to summarize the potential for recognizing legal rights for the Salish Sea and surrounding habitat as an ecosystem.

Kai appreciated what Elliott said. He said that it’s ironic that even though the dams are blocking fish, actually we are understanding interconnections among issues about tribal rights, fish, ecosystems, and so forth. We are actually making good connections among people and among ecosystems, bodies of water, and so forth. This energy is helping to make more feasible the recognition of rights of the Salish Sea. He said several organizations are working on this on behalf of the regional ecosystem, the salmon, the orcas, the tribal nations, and so forth. Besides recognizing interconnections among ecosystems, likewise we see interconnections among human systems including our legal system in recognizing rights of the Salish Sea and tribal nations, the state and federal levels, and so forth. He said this work is very much underway and is going beyond goals of removing dams.

Glen mentioned that we’re taping this January 2022 TV program in December 2021, and the December TV program interviews an expert who discusses some scientific and practical aspects of water quality problems in the Salish Sea and in the streams and rivers that flow into it.

People can watch the December 2021 interview and/or read a thorough summary of what we said at this link: [**https://parallaxperspectives.org/understanding-environmental-water-quality-problems-and-solutions**](https://parallaxperspectives.org/understanding-environmental-water-quality-problems-and-solutions) During that interview Glen mentioned that we must consider the rights of nature and invited people to watch this current TV program with Kai and Elliott.

**Lake Erie:**

Glen asked Kai to mention the recent significant success in a case recognizing some legal rights for Lake Erie and some nearby land areas. Kai said the local citizens had voted to create a law recognizing some rights for Lake Erie, but then a court overturned that because big agricultural interests opposed the new law. He said those powerful economic interests felt their rights to pollute were more important than the voters’ rights to protect the ecosystem.

Kai said passing the law was a victory, but our progress does not occur on a straight line through the legal system. He said we need to build a political movement and create a cultural shift. He said the Lake Erie case was a real breakthrough both nationally and globally. He said news media coverage shifted dramatically in how they cover the rights of nature movement. This movement could no longer be laughed off as extraneous; rather, it started getting serious consideration. Now people were asking: What would the rights of nature look like? What would it mean? Now we have a new era of possibilities coming from grassroots communities and tribal nations.

He said the voters in Toledo, Ohio, stood on the shoulders of people before them, and they catapulted the movement further ahead. The concept seems more feasible not just locally but also globally.

Glen said this is how social and political progress occurs. Historically, for example, we can look at the Civil Rights Movement in the American South and see that when black people “sat in” at a white-only lunch counter until they were served, other black Americans replicated that nonviolent action in other communities throughout the South. Likewise, workers in one factory organize for a union, and the workers in other factories are inspired to organize at their workplaces too. Significant changes occur when people replicate bold actions in various local communities. The movement to recognize legal rights for nature is part of this historical sweep.

**Other places in the U.S.:**

Glen invited Kai to summarize efforts in other places in the U.S. Kai said more than two dozen local communities in the U.S. have passed “rights of nature” laws. He said other cities and counties are considering doing this too. We’re in a transformative moment of history. He agreed with what Glen had said about the growth of movements.

Kai added that when this counter-narrative grows and challenges the status quo, the more the dominant system will try to snuff that out. He said state legislatures are passing laws to prevent local jurisdictions from passing “rights of nature” laws, and in other ways the dominant system is taking actions to deter or even punish people who promote “rights of nature.”

But, he said, despite the pitfalls and barriers, more and more local communities – and tribal nations – are pushing ahead to protect ecosystems in this way.

Glen said this pattern of pushing and pushback is playing out in this issue. We need to organize well with smart strategic sense and nonviolent movement-building from the grassroots up, so that over the long term we can win.

***We did not have time to mention this information:***

Current organizing efforts are underway in a number of places, including Oregon, where people want to protect the actual rights for protecting water and watersheds. In California some big agricultural businesses are aggressively pushing for greater allocations of the water, even though water is scarce. We must actually protect the “rights of nature” in significant ways instead of letting big business and “the market” manipulate this.

