

METHOW VALLEY CITIZENS COUNCIL

VALLEY VOICE

SUMMER 2026
50TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION



**Saying “Yes”
to Community
Advocacy**

**An Indigenous
Perspective on
Stewardship**





METHOW VALLEY CITIZENS COUNCIL

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“For my people, stewardship has never been just a program or policy. It is a way of living. Our ancestors did not separate themselves from the land, water, fish, plants, and animals around them. Stewardship means living in reciprocity with the natural world and understanding that we are responsible for protecting what sustains us.”

—Kiana Sam, p. 8

“I like our earth. I’d rather not see everything ruined.”

—Liberty Bell Climate Club Student p. 11

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Letter from the Executive Director

BY REBEKAH PHILLIPS

Fifty years ago, a group of people in the Methow Valley held a conviction that still shapes this place today: that “citizenship” is far more than a legal status.

To the founders of the Methow Valley Citizens Council, citizenship meant responsibility, participation, and showing up—again and again. What they understood back then remains true today: places do not protect themselves. Communities do not sustain themselves. Democracy is not automatic. People do that work together.

Over the last fifty years, MVCC, alongside many partners, has helped protect the landscapes, waterways, forests, and rural character that define the Methow. Generations of advocates, volunteers, donors, and community members have fought for clean air and water, climate resilience, ecologically sound management of public lands, economic sustainability, and a future rooted in stewardship.

The victories (as you’ll learn from this issue) did not happen because everyone agreed. They happened because people believed our Valley was worth organizing for.

As I begin my first year as MVCC’s Executive

Director, I feel honored to step into this legacy and inspired to chart our path forward. With climate change reshaping our region in real time, major envi-

ronmental policy setbacks in recent years, and deepening socioeconomic and cultural divides, the challenges are profound. Sadly, too many in the Methow feel disconnected from decision-makers in the capital, skeptical that their voices matter, uncertain whether collective action or collaboration across differences is possible.

As I consider this moment, I find myself returning to a question that feels both timeless and urgent: Who gets to be a citizen? And, like MVCC’s founders, I’m not talking about the legal designation. I mean citizenship as the practice of belonging.

As I speak with folks around the Methow, it’s clear this is what some would call a “loaded question.” At its heart lies plenty to wrestle with: Who gets invited into decisions about the future of the Valley? Who feels ownership over our shared challenges? Who has access to safety,



Rebekah Phillips, Executive Director

“The future needs more citizens—more people who believe they have both the right and the responsibility to shape the destiny of the place they call home.”

dignity, and meaningful participation in civic life?

Our future depends on our capacity to answer these questions honestly, and to acknowledge that inclusion, safety, and a shared purpose are prerequisites of belonging.

The work ahead cannot be carried out by any one entity alone. This era of advocacy requires broader coalitions, deeper relationships, unlikely partnerships, and a renewed culture of collective empowerment. We need conservationists, business owners, workers, longtime residents, newcomers, tribal members

and leaders, farmers, scientists, educators, and artists willing to work around shared goals in the pursuit of a livable future. Coalition-building is not secondary to advocacy. It is advocacy.

For our part, MVCC will continue to serve as both a watchdog-advocate and a convener, helping translate complex environmental and land-use issues into constructive dialogue and collaborative solutions. Our mission to “raise a strong community voice” comes with the responsibility of investing in the skill, knowledge, acumen, and leadership development of those who live here.

The future needs more citizens—more people who believe they have both the right and the responsibility to shape the destiny of the place they call home. In my first months, I’ve already witnessed that spirit across the Valley. People step forward not because the work is easy, but because they understand that caring for a place is an ongoing act of collective courage. And that is the real legacy of MVCC.

As we celebrate fifty years, let’s also embrace the invitation embedded in this moment: to widen the circle of belonging, strengthen the practice of citizenship, and lead together with courage and humility.

The work continues. But so does the possibility. ♦



SAYING “YES!” TO COMMUNITY ADVOCACY

Reflections from
co-founder and
longtime advocate
Maggie Coon

I have often said the most precious things in life have come to me when I wasn't looking. A Spring 1975 phone call from a former college professor offered me a completely unexpected opportunity: “Come to Washington State and work with me on a U.S. Forest Service economic study of big ski resort that Aspen Corporation proposes to build in the Methow Valley.” Methow Valley?

