

Biography for Rodney Cawston, Chairman Colville Business Council

Rodney Cawston is the Chairman of the Colville Business Council, the governing body of the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation. Rodney's Indian name is tipyelene cicqn, or "Eagle Blanket," which is a Nez Perce ancestral name he received from his mother's side of his family.

Rodney grew up on the Colville Reservation in Nespelem, Washington. He descends from the Nez Perce, Lakes, and Okanogan Tribes. Rodney's 20 plus years of work experience with the Colville Confederated Tribes includes managing the Archives & Records Program, the Museum & Gift Shop, and the Language Program, all three of which he wrote the initial grants that funded them. He has also served as the Tribes' Contract Officer.

His work experience includes serving as a Regional Branch Chief for the Bureau of Indian Affairs' Navajo Regional Office as the Self-Determination Officer. Rodney also worked as the Self-Determination Specialist for the BIA's Puget Sound Agency, working with most of the tribal governments in Western Washington.

He also served as the Tribal Operations Manager for Washington State University (WSU) to recruit Native American students and to work with signatory MOU tribes to establish research opportunities with the University. Rodney was also instrumental in the development of the Regents scholarship for Native American students attending WSU.

Rodney also worked for the State of Washington under two Commissioners of Public Lands (a state-wide elected official) providing leadership to the Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR). DNR has oversight over all state public, commercial, agricultural, and aquatic lands in the State of Washington. At DNR, Rodney was responsible to work with all federally recognized tribes and he has met with each of their tribal councils on natural resource issues. Rodney drafted the "Commissioner's Order on Public Relations," which sets government to government policy between DNR and Washington's federally recognized tribes. Presently, Rodney is pursuing a PhD in the School of the Environment and Forest Sciences; he has completed all the required coursework and has to complete his dissertation.

Rodney has spent many years of learning traditional arts from many tribal Elders. He is a renowned traditional artist in weaving and beadwork. He and his family harvest and preserve as many of the traditional foods and plant materials of our Plateau people. He and his family participate in the dancing at local pow-wows and are active members in Nez Perce Longhouse.