Four decades ago, in 1972, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled 4-3 against the “rights of nature” concept in the *Sierra Club vs. Morton* case. The Sierra Club had sued the U.S. Secretary of the Interior because the agency had decided to allow Disney to build a resort in the Sierra Nevada Mountains. The Sierra club argued that the development would hurt the area’s natural beauty and value, but they lost and appealed to the circuit court, which ruled that the Sierra Club lacked standing to sue on behalf of the environment. The Sierra Club appealed to the Supreme Court, which ruled in a 4-3 decision that the Sierra Club lacked standing to sue. (See information at [**https://study.com/academy/lesson/sierra-club-v-morton-1972-case-brief-summary-dissent.html**](https://study.com/academy/lesson/sierra-club-v-morton-1972-case-brief-summary-dissent.html)) In order to make progress, we must challenge this concept of “standing” in bold and creative ways with a strong grassroots movement.

**Latin America:**

Glen said that a few years ago he started reading about victories in some South American nations that were writing new constitutions that included legal rights for nature. He invited Kai to summarize these victories.

Kai said things move and shift with connections to other locations. He said their work in Pennsylvania in 2006 inspired Ecuador’s people who were writing their new national constitution two years later. He said CELDF helped Ecuador write the rights of nature into their constitution.

After that, courts in Bolivia and Colombia made powerful decisions recognizing the rights of river systems and the rain forest.

Right now, Kai said, Chile is working on their new constitution, and some indigenous people there are working hard to have the constitution protect indigenous rights and the rights of nature.

**Recent activities and obstacles – and positive activities now and in the future:**

Glen said that when we were preparing for this interview, Elliott mentioned that the COVID pandemic has hurt his tribe badly and interfered with their good work. He mentioned that they want to hold conferences with other tribes when it’s safe to do that, so several tribes can cooperate to make progress. He invited Elliott to tell us what they want to accomplish.

Elliott said these are dangerous times for everyone, so they have been very careful. He said they had been organizing flotillas on the Snake River – usually in September – to bring indigenous groups and other groups together in respect of the Snake River. They urged breaching the four dams on the lower Snake River so the salmon could return to healthy runs. He said sometimes they had as many as 600 vessels floating down the Snake River in respect and celebration.

They worked with tribal entities, including the General Council (which is the tribe’s entire voting population) and with other organizations, so they were effective in raising the issue. It was frustrating when COVID forced them to stop gathering. The General Council passed their resolution recognizing the legal rights of the Snake River, so next the resolution will go to the Tribal Council, which can implement it.

When COVID subsides and it becomes safe to gather again, they want to bring people together for educational summits about issues such as the rights of nature.

Glen asked Elliott to tell us more about the tribe’s current work in protecting the environment – and what they would like to do. He also asked Elliott to tell us about the non-profit organization they created, Nimiipuu Protecting the Environment. See [**www.nimiipuuprotecting.org**](http://www.nimiipuuprotecting.org) and [**https://www.nimiipuuprotecting.org/home-original**](https://www.nimiipuuprotecting.org/home-original)

Elliott said his tribe has initiated cooperation and coordination with other tribes. The Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians is an intertribal organization of tribes throughout our region, including Alaska and parts of Montana. This organization agrees on the need to breach the four dams on the lower Snake River, and it is advancing the proposal to the national intertribal organization, the National Congress of American Indians. He said other organizations in addition to Nimiipuu Protecting the Environment are promoting recognition of the legal rights of nature. He also reported that in 2019 the Yurok Tribe had recognized the rights of the Klamath River and are pursuing the removal of the dams there. He added that they are supporting U.S. Representative Simpson’s legislation as a model for breaching the lower four dams on the Snake River.

**How to raise public consciousness and support for Legal Rights for Nature:**

Glen said that – regardless of which issues we are working on – a serious obstacle that limits the progress we can make is the mainstream news media’s failure to adequately cover the grassroots movements and their information and perspectives on the issues. This is true for all kinds of movements, including the movement to abolish nuclear weapons, for example, as well as the movement to recognize legal rights of nature. If we had better news coverage, the public could help move this goal ahead. Glen said he strongly supports the power of ordinary people to organize strategically smart grassroots movements to boldly work for positive goals.

He expressed appreciation for the efforts of both Elliott and Kai to publicize the issues and invited each of them to share their insights and strategies could you share now about how to raise public consciousness and public support to recognize legal rights for nature.