On my first day on the job in June of that year, I took a helicopter ride over Sandy Butte, site of the proposed ski resort. Below lay the Methow Valley—craggy peaks, mountains full of snow and a pristine river running through it. I had no idea I was in for the ride of my life. I had discovered a place like no other.



Vicky Welch (L) and Maggie Coon (R), two of the founders of the Methow Valley Citizens Council, believed in the principle that the voices of the people who live here should matter the most in shaping the character and destiny of this place. Fifty years later, there remains a unique culture of advocacy and engagement in the Methow Valley.

50 YEARS OF COMMUNITY ADVOCACY

Not by Accident

This timeline highlights some of the actions the Methow Valley Citizens Council has taken over the past fifty years to protect the Methow Valley's natural environment and rural character. The valley we enjoy today is

the result of decades of dedication by countless individuals and organizations working to safeguard this place—an exhaustive history would fill far more pages than this publication allows.

Here, we focus on major

campaigns involving Early Winters, Arrowleaf, and the Methow Headwaters. It's important to note that much of MVCC's work is less visible in a timeline format: the steady effort of reviewing plans, commenting on proposals, and

challenging policies affecting zoning, growth, shorelines, and water rights. Protecting a place over time requires the commitment of an entire community, and this timeline reflects only a portion of that shared work.

FROM THE BEGINNING

CIRCA 11,000 BCE

The earliest known people inhabit the Methow Valley. The Methow people steward this landscape for millennia through fishing, hunting, and gathering, guided by values of gratitude, reciprocity, and responsibility to future generations.

1880s

White settlers arrive in the Methow from the Eastern U.S. Mining, and then logging, become central economic drivers in the valley. The Methow people are forcibly removed to the Moses-Columbia Reservation, and, later, to the Colville Reservation. Land and water become privatized and monetized, setting the stage for formal regulation and management by the U.S. Government.

The report we wrote for the U.S. Forest Service, based largely on estimates of anticipated population growth throughout the county, predicted winners and losers from an economic perspective. For me, the job provided a fabulous chance to begin to know Okanogan County in all its beauty and complexity and to appreciate the controversy shaping up around the prospect of a big resort. It soon became abundantly clear to me that a ski resort bringing up to 10,000 a skiers a day to Sandy Butte would irreparably change the unique qualities of the Methow landscape and community.

Amid a rising tide of concern in the local community, I unexpectedly discovered a soulmate in Vicky Welch, a woman with enormous energy, incalculable resolve and a steadfast commitment to engaging others in the emerging political debate. In 1976, we founded the Methow Valley Citizens Council. It was born with the idea that voices of people who live here should matter most in shaping the character and destiny of this place. We believed that citizens should stand up and speak out for what they believe is right, even if it's very unpopular to do so. We were young and full of the belief that anything was possible, even the David and Goliath proposition of defeating an international-scale ski resort backed by Aspen Ski Corporation. We had little experience, but some good instincts and, most importantly, developed a culture of determination and persistence that has stood as MVCC's trademark ever since.

Fifty years later, I've been asking myself: What is it about the Methow Valley that had me fall in love, as so many have? I suspect that for most of us, the answer is tied to both the land and the people. For me, it's a tiny beach on the Twisp River, immersed in cottonwood

fragrance and the sound of mountain river flow, where my sense of awe and wonder is most awakened. This is the place of solace I go in my heart, wherever I have travelled through the years. The "people" part to me means belonging in a community where we can agree or disagree and still value the contributions of all in times of both abundance and adversity.

Why did I take the path I chose? My dad's life work as a teacher of medicine shaped my world view at an early age. As a pharmacologist/toxicologist, he became involved in an international debate on the regulation of toxic chemicals in food and the environment. He understood that politics is part of any profession. And so around the dinner table, I glimpsed the nexus between science and the societal choices we make and how politics are at the center of that. I also came of age during the early 1970s dawn of the modern environmental movement. I was fortunate to have an up front view of a global awakening that we needed a quantum shift in how we treat the Earth that sustains us. Once I arrived in the Methow and connected so powerfully with this place, I knew this valley needed many voices to keep it from being rampantly developed.

