



Credit: Al Drago/Getty Images

## Sovereignty Key to Tribal Impact on Carbon Removal

By Mark Fogarty

Tribal sovereignty is one of the biggest factors enabling tribes to have an impact in the area of carbon removal.

That was one of the key takeaways of a recent meeting of the Tribal Working Group at Building Tribal Leadership in Carbon Removal, a program of Global Ocean Health.

Ground rules for reporting on the meeting are that only key takeaways can be focused on, rather than individual speakers.

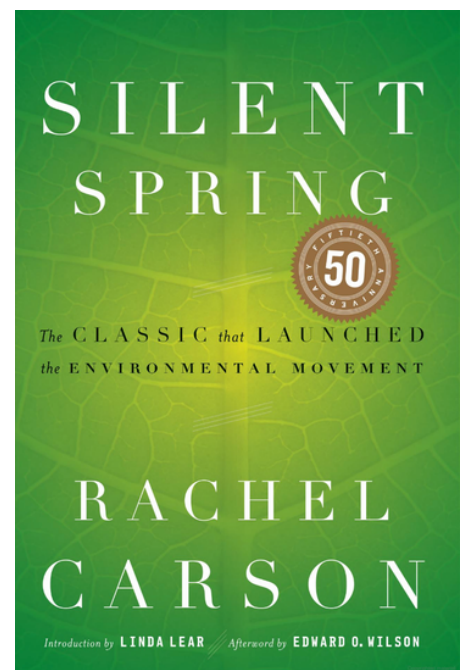
Allied to tribal sovereignty and carbon is the central role tribes have had in protecting ecosystems and the environment.

Efforts by tribes in the Puget Sound have enabled all residents to continue to enjoy natural resources that otherwise would be gone, said one participant.

A tribal viewpoint, that all things are connected, is important to how humans care for the world, another participant said.

Another takeaway a couple of participants mentioned was the personal impact of a book, *Silent Spring*, by Rachel Carson. Published in 1962, it was one of the earliest and most influential works on the environment and the potential for disaster by human intervention.

Climate change now is affecting most aspects of tribal life, another Working Group member said. But technology that permits carbon removal from the ocean and from the atmosphere is giving this participant hope that disaster can be averted. A big effort now has to be made to develop these technologies and make carbon removal happen.



In addition to carbon, methane removal is a topic that came up, considering the dramatic amounts of methane being released into the atmosphere. Should a higher priority be placed on methane than carbon dioxide?

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And it has been seen in some areas, both domestically and abroad, that an emphasis has been placed instead on the umbrella concept of greenhouse gas removal (GHG), which includes both carbon dioxide and methane. Direct air capture (DAC), however, is focused on carbon dioxide.

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Can DAC activity scale? One participant pointed to the ClimeWorks DAC facility in Iceland that is now operating. Local energy sources like solar and geothermal also can help keep down the huge energy intensity associated with removing carbon from the air.

The kinds of jobs that might be created by tribal business development

in the carbon area might be the kind of employment tribal members would gravitate to, another Working Group member said.

These opportunities could be helpful to the Zero Waste movement, as well, by replacing materials like cement that generate a lot of GHG emissions.

The Tulalip Tribes is involved in a project converting methane into hydrogen and black carbon. If you can capture methane, you can capture carbon, said one member.

There are also smaller DAC projects, such as in Kenya, that could potentially use less energy and need less land, another member noted.

And capturing carbon before it gets into the atmosphere is an effort that at least one Pacific Northwest tribe has made.

Building Tribal Leadership in Carbon Removal is the publisher of *Tribal Carbon Solutions*.



Indigenous and environmental activists protesting in front of the White House in Washington on October 11, 2021. Credit: Sue Ogrocki, File/Associated Press.