Kai said it’s more complicated now because people use so many different sources of information – and misinformation. He said the problem is worse because 90% of media are owned by five giant business corporations. He said we can see how the corporate agenda – the corporate playbook – keeps getting trotted out to squash anything contrary to whatever big business wants. He said legal rights for nature would be a seismic reversal of how big business works – “the endless production of more” mentality – so our fresh perspective would not get mainstream media coverage, and when it eventually does get coverage, the coverage would be negative. He said we need community connections and outreach – such as this TV interview – and collaborations with people such as Elliott, so many different kinds of people can share information and encouragement among various communities.

He also suggested that we might need to create our own communication channels so we can get the good information out to the public. There are various ways to do this, but in any case we need to always build relationships with people, stay connected, and build a sense of community. Then we’ll be less susceptible to the corporate media’s propaganda.

Glen agreed with Kai and said that Kai’s insights and recommendations are consistent with what Glen promotes in his free online workshops about nonviolent grassroots organizing.

Elliott agreed with Kai. He said organizations need to strategically plan how to get their information out in the best ways they can. This includes journalism and various media. These tribal-based websites are good examples of what can be done: [**www.nezperce.org**](http://www.nezperce.org) and [**www.nimiipuuprotecting.org**](http://www.nimiipuuprotecting.org) and [**https://www.nimiipuuprotecting.org/home-original**](https://www.nimiipuuprotecting.org/home-original)

Elliott said that when they promote breaching the Snake River’s dams they need to deal with the reality that many barges go up and down the river with agricultural crops, logs, and other commercial products. The business interests that transport things on the barges are concerned that breaching the dams could interfere with their transportation and increase their costs.

Elliott said he and his organization and his tribe need to understand those narratives and present their own narratives into the public space. He said the tribes do not benefit very much from those kinds of businesses, even though tribal members do produce some agricultural products. The logs that are exported bring profits to people other than themselves, and they still have to pay high prices when they buy lumber just like anyone else does. The dams are not helping his people. His people are promoting their narrative from their perspective to counter the dominant narrative that those dams are good for the region’s people.

Elliott said their website conveys their perspective. They conduct interviews. They write letters to editors. They reach out to local people, the local political base, the city councils, the churches, the chambers of commerce, so those folks will understand. He said when they do that, they do indeed make the connections that are necessary. They can help people understand that everyone wants clean water, everyone wants clean air, everyone wants happy and satisfying situations. They explain these common factors.

Glen expressed appreciation for Elliott’s approach and said that it’s smart to tap into widely held positive values that people hold, so we can help people understand that our interests support those widely held positive values. This helps people recognize our positions as valid, so they can agree with us.

***We did not have time to mention this information:***

Kai had been a guest on Glen’s April 2014 TV program promoting profound democracy at the local level through “Community Rights Ordinances.” That effort continues, and progress has been made on that strategy as well as legal rights for nature. But even while there are greatly increased possibilities for this new ways of thinking, there are also pitfalls, including dangers that negative political, economic and social forces could coopt and “greenwash” our efforts.

Glen often tells people that on the bright side, our persistent drops of water cause ripple effects leading to overall progress, so we need to keep doing our work so we can accomplish larger goals. In various ways we need to build grassroots movements to reshape our culture, so we’ll have a friendly context for passing laws, etc. Also, the inverse is true, because when we pass a good law, that also helps to change our culture in positive ways. So let’s recognize that progress occurs in both of these reciprocal ways. We need to change the culture in order to prompt the legal system to change. Also, we need to change the legal structure in positive ways so the culture will catch up with it.

The late U.S. Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas – who came from the Yakima WA area and enjoyed being out in the wilderness – suggested that nature – or anyone who speaks for nature – should have its day in court. He wrote book titled, ***A Wilderness Bill of Rights*** (paperback, 192 pages, published 1965 by Little, Brown and Company). See [**https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/48846352-a-wilderness-bill-of-rights**](https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/48846352-a-wilderness-bill-of-rights)

The idea is not new. In 1972, American law scholar Christopher Stone wrote a visionary essay, “Should Trees Have Standing?”, in which he proposed granting nature rights. Justice William O. Douglas of the U.S. Supreme Court agreed. In a famous dissent, he argued that nature, or anyone who speaks for it, should have its day in court. See these resources: [**stone-christopher-d-should-trees-have-standing.pdf (wordpress.com)**](https://iseethics.files.wordpress.com/2013/02/stone-christopher-d-should-trees-have-standing.pdf) and [**Should Trees Have Standing? Toward Legal Rights for Natural Objects (fsu.edu)**](https://ir.law.fsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1753&context=lr)

**Both guests’ organizations deserve our support:**

Glen said the he and Kai have already told a little about the non-profit organization for which Kai has been working for a long time, the Community Environmental Legal Defense Fund (CELDF – [**www.celdf.org**](http://www.celdf.org)). Glen enjoys reading about its work and donating financial support. At this time he invited Kai to share some more information about CELDF.