In my long commitment to environmental advocacy, I have benefitted enormously from the heroes, heroines and mentors who have shaped my thinking and guided my actions. A few of the many include Brock Evans, activist extraordinaire, who fostered generations of environmental champions. He famously said what is required in the activist life is "endless pressure, endlessly applied." That's what MVCC is all about!

Terry Tempest Williams, writer, poet, and champion

50 YEARS OF COMMUNITY ADVOCACY

A SKI RESORT IS PROPOSED

1969

After forming the Methow Valley Winter Sports Council, part-time Mazama resident, businessman and ski instructor Doug Devin meets with the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) to indicate interest in developing a ski resort at Sandy Butte.

1972

North Cascades Highway opens to the public, increasing access to the Methow. Land prices in Mazama soar, along with tourism and land speculation.

1974

Aspen Ski Corporation purchases 1,200 acres at the base of Sandy Butte, believing it could be a highly profitable ski resort; feasibility studies begin.



of wild places, has taught me the power of emotion and inspiring words that motivate action to protect what she calls the “open space of democracy.” And David Weekes, a favorite boss, advised one to always “assume good intent.”

I hope I share with you a sense of pride in the difference MVCC, working with so many other great organizations, has made over the past 50 years. Together, we’ve had a huge influence on how our Valley has grown and developed. We’ve instilled a culture of advocacy which is alive and well in the Methow Valley today.

As a lifelong advocate for Methow Valley Citizens Council, I’m excited to see the next generations build on the Methow’s legacy of protection and care. My advice?

First, take the time to discover your own most special place, your path, your heroes, heroines and mentors. Share your discovery with others as you forge your own community of powerful voices with all the tools now available for spreading the word.

Second, take a drive and linger at the overlook about two miles up Goat Creek Road. Feel the magic of this “smiling country” as author Owen Wister famously described the Methow Valley. Contemplate the magnificence of the Pasayten Wilderness to the north, the North Cascades National Park to the west, the Lake Chelan/Sawtooth Wilderness to the south. Consider how citizens raised their voices and said “no thanks” to a mega ski resort directly across the valley, and “no way” to a copper mine just down valley. Keep saying “yes.” “Yes” to living in harmony with



What made you fall in love with the Methow? For Maggie Coon it was this reach of the Twisp River. Her hope for the next 50 years? That we can continue coming together to say “yes” to protecting this incredible valley.

the non-human critters which share this place with us. “Yes” to working through divergent perspectives about the human footprint which inevitably arise. And “yes” to safeguarding the Methow River as an ultimate expression of the restraint required for the health and well-being of all. Then imagine a future in which you join with friends and neighbors in gratitude for what we have here and resolve to sustain its sacred nature for the next 50 years and beyond. ♦

COMMUNITY ORGANIZES

1975

A broad coalition of community members meet in response to rumors of recreational development at Sandy Butte, now called the Early Winters Ski Resort

1976

Methow Valley Citizens Council forms as an organization, submitting comments on the Forest Service Draft Environmental Impact Statement which considers Sandy Butte for a Ski Area. The statement of purpose of MVCC is “to maintain the rural quality of life and agricultural character of the Methow Valley and to keep the valley a wholesome place for family life.”

1979

MVCC and supporting community members successfully advocate for the development of the Methow Review District, a protective zoning code forbidding strip development and requiring a 5-acre minimum lot size in the valley (20 acres in the uplands). The Review District is later adopted, despite strong opposition from Methow Valley real estate developers.

1976

MVCC members become involved in the Methow Valley Plan. The Methow Valley Addendum to the Okanogan County Comprehensive Plan is adopted, initiating the framework for concentrated development and focusing on retaining rural character.



FULFILLING ALL OUR RELATIONSHIPS

An Indigenous Perspective on Stewardship



Tule mats and teepees set up at the open house at the ʷnámʷnam (Hummingbird) property on the Chewuch River. This traditional land given to the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation offers an important place for members of the Colville Tribes to preserve and share their ancestral knowledge, skills, and traditions on their homeland. Photo: Kiana Sam

50 YEARS OF COMMUNITY ADVOCACY

PERMIT FIGHT

1978

After Aspen abandons the project, Methow Recreation Inc. (MRI) forms and applies for a Special Use Permit on Sandy Butte to pursue the ski resort development.

1984

The Forest Service signs a Record of Decision to issue a permit for up to 8,200 skiers on 3,900 acres of public land on Sandy Butte. MRI plans to develop 1,200 acres of private land at the base of the hill into a ski village.

1985

MVCC enters into talks with Hossey and Associates, contracted with MRI, about acceptable development scenarios for the ski village. These talks soon break down over the size of the resort—up to 4,120 dwellings on the 1200 acres. Upon breakdown of negotiations, anti-MVCC signs appear throughout the valley protesting MVCC's obstructionist tactics. With local unemployment high, some valley businesses and residents are in full support of the ski resort development.



BY KIANA SAM, MVCC BOARD
MEMBER AND MEMBER OF
THE COLVILLE TRIBES

For many Native communities, there is a teaching to consider the next seven generations in the decisions we make today. In one line of descent, I am the seventh generation from our last Chief. When I sit with that thought, I feel gratitude and hope, but, also, the weight of responsibility for what comes next.

For my people, stewardship has never been just a program or policy. It is a way of living. Our ancestors did not separate themselves from the land, water, fish, plants, and animals around them. Stewardship means living in reciprocity with the natural world and understanding that we are responsible for protecting what sustains us.

That responsibility still lives within our communities today. When we gather roots, we put our hands in the dirt to shake hands with Mother Earth and thank her for bringing our foods back each year. When we go to the water to fish, we put our hands in the water to thank it for carrying the salmon back to our people. We are taught not to take more than we need and to leave enough for others. Stewardship, when viewed through an Indigenous lens, is reciprocity. It is giving



Kiana Sam at Icicle Creek
with her Grandma after the
Salmon Ceremony.

thanks and doing our part to ensure these ways of life continue.

Some of my earliest teachings about stewardship came through our first foods and ceremonies.

In our winter dances, even the sequence in which we set our table carries teachings: we drink water before eating, because water is life. Water sustains not only our bodies, but everything placed on the table before us at ceremony. The salmon is next, followed by roots, berries, and meat. Every food carries its own responsibility and teachings.

In the kitchen, during ceremony, the food we prepare is medicine for the people who join us there. We are taught to cook with a good mind and spirit because what we carry within ourselves is also carried into the food that nourishes our community. Our first foods are more than resources. They are beings that have sustained and taught our people for generations. Through our language, ceremonies, and teachings, we learn that we remain in relationship with them, just

STEWARDSHIP continued on page 15

IN THE COURTS

1985

MVCC appeals the adequacy of the Early Winters EIS to Federal District Court. After they are ruled against, MVCC attorney David Bricklin files a complaint with the Ninth Circuit Court (1986).

1988

U.S. Forest Service (USFS) appeals the Ninth Circuit decision on Early Winters to the U.S. Supreme Court

1987

The Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals rules in favor of MVCC. The EIS is ruled as inadequate in addressing alternative sites, mitigation, and impacts to air quality as well as highly sensitive mule deer herds.

1989

David Bricklin and his legal team argue *Robertson v. MVCC* at the U.S. Supreme Court. Despite not ruling in MVCC's favor, the court leaves the majority of the Ninth Circuit decision in place on the inadequacy of the EIS, an ultimate victory for MVCC.



Learn more about attorney David
Bricklin's victory on page 14.



FACING DOWN THE FUTURE

Four students (from L) Rowan Kelly, Liam Keifer, Orlo Parkinson, and Mira Hirsch from Liberty Bell's Climate Club, met with their 7th District Representatives, Andrew Engell and Hunter Abell during the legislative session earlier this year. Photo: Legislative Services

A Conversation with the Next Generation of Climate Advocates

BY DANA GOLDEN, CLIMATE AND AIR PROGRAM COORDINATOR

Liberty Bell High School's Climate Club restarted two years ago after a three-year hiatus thanks to MVCC's Red-Tailed Hawk Fund. Students meet during the lunch hour to hear from guest speakers, and to learn

50 YEARS OF COMMUNITY ADVOCACY

ARROWLEAF DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED

1992
The Early Winters project is dissolved, resulting in the land's foreclosure and sale at public auction to R.D. Merrill, the sole bidder, for \$830,000.



1992
MVCC and the Western Washington-based Friends of the Methow challenge Okanogan County's new Zoning Ordinance in Superior Court on the grounds that it failed to identify and protect critical and sensitive areas, and is inconsistent with its Comprehensive Plan.

1993
MVCC and Friends of the Methow sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with R.D. Merrill allowing the smaller Wilson Ranch Planned Development (at the location of the existing Freestone Inn) to proceed with a number of provisions, including agreeing not to pursue a downhill resort, retaining the right to challenge any Planned Destination Development (PDR) and a right of first refusal on purchase of the property.

about opportunities for statewide climate advocacy. This year, I had the privilege of taking four students to Olympia during the legislative session to testify on wildfire and forest resilience funding, meet with our local 7th District representatives Andrew Engell, Shelley Short, and Hunter Abell, and learn about how policy is made at the state level. I sat down with this next generation of climate advocates to get their perspectives on climate change, growing up in the Methow, and their advocacy efforts.

Conversation with: Kara Mcmillan, Rowan Kelley, Nina Halpin, Elliot Plott, Alida Burt, Orlo Parkinson, Liam Kiefer, Mira Hirsch

Q: What first got you interested in climate issues?
Climate Club Students:

- I like our Earth. I'd rather not have everything ruined. At some point I realized we're causing this ourselves instead of it being some natural asteroid or something, and that's a pretty sad thing to think about.
- We're truly able to see the effects of climate change every single day. Like, why was it May and a billion degrees outside?
- I feel like climate is one of those areas where you can actually have a big impact. A lot of climate work is public policy, and we're the ones who have to live with the choices being made. If you want to get involved and make change, climate is a really good place to do it.

Q: How have you personally seen climate change impact the Methow Valley?

- Growing up here, wildfires have been huge. Not



Climate Club students testified on wildfire and forest resilience funding in front of a legislative committee that included Senator Shelly Short. Photo: Legislative Services

- being able to go outside in the summer because it's so smoky has become a normal experience.
- This winter, we could literally see it happening. There was barely any snow. It felt like it rained when it should have snowed, rivers flooded, and the weather was all over the place.
- We see it in people's health, too. A lot of our classmates have asthma. One student pointed out, "I literally have asthma because of fires. I didn't before I moved here."
- It affects more than just nature. The Methow's economy is built around outdoor recreation. When there's not enough snow for skiing, businesses around Loup Loup and the ski trails struggle. When roads or passes get washed out, businesses feel that too.

Q: Do conversations about climate change feel different here than they might in a city?

ARROWLEAF CHALLENGED

1995

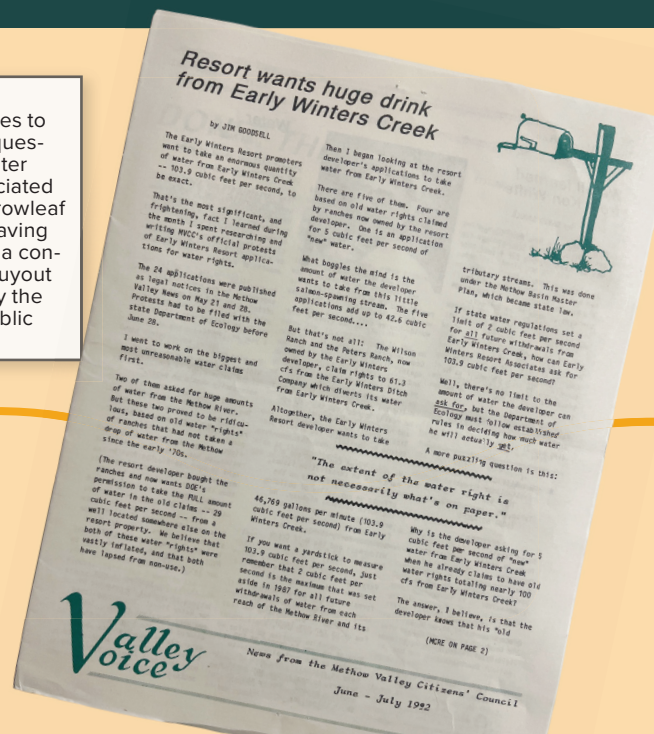
R.D. Merrill changes plans and pursues a Planned Destination Resort (PDR), that includes a golf course and up to 689 housing units. The Draft Environmental Impact Statement for Arrowleaf PDR is released in November, revealing significant environmental impacts from the project. Negotiations break down with R.D. Merrill about development of the Arrowleaf PDR and MVCC files an Administrative Appeal on the adequacy of the Final EIS (1996).

1999

In R.D. Merrill Co. v. Pollution Control Hearings, the Washington Supreme Court upholds a ruling in favor of Okanogan Wilderness League and co-plaintiff Aaron Burkhart, allowing only three of Merrill's five proposed water rights changes for the Arrowleaf project. The Department of Ecology then determines the project lacks sufficient water rights to proceed, and Merrill abandons the development plans.

2000

Merrill agrees to relinquish questionable water rights associated with the Arrowleaf property, paving the way for a conservation buyout arranged by the Trust for Public Land.



- I think we can be more open about it here because we're right in the middle of it. It's harder to say climate change isn't real when you've lived through wildfire smoke, drought, floods, and changing winters.
- I feel like it's harder to see changes in the natural world if you don't live in the natural world. We see those changes all the time.
- It's easier to shed responsibility when you live in a huge community. Here, the people affected are your neighbors.

Q: Who's responsible for the climate crisis?

- Big fossil fuel companies actually deserve a lot of blame. As far back as the 1970s, they knew what was happening and what climate change would do, but they kept going because they're focused on making money. At the same time, we've created a world where it's hard to avoid things that negatively impact the environment. Cars cause pollution, but not everybody can afford an electric vehicle, and public transportation isn't always available.
- A lot of the blame gets pushed onto individuals when some of the biggest impacts come from large corporations. It can feel like companies created the problem and then told everyone else it's their fault. But there's also some shared responsibility. We all contribute in some way, and not taking action contributes to the problem too.
- I see it at school all the time. People will look at a

recycling bin and then just throw something in the trash because it's easier. It sounds small, but those habits add up.

- I also think people don't always care because a lot of the biggest impacts won't affect them directly. They'll affect future generations, and that's part of what makes this issue so frustrating.

Q: What does youth leadership in climate mean to you?

- We have our whole lives ahead of us. The decisions being made now are going to affect us for decades.
- We're actively growing up in this world and experiencing these things firsthand. We still have hope

for the future, so our voices can make such a difference when we choose to use them. When young people talk about something they're passionate about, people pay attention.

"I like our Earth. I'd rather not have everything ruined."

Q: What was it like speaking with legislators and public officials in Olympia?

- It was interesting to see how they reacted to what we were saying. Even when they might have disagreed with us, they seemed genuinely willing to listen.
- It felt good to have the opportunity to actually talk to them. Instead of sitting around feeling powerless, we got to be part of the conversation.
- You always hear that legislators are there to represent you, but you don't really get to see that. Going there made it feel real.

50 YEARS OF COMMUNITY ADVOCACY

HEADWATERS THREAT

2014

A Canadian mining company proposes exploratory drilling on Flagg Mountain above Mazama as a first step toward a potential open-pit copper mine.

2016

MVCC helps launch the Methow Headwaters Campaign, backed by hundreds of local businesses and organizations supporting a permanent mining withdrawal. Senators Maria Cantwell (D) and Patty Murray (D) introduce the Methow Headwaters Protection Act to protect 340,000 acres of National Forest from large-scale mining.

2018

Representative Dan Newhouse (R) urges federal agencies to pursue a 20-year mineral withdrawal in the Methow headwaters. Despite a low environmental voting score at the time, his support highlights the broad bipartisan backing built by the Headwaters Campaign.

2019

As part of a public lands package led by Senator Maria Cantwell, 340,079 acres in the Methow Headwaters are permanently protected from new mineral exploration and mining.

Senate passes bill to protect Methow Headwaters

Trump signs bill protecting headwaters

Q: Were you nervous before testifying? What helped you do it anyway?

- So nervous.
- Box breathing.
- We had prepared a lot, and we knew what we were talking about. That helped boost our confidence.
- Honestly, it was such a unique opportunity that being able to speak up felt more important than being nervous.

Q: Climate conversations can sometimes feel overwhelming. What gives you hope?

- Honestly, people caring gives me hope.
- Young people seem to care a lot.
- Listening to Bill McKibben speak gave me a lot of hope. Hearing about renewable energy, especially solar, made it feel like real solutions exist and progress is happening.
- It helps seeing communities, organizations, and individuals actively working on solutions instead of just talking about problems.

Q: What changes would you most like to see in the Methow Valley over the next 10 years?

- More education. I think MVCC does a really good job helping people understand the science and data, and I'd love to see more of that.
- People need clear things they can actually do. The more people understand the issue, the more ideas and solutions they'll come up with.
- I'd like to see more focus on wildfire prevention, forest health, and controlled burns that can help prevent larger fires.
- As summers get hotter, we need things like cooling spaces and ways to help people stay safe during



Mira Hirsch and Marit Nelson, MVCC Junior Board Members, ask renowned climate activist Bill McKibben a question during his talk at the Red Barn in January 2026. Photo: Dana Golden

heat waves.

- Mostly, I want future generations to be able to enjoy the things that make the Methow special.

Q: If you could tell adults one thing about your generation and climate change, what would it be?

- It's not too late. Seriously, it's not too late!
- Just because previous generations didn't solve everything doesn't mean we should give up now.
- Climate change is a big problem, and it's only going to get bigger if we don't do anything about it.
- There's only one planet, so lock in!
- We can learn together. We can still make choices that matter. ♦

AFTER THE HEADWATERS CAMPAIGN...

In this current decade, MVCC continues to inspire accountability around Okanogan County through watchdogging, community engagement and programming that brings awareness to the challenges facing our region today.

2019

MVCC fully absorbs Clean Air Methow, whom it had fiscally sponsored for six years, to address emerging public health concerns around both summer and winter smoke.

2021

After two years of collaborative community planning, the Climate Action Plan is launched, spearheaded by the fiscally sponsored Resilient Methow (now part of MVCC).

2022

MVCC appeals Okanogan County's Comprehensive Plan (adopted under the Planning Enabling Act in December, 2021) citing serious deficiencies that affect water availability, wildlife habitat, critical areas, agriculture and wildfire safety; After two favorable rulings, in June 2026 the Court of Appeals hands down its decision in favor of the County.

2023

MVCC adopts the Dark Sky Coalition as a new program, advocating for local lighting ordinances that minimize light pollution to protect human health, help local wildlife, and keep the stars visible for future generations.

...this is not the end.

Protect the Methow for Generations to Come

Including Methow Valley Citizens Council in your estate plan is a meaningful way to create a lasting legacy while supporting the values you hold dear.

By designating MVCC as a beneficiary of your will, living trust, life insurance policy, retirement account, or brokerage account, you help ensure that the work of protecting the Methow's natural landscapes, ecological health, and rural character continues for generations to come. Your planned gift will provide enduring support for the places, communities, and way of life that make the Methow so special.

If you've already decided to include MVCC in your estate plans, we invite you to let us know. You'll want to be sure that you've recorded Methow Valley Citizens Council with the Tax ID (EIN) 91-1061350.

Contact us:

Rebekah Phillips, Executive Director
rebekah@mvcitizens.org | 509-997-0888 x3

Photo: Anna Sand

50 YEARS OF COMMUNITY ADVOCACY

ROBERTSON V. METHOW VALLEY CITIZENS COUNCIL, DAVID BRICKLIN'S REFLECTIONS ON THE SUPREME COURT CASE

"It [Early Winters] was a David and Goliath case. As a young lawyer it was appealing. If I was looking at it now I may have thought the odds were stacked against me...

In the Ninth Circuit MVCC had prevailed, they had ruled that the EIS (Environmental Impact Statement) had to be redone. But they added in that NEPA (the National Environmental Policy Act) also gives the agency a substantive mandate to avoid environmental harm [and that NEPA required a fully developed and enforceable mitigation plan before approving an EIS and issuing a permit].

All we needed was the Supreme Court not to touch the Ninth Circuit ruling that the EIS needed to be redone. Much of our focus was

to make sure the Supreme Court didn't drift away from the Ninth Circuit NEPA ruling.

When the decision was issued, it was interesting how the press saw it. They didn't understand the nuance. Before I saw it myself I was told that we had lost. I hurried back to see it and the first line said: "We accepted review to rule on a single issue." I knew MVCC had won. We asked for an award of attorney's fees that were awarded by the

The litigation team on the steps of the Supreme Court: (from R) Mickey Gendler (Bricklin's law partner), David Bricklin, Neil Kagan (lawyer for case it was combined with) and John Bonine, a law professor who provided guidance. MVCC volunteers were closely involved in the trial, Melanie Rowland assisted with the Supreme Court briefs and Isabel Spohn was an invaluable resource during the trial. Photo courtesy of David Bricklin.

Ninth Circuit. It soon became apparent that this was the beginning of the end of the project, as the Forest Service was not prepared to put out a satisfactory EIS.

How I explained the case in simple terms was: the Ninth Circuit put some icing [NEPA ruling] on the cake [EIS had to be redone]; the Supreme Court took the icing away." ♦



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as we remain in relationship with the land and water that continue to renew them. As children, many of us unknowingly grow into these responsibilities. Some learn to hunt. Some gather roots and berries. Some catch fish. The teachings that were shared with me as a child continue to shape the way I understand stewardship today.

As I have gotten older, I have also seen how much pressure our lands and resources are under. I've grown up during a time when technology has rapidly changed the world around us. Now, at 27 years old, I've witnessed firsthand the realities of climate change, wildfire seasons that have become expected every summer, warming waters, development pressures, and the decline of salmon and their habitats.

In my work with my Tribes as nsəlxcin Traditional Territories Coordinator, I often sit in spaces where these issues are discussed every day. I have seen consultation efforts for energy projects, data centers, mining, and developments proposed within our traditional territories. I have sat in spaces discussing salmon restoration and fish passage. I have been on our rivers during the summer and seen salmon dying in warming water before they could complete their journey further north.

The changes happening to the land, water, and salmon are not separate from us. They are reminders that the natural world responds to how we care for it. At times, that responsibility feels heavy. But I also understand how important it is for Indigenous people to be present in these spaces. For many young tribal members, stewardship today means learning how to walk in both worlds—carrying traditional teachings while working within modern systems that shape the future of our homelands. Indigenous knowledge is often treated as something historical, but it is living knowledge. Our people still carry generations of understanding about fire, water, seasonal change, habitat, and sustainability. That knowledge is not separate from science or restoration work. In many ways, it strengthens it.

One of the most important lessons I have learned through the practice of stewardship, is the importance of relationships. Protecting these valleys and ensuring our ways of life continue into the future cannot happen alone. Just as we hold relationships with the land, water, and animals around us, strong

relationships between the Tribes, agencies, nonprofits, scientists, educators, and local communities are essential. We accomplish far more when we work together and when Indigenous voices are included not only in conversation, but in decision-making.

We need more Indigenous people entering environmental work, science, restoration, policy, and education, so our communities can help shape decisions that directly affect our homelands and ways of life. Indigenous people carry urgency, perspective, and responsibility. They are inheriting both the challenges facing our lands and the teachings that remind us how to care for them.

When I think about the next seven generations, I think more about responsibility than certainty. But I also think about resilience, and the opportunity to continue carrying forward the teachings that have been passed down through generations. I think about continuing to show up for the land, water, salmon, animals, and people that have sustained our communities for thousands of years. Stewardship is not only about protecting our resources. It is about protecting relationships—relationships with the earth, with one another, and with generations still to come. ♦

UPCOMING EVENTS

July 22

MVCC's 50th Anniversary Celebration
Methow Valley Community Center

Celebrate 50 years of defending and protecting the Methow!

September 4–6

Mountainfilm on Tour – Methow Valley
Methow Trails Campus

Join us for the 11th Annual Mountainfilm on Tour – Methow Valley film festival.

October 6–November 14

50 Years of Watching Like a Hawk:
