

## **TRANSCRIPT – Listening to the Ripples Podcast**

### ***Introductory Episode: Welcome to Listening to the Ripples***

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**tylee:** Yá'át'ééh shik'éeí – Hello, my relatives welcome to the first episode of Listening to the Ripples podcast, my name is tylee nez. I'm a Diné water protector, artist, storyteller and your host from the high desert to the Navajo and Hopi lands.

This podcast is supported by the Native Resilience Project at the Desert Research Institute.

Listening to the Ripples is about connecting and learning from indigenous matriarchs, who are protecting water, fighting for water sovereignty, and most importantly who continue to harbor a close relationship to our waters, our streams, our ponds, our springs, our monsoons, here in the southwest region of Turtle Island.

For the series, I'm going to be focusing on—starting off with matriarchs from Indigenous communities and nations in what we call the Colorado River basin, the Colorado River watershed. Before I get into that I want to also explain why I'm doing this podcast. It's not because there's a lack of information about the Colorado River, about water in the desert — about water here. In the southwest but a lack of connection to the water, a lack of respect, and understanding, and grounding in the water.

For me, I was born and raised here in the southwest and in the desert. I was raised by the desert, and I got to develop a genuine love and care for water – water is so powerful, it's so important, it brings so much life and color and love to the desert. I witnessed at a very young age by listening to the sound of water and knowing what it sounds like when it hits the cacti, and the smells that it brings to the desert.

I know I wouldn't be the person that I am today, if it wasn't for the love and care that it had shown me, and the lessons that I learned. I'm a child of the desert, of the mountains, of the skies, of the monsoons, and of the water, of the river, of the washes.

I want to stay grounded in that and to remember, I have a responsibility to honor my relations with the water, the plants, the animals, and the mountains. I want to be able to return that love and care, and protection, that it gave to me as a kid.

When I say protection, this isn't to get confused with me trying to be a savior to the water and to the desert, to the ecosystems, and to the river because this river has existed for millions of years. It will continue to exist long after me, it will continue to go through the cycles. It's all about living, knowing, and respecting the rhythms of the earth, of the cycles, of the seasons. I really want to center that at these conversations with Indigenous matriarchs, and I really want to focus on the voices of matriarchs because they are the caretakers of this river.

The people that dominate these conversations about water and who control the water are people in suits or men in suits and lab coats, who can only speak about water through numbers as measurements, as dollar signs. Who only can respect water through centuries of policies and laws that lets them believe that they have a right to control it.

I want to challenge this idea; dismantle the pedestal that is given to suits who spend more time in a concrete building far away from where the river flows. It's about bringing that breath of life back to

these conversations and back to this heavily technical conversation that's saturated with jargon and policies

To provide a non-extractive place for our community, and for our caretakers, and for the stewards of the land because at these conferences and these gatherings for water, our presence is only conditional on, you know, doing an opening prayer or a blessing or a photo op. And I wanted to provide a genuine and authentic place for matriarchs to share their knowledge and to share things that they want to say. And there's so much that we can learn, and there's so much I have learned from them, and I want to be able to share those relationships and share that knowledge.

This podcast provides an opportunity to help bridge those gaps for anyone, and to have this information be accessible. And have, you know, our youth to be able to learn from this because they will inherit the decision, and have, you know, the adults and elders, and have this be an intergenerational way of sharing knowledge.

This brings me to my next point about why I feel so strongly to make information accessible and to bridge this gap because I was the kid that had an ocean of questions about the water. About why the water was being managed? How was it being managed? Why were dams built, what did that mean? And why the river I grew up next to didn't have water flowing through it.

I had all these questions about the water, but I couldn't answer them for myself. I chased these answers, I chased it to a university where I could study environmental engineering to have the technical background and knowledge—colonial knowledge—to understand the jargon, the models, the processes, the methodology that controlled the water and the river.

I got to understand and answer these questions; I had as a kid. I want to share that knowledge and share the education with my community because you should not have to go to school to become an engineer, a hydrologist, a geologist, a lawyer, a scientist to care — to have a say in the water. It is an immense privilege to go to school and study that. I don't want to continue the cycle of having this information only be accessible to certain people, with certain credentials, and background, and standing because at the end of the day the water does not care if you have a college education. To have this information be shared and accessible and translating this technical jargon is really important to me.

Again, this brings me to my other point about doing a podcast and why doing this is for form of information sharing and media sharing and storytelling, rather than having it written. I wanted to honor the way we have passed down knowledge. When I say we I don't to, you know, put us all in an umbrella to encourage this monolithic idea, that we are all the same because we are not. But before textbooks existed and photos and videos and written words, information was passed down orally. It was passed on through generations through listening. There are other ways to learn than reading, you can do it by listening.

Which is why I felt it fitting for this podcast to hold the name *Listening to the Ripples* because we're going to be listening to indigenous matriarchs, who are going to be sharing their knowledge, their stories. And to also, ground and — not to ground us and also, myself about how this all started. It started by me listening and watching the things around me and listening for the water. And that's how I developed such a love and care for this, and that at this project it will always be the center of that, is a loving care I have for it.

And to always remember that we're talking about water and to always go back and to connect with it whether that's listening or, you know, watching or playing in water, or all the things you can do to connect and reconnect with it.

And the word ripples, is also to ground us in the many ways that water can be heard, and carried, and seen. Ripples have a sound and ripples can be seen. And ripples also remind me about a teaching of mine, that my mom shared with me about how our actions have ripple effects, and it's something that I'm reminded about, and something I carry with me everywhere I go that my actions not only impact myself but the people around me, and the things around me. And to always remember that we're not alone in this, to be really intentional about what you do and why you do it.

For this podcast we're going to be examining the ripples that have gotten us to this point with the water and the state of it, and the conditions of it. While we also understand and realize what are the ripples we're going to be leaving for the next generation, and for the next caretakers of this land.

As we're talking about the river the river is a connector, it connects the forest communities to the desert communities and it the river can carry our words, our songs, our hopes, our visions, and it's what connects us at the end of the day, is a river that flows through us and within us and it connects us. So, I just wanted to share that before we start this podcast that these are my intentions and my goals and my vision for this podcast and this is my first time doing a podcast, I've never done anything like this and I'll be learning a lot along the way, learning and growing so much; I'm not an expert in this area whatsoever.

I'm really excited to see the conversations and the stories that are shared and the connections that are shared and I really hope this motivates and inspires people to care about the water and that we're always learning from the land and we're always learning from each other and I'm really excited to start this podcast and to see where it takes us on this water journey.

Like I said, we're going to be starting with the Colorado River — the Colorado River begins from the snow on the forestry mountains of what we call the Rocky Mountain range. It melts down the mountainsides gathering into one to become a river, flowing through the forest ecosystems making its way into what we call the Grand Canyon. Carving its way through the deserts and the ecosystems to flow into the ocean, but due to centuries of engineering projects in its path like hydrological [hydro-electrical] dams, diversion channels and more, are intentionally altering the path and flow of the river and it doesn't reach the ocean anymore. And I really want to share this piece because it's something that I didn't know until a few years ago when I started my water journey, even though I was born and raised within this area, most people don't realize, and I think it's really important to point out because that's really concerning.

Yeah, it's really concerning because you think about the ripple effects that have when the water can't reach the ocean anymore and what that means, not only for the people but for the animals and the plants that rely on it for that delta to fulfill its cycle.

To go back to the Colorado River and the Colorado River basin and I say basin it's kind of like a watershed so where all the water that, kind of, drains from the river underground and on the surface.

And this watershed consists of 30 federally recognized tribes, seven states, and two countries but I also want to point out that the river has flowed long before these imaginary state lines and reservation boundaries were established. It has flowed for millions of years, and it will continue to flow and so I just wanted to kind of strike that off.

We're going to be starting this water journey and the first indigenous matriarch kicking off listening to the ripples podcast is going to be from the Jicarilla Apache Nation with the incredible water protector and talented musician Kirin Vicenti-Lacapa. Kirin is a Water Commissioner for her tribe, the Jicarilla Apache Nation. I'm so excited for this upcoming episode and the conversation with Kirin because I have learned so much from her, and the perfect person to start us off because they are very grounded in their work, and very knowledgeable about the water.

So, stay tuned for this next episode. Ahehee' – thank you, my relatives and take care.