Kai said CELDF has evolved since was first created. They value local community empowerment and work with local communities to help them protect their interests and statewide networks of community rights networks. CELDF also works to help people collaborate and create a real people’s network. They are planning a symposium for the spring of 2022. Look for updates on their website.

Also, they’ve been helping groups come together about common interests, such as the rights of wetlands and challenging the rights of big businesses. He thanked Glen and other donors whose financial support has allowed all of this progress to be made.

Ultimately, he said, these efforts are about transforming our relationship to place and how we interact with place and with one another. The big picture is beyond any organization and bigger than the rights of nature. We need to change how we interact with ecosystems. Organizing for the rights of nature is an opportunity for powerful leverage.

Glen said he knows CELDF is helping people develop a grassroots rights of nature movement in Thurston County, Washington, where he lives. Kai is also helping people statewide develop the Washington Community Rights Network, and they hold regular meetings to move that ahead.

Glen invited Elliott to add anything beyond what he’s already said about his tribe’s organizing efforts. Elliott said that – similar to what Kai had said just now – his tribe’s people are actively working to strengthen their community.

He said that in addition to making sure the environment and Mother Earth are functioning well, they also need to help their local communities function better together to become the community that they all want to be.

Their strategy has several parts. They’re doing good work locally, and they’re also reaching out internationally. Their Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) participates in efforts related to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People. They are using that as another way they can advocate for the rights of nature.

He said [**www.nezperce.org**](http://www.nezperce.org) includes recent materials about breaching the Snake River dams and saving the salmon.

**Sources of information:**

Glen said a lot of good information exists. He recommends the websites both guests have mentioned:

* [**www.celdf.org**](http://www.celdf.org)
* [**www.nezperce.org**](http://www.nezperce.org)

* **[www.nimiipuuprotecting.org](http://www.nimiipuuprotecting.org)**
* [**https://www.nimiipuuprotecting.org/home-original**](https://www.nimiipuuprotecting.org/home-original)

More broadly, Glen invited people to search the internet for “legal rights of nature.” Learn about it and pay attention to news about its progress and setbacks.

He invited people to watch three of his TV programs that are relevant to our current discussion topic:

* Kai was a guest on Glen’s April 2014 TV program about Community Rights Ordinances to strengthen local democracy in profound ways. He invited people to visit his blog and watch that program – and/or read the document he typed up summarizing what we said in that interview. The blog link to that 2014 interview program is [**https://parallaxperspectives.org/tv-strengthen-democracy-with-a-community-rights-ordinance-**](https://parallaxperspectives.org/tv-strengthen-democracy-with-a-community-rights-ordinance-)
* Glen’s December 2021 TV program discussed water quality in Puget Sound and the rivers and streams flowing into Puget Sound. We mentioned that recognizing legal rights for nature would help us improve water quality. You can visit Glen’s blog and watch that program – and/or read his document summarizing what we said in that interview. The blog link for this December 2021 program about water quality is **<https://parallaxperspectives.org/understanding-environmental-water-quality-problems-and-solutions>**
* His July 2016 TV program interviewed two organizers of that summer’s canoe journey from tribal locations in our region to Nisqually (near Olympia), hosted by the Nisqually Tribe. Visit his blog to watch the video and/or read the thorough summary for warm insights into that powerful experience. That blog link is [**https://parallaxperspectives.org/tv-nisqually-canoe-journey**](https://parallaxperspectives.org/tv-nisqually-canoe-journey)
* Please tell your friends to watch this TV interview video and/or read the thorough summary you are reading now. They are at [**www.parallaxperspectives.org**](http://www.parallaxperspectives.org). Click the categories for “TV Programs” or “Environment” or “Judicial.” Then click this TV episode’s title, “Let’s Recognize Legal Rights for Nature.”

Glen invited people to take his FREE online workshops about nonviolent grassroots organizing to help people make progress on this and on any progressive issue. He offers these workshops several times each year. The next series runs from mid-January to mid-February 2022. See information here:  [**https://parallaxperspectives.org/sign-up-now-for-free-practical-online-workshops-to-help-you-make-more-progress-on-issues-you-care-about**](https://parallaxperspectives.org/sign-up-now-for-free-practical-online-workshops-to-help-you-make-more-progress-on-issues-you-care-about)

Another non-profit organization – Community Rights US ([**www.communityrights.us**](http://www.communityrights.us)) works to protect the rights of people and nature from the local up.

**Several articles and books about the rights of natures are on the internet, including these:**

* In 2008 Ecuador become the first nation to constitutionally protect the Rights of Nature in its constitution. CELDF applauds those who have worked to enforce Ecuador’s constitutional Rights of Nature. See CELDF’s statement here: [**https://celdf.org/2021/12/historic-rights-of-nature-victory-in-ecuador/**](https://celdf.org/2021/12/historic-rights-of-nature-victory-in-ecuador/)
* “Ecuador's Highest Court Enforces Constitutional ‘Rights of Nature’ to Safeguard Los Cedros Protected Forest” is headline of this article about the ruling made on December 1, 2021. Read about it here: [**https://biologicaldiversity.org/w/news/press-releases/ecuadors-highest-court-enforces-constitutional-rights-of-nature-to-safeguard-los-cedros-protected-forest-2021-12-02/?utm\_source=eeo&utm\_medium=email&utm\_campaign=eeo1118&utm\_term=International&emci=45d6f0d6-af57-ec11-94f6-0050f2e65e9b&emdi=6a1b579d-2a59-ec11-94f6-0050f2e65e9b&ceid=1299769**](https://biologicaldiversity.org/w/news/press-releases/ecuadors-highest-court-enforces-constitutional-rights-of-nature-to-safeguard-los-cedros-protected-forest-2021-12-02/?utm_source=eeo&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=eeo1118&utm_term=International&emci=45d6f0d6-af57-ec11-94f6-0050f2e65e9b&emdi=6a1b579d-2a59-ec11-94f6-0050f2e65e9b&ceid=1299769) Also see this article, which reports that the seven justices of the Constitutional Court found that mining activities pursued by a state mining company and its Canadian partner threatened the Los Cedros protected area’s right to exist and flourish: [**https://insideclimatenews.org/news/03122021/ecuador-rights-of-nature/?utm\_source=InsideClimate+News&utm\_campaign=9e78cd40aa-&utm\_medium=email&utm\_term=0\_29c928ffb5-9e78cd40aa-327502737**](https://insideclimatenews.org/news/03122021/ecuador-rights-of-nature/?utm_source=InsideClimate+News&utm_campaign=9e78cd40aa-&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_29c928ffb5-9e78cd40aa-327502737)
* “Indigenous Women in Peru Seek to Turn the Tables on Big Oil, Asserting ‘Rights of Nature’ to Fight Epic Spills” is the headline of an article about their lawsuit demanding protection for the Marañón River from Lot1AB, an oilfield carved into the Amazon Rainforest with nearly 2,000 contaminated sites. Read this article here: [**https://insideclimatenews.org/news/05112021/indigenous-women-in-peru-seek-to-turn-the-tables-on-big-oil-asserting-rights-of-nature-to-fight-epic-spills/?utm\_source=InsideClimate+News&utm\_campaign=d0d82f91ba-&utm\_medium=email&utm\_term=0\_29c928ffb5-d0d82f91ba-327502737**](https://insideclimatenews.org/news/05112021/indigenous-women-in-peru-seek-to-turn-the-tables-on-big-oil-asserting-rights-of-nature-to-fight-epic-spills/?utm_source=InsideClimate+News&utm_campaign=d0d82f91ba-&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_29c928ffb5-d0d82f91ba-327502737)
* CELDF published this article on November 20, 2021, to summarize the challenges to implementing the rights of nature in the U.S.: [**https://celdf.org/2021/11/challenges-to-implementing-rights-of-nature/**](https://celdf.org/2021/11/challenges-to-implementing-rights-of-nature/)
* A new book about ***The Politics of Rights of Nature*** is subtitled, “Strategies for Building a More Sustainable Future.” See information at [**https://celdf.org/2021/10/book-the-politics-of-rights-of-nature/**](https://celdf.org/2021/10/book-the-politics-of-rights-of-nature/)
* Page 5 in the document you’re reading now mentioned the 1972 Supreme Court decision against the “rights of nature” concept in the ***Sierra Club vs. Morton*** case. See information about it at [**https://study.com/academy/lesson/sierra-club-v-morton-1972-case-brief-summary-dissent.html**](https://study.com/academy/lesson/sierra-club-v-morton-1972-case-brief-summary-dissent.html))
* “Killing Nature Must Be Treated as a Crime on a Par with Genocide and War Crimes.” This article says the time has come for drastic measures to protect the environment and save the world from a climate catastrophe. Read it here: [**https://www.commondreams.org/views/2021/12/29/killing-nature-must-be-treated-crime-par-genocide-and-war-crimes?vgo\_ee=k2jIECcPP24SvUHOjogvWM%2Fa8rzVrD8A28fuZdXegaA%3D**](https://www.commondreams.org/views/2021/12/29/killing-nature-must-be-treated-crime-par-genocide-and-war-crimes?vgo_ee=k2jIECcPP24SvUHOjogvWM%2Fa8rzVrD8A28fuZdXegaA%3D)
* “Philippe Sands Makes The Case For A New International Crime Called Ecocide.” Read this article here: [**https://popularresistance.org/philippe-sands-makes-the-case-for-a-new-international-crime-called-ecocide/**](https://popularresistance.org/philippe-sands-makes-the-case-for-a-new-international-crime-called-ecocide/)
* Here is another link to an article about Philippe Sands’ urging us to recognize a new international law for people who commit crimes against the environment. Two paragraphs in the middle of this article quote the British lawyer who is proposing a new international law crime for seriously hurting the environment: “I want to give you a little bit of context and background so you can situate this in its broader framework,” he says. *“As of 1945, there have been four international crimes, the oldest one is war crimes, a 19th century invention, and then three invented in 1945 in the context of the creation of the international military tribunal at Nuremberg: crimes against humanity, the destruction of individuals; genocide, the destruction of groups; and the crime of aggression, the waging of illegal war.”  “All of these existing international crimes, and there have been no new ones for 75 years, focus on the protection of the human being, for obvious and very good reasons. None of the international crimes as such focus on the environment, because of course in 1945 the environment wasn’t part of the international legal order or part of political consciousness.”*  This article is titled, “The Essential Advocate, Philippe Sands Makes the Case for a New International Crime Called Ecocide.” The British lawyer and author has held Nazis and presidents accountable for crossing the moral red line. Now, he argues, the time has come to pursue those who commit crimes against the environment. Here is the article: [**https://insideclimatenews.org/news/22122021/philippe-sands-ecocide/?utm\_source=InsideClimate+News&utm\_campaign=d2b717053c-&utm\_medium=email&utm\_term=0\_29c928ffb5-d2b717053c-327502737**](https://insideclimatenews.org/news/22122021/philippe-sands-ecocide/?utm_source=InsideClimate+News&utm_campaign=d2b717053c-&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_29c928ffb5-d2b717053c-327502737)
* “Is it Time for the World Court to Weigh in on Climate Change?” This article reports that the small island nation of Vanuatu is maneuvering to call the question, hoping the UN General Assembly will ask the International Court of Justice to rule. Here is the article: [**https://insideclimatenews.org/news/04102021/internationa-court-of-justice-vanuatu-ecocide/?utm\_source=InsideClimate+News&utm\_campaign=9256feabcb-&utm\_medium=email&utm\_term=0\_29c928ffb5-9256feabcb-327502737**](https://insideclimatenews.org/news/04102021/internationa-court-of-justice-vanuatu-ecocide/?utm_source=InsideClimate+News&utm_campaign=9256feabcb-&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_29c928ffb5-9256feabcb-327502737)
* In November 2021 Glen posted to his blog some information about legal rights for nature: [**https://parallaxperspectives.org/see-this-blog-post-from-sept-25-2021-updated-on-nov-6-2021-yes-nature-has-legal-rights-see-this-info-about-the-growing-movement-asserting-that-rivers-forests-wildlife-etc-have-legal-rights**](https://parallaxperspectives.org/see-this-blog-post-from-sept-25-2021-updated-on-nov-6-2021-yes-nature-has-legal-rights-see-this-info-about-the-growing-movement-asserting-that-rivers-forests-wildlife-etc-have-legal-rights)
* Kai knows Carol Van Strum, who lives along the Alsea River in Lincoln County, Oregon. He said she organized that area to force the federal government to stop spraying pesticides on federal forestland. That has led Carol over the last 4 decades to become a leading voice for forest health – including being the human spokesperson for the rights of the Siletz River watershed in a current legal case (with CELDF providing counsel). Carol is also the author of “A Bitter Fog: Herbicides and Human Rights,” the architect of the Poison Papers: [**https://www.poisonpapers.org/**](https://www.poisonpapers.org/), and featured in the award winning documentary “The People vs. Agent Orange.” See [**https://www.pbs.org/independentlens/documentaries/the-people-vs-agent-orange/**](https://www.pbs.org/independentlens/documentaries/the-people-vs-agent-orange/)
* One of the best U.S. Supreme Court justices we ever had – William O. Douglas – came from the Yakima, Washington, area and greatly enjoyed being out in the wilderness. He suggested that nature – or anyone who speaks for nature – should have their day in court. He even wrote a book titled, ***A Wilderness Bill of Rights***. This 192-page paperback was published 1965 by Little, Brown and Company. See [**https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/48846352-a-wilderness-bill-of-rights**](https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/48846352-a-wilderness-bill-of-rights)
* In 1972 the American law scholar Christopher Stone wrote a visionary essay, “Should Trees Have Standing?” He proposed granting nature rights, similar to what Justice Douglas urged. You can see relevant articles about Stone’s writings at [**stone-christopher-d-should-trees-have-standing.pdf (wordpress.com)**](https://iseethics.files.wordpress.com/2013/02/stone-christopher-d-should-trees-have-standing.pdf) and[**Should Trees Have Standing? Toward Legal Rights for Natural Objects (fsu.edu)**](https://ir.law.fsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1753&context=lr)
* A knowledgeable friend of mine recommends this book: ***The Ministry for the Future***. See [**https://www.theguardian.com/books/2020/nov/20/the-ministry-for-the-future-by-kim-stanley-robinson-review-how-to-solve-the-climate-crisis**](https://www.theguardian.com/books/2020/nov/20/the-ministry-for-the-future-by-kim-stanley-robinson-review-how-to-solve-the-climate-crisis)
* A blog post says “Both posthuman theory and the rights of nature (RoN) movement have the potential to challenge the anthropocentrism of international environmental law (IEL).” See this: [**https://communityrights.us/2021/12/28/posthuman-international-law-and-the-rights-of-nature/**](https://communityrights.us/2021/12/28/posthuman-international-law-and-the-rights-of-nature/)
* In late 2021 a community in Virginia promoted a “Community Bill of Rights” in order to protect its environment from mining. This is part of the growing Global Rights of Nature” movement: [**https://celdf.org/2021/12/virginia-community-joins-global-rights-of-nature-movement/**](https://celdf.org/2021/12/virginia-community-joins-global-rights-of-nature-movement/)

**Several videos about the rights of natures are watchable online, including these:**

* This 53-minute video documentary reports on the global movement to recognize the rights of nature. A brief introduction to this video says this: “Western views and the legal system tend to view nature as property, and as a resource from which wealth is extracted, a commodity whose only value is to provide for human needs. But for millennia indigenous communities have viewed themselves as part of nature.” Watch it here: [**https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kuFNmH7lVTA**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kuFNmH7lVTA)
* Mumta Ito’s TED Talk urges legal recognition for the Rights of Nature. Mumta Ito’s central theme is that by enshrining Rights of Nature in law, we protect the environment that we all need for our very existence. Watch it here: [**https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1nZ9u2ZoIJo**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1nZ9u2ZoIJo)
* Patricia Siemen’s TED Talk about the rights of nature can be watched here: [**https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4EPnSw0j5Go**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4EPnSw0j5Go)

**Take action to protect the Snake River, salmon and orcas:**

The Backbone Campaign ([**www.backbonecampaign.org**](http://www.backbonecampaign.org)) helps people create and use “artful activism” for a variety of important issues, including protecting the environment. An e-mail from them in December 2021 offered several opportunities:

Backbone stands with tribes to demand that the 4 Lower Snake River dams be breached, to save endangered salmon. Here is an image:



More activities to save the Snake River will be planned at a Zoom meeting to occur at 12 noon Pacific Time on **Wed. Jan. 5, 2021**. All who wish to see a free-flowing Snake are welcome to attend. Your voice, energy, time, and ideas are important. [**Sign Up Here**](https://www.backbonecampaign.org/010522?e=32afe5fde842fcb694f9aced4dd5d57b&utm_source=backbonecampaign&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=creative_actions_for_lsr&n=2)

More resources are listed here:

* Backbone friend, supporter and videographer Jeff Dunnicliff put together an outstanding **2+ minute video on the history of the dams and why they were built** (it's probably not what you think!)  [**Watch HERE**.](https://www.backbonecampaign.org/fts?e=32afe5fde842fcb694f9aced4dd5d57b&utm_source=backbonecampaign&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=creative_actions_for_lsr&n=6)
* **Trout Unlimited** dedicated the current issue of their magazine to the Snake River issue, taking a strong stand in support of breaching the dams.  The content from that issue is [**available online**](https://www.backbonecampaign.org/r?u=edkTTGOBdfdRM_0UDHhY9svp7dHaa5S3ILh3bnc6uWaIc22UhRppVHdj-w0oSJ6s&e=32afe5fde842fcb694f9aced4dd5d57b&utm_source=backbonecampaign&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=creative_actions_for_lsr&n=7). (The cover featured Backbone's projection on Lower Granite Dam.)
* One of the best resources for understanding this complex issue is the documentary **Dammed to Extinction**, [**available to watch for free on Kanopy**.](https://www.backbonecampaign.org/r?u=KTEY-Ev3AHKsnh1l3di__anjz1WdbssRPnFLspvI8PLjq9ie85bMzpF8zDMxDa6tw5R_LdtrLfiriS4Sg13APg&e=32afe5fde842fcb694f9aced4dd5d57b&utm_source=backbonecampaign&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=creative_actions_for_lsr&n=8)
* Get your own **Snake River yard sign** by [**reaching out to the contactperson**](https://www.backbonecampaign.org/r?u=yHwGGM1enS3W21WL1qjCLpd_cZ9LO7sEwyxoI3n-K_VaskNfNCpXz8UWw18h8_WP&e=32afe5fde842fcb694f9aced4dd5d57b&utm_source=backbonecampaign&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=creative_actions_for_lsr&n=9) in your area. Let's blanket the NW with our opposition to these dams!

**🡪 See the next page for Glen’s closing encouragement.**

**Glen’s closing encouragement:**

Glen thanked Elliott Moffett and Kai Huschke for sharing their information and insights during this interview. He also thanked all of the people who have been watching.

One of the great social realities in our world is that people actually can build grassroots movements to accomplish good goals. Grassroots movements can reshape our culture, so we’ll have a friendly public context for passing better laws and governmental regulations.

Also, the process works the other way too. When we pass good laws and regulations, these also help change our culture to become better.

Recognizing legal rights for nature might seem bold. But we have accomplished many bold goals throughout history:

* Many nations used to be ruled by kings who insisted that said God had appointed them to rule over us, but populations have replaced kings with democracies.
* Women used to be seen as the property of men and had no right to vote and no other rights. That has been changing.
* The list goes on and on.

The modern environmental movement began only about 50 years ago. Now we need to advance this to the next step and recognize that Mother Nature deserves legal rights and legal standing in courts of law.

You can get information about a wide variety of issues related to peace, social justice and nonviolence through my blog, [**www.parallaxperspectives.org**](http://www.parallaxperspectives.org)or by phoning me at   
(360) 491-9093 or e-mailing me at [**glenanderson@integra.net**](mailto:glenanderson@integra.net)

Glen ends each TV program with this invitation to help make progress:

**We're all one human family, and we all share one planet.**

**We can create a better world, but we all have to work at it.**

**The world needs whatever you can do to help!**