

## **2005 Buffett Award for Indigenous Leadership Finalist: Vice Chair Leaf Hillman**

The 2005 Buffett Award for Indigenous Leadership honors Vice Chair Leaf Hillman as a finalist for his grassroots efforts to restore the Klamath River salmon habitat, protect sacred sites and build the capacity of the Karuk Tribal government. Hillman is a member of the Karuk Tribe of California and lives in Orleans, California.

Hillman has served as Vice-chairman of the Karuk Tribal Council since 2002. From 1995 to 2002, he worked as the Director of the Karuk Department of Natural Resources. Hillman served as the Karuk Fisheries Department Director from 1990 to 1995. Hillman also worked as a program supervisor on the Northern California Indian Development Council's Native Stocks Enhancement Program from 1985 to 1990.

Hillman's development of the Tribal Fisheries and Natural Resources Departments is a vehicle through which habitat restoration work has been accomplished, research conducted and political decisions affected. For example, Hillman worked with UC Davis researchers to evaluate the health impacts associated with the loss of the traditional, predominantly salmon rich, Karuk diet. Their study revealed an alarming increase of diet-related illnesses such as diabetes and heart disease. These results provide a valuable environmental justice tool to evaluate river management decisions based upon human health.

Hillman serves as the Chairman of the Klamath River Inter-Tribal Fish and Water Commission. Currently the commission is hoping to seize upon the opportunity afforded by the federal relicensing of Klamath dams to promote dam removal. This campaign has brought together neighboring tribes, fishing organizations and environmental groups. If successful, the result would be the reintroduction of salmon in the Upper Klamath Basin.

From 1986 to 2003, Hillman served on the State Board of Forestry's Native American Advisory Committee. He is currently the Bring the Salmon Home Campaign Steering Committee Chair. Hillman also served on the Klamath River Basin Fisheries Task Force from 1985 to 2005.

Hillman serves as Chairman of the Karuk Tribal Court Appointed Special Advocate Program designed to keep Karuk children in Karuk families. From 1984 to 1988, he served on the United Way of Humboldt County Board of Directors. Hillman also served on the American Red Cross of Humboldt County Board of Directors from 1983 to 1986.

Leaf Hillman is a descendant of a Karuk dance owning family and serves as a ceremonial leader during Pikyowish, the Karuk World Renewal Ceremonies. Over the past twenty years, Hillman has also taught the Karuk language at all levels of public education including adult community classes.

For more information on the Karuk Tribe and Bring the Salmon Home Campaign, log on to [www.karuk.us](http://www.karuk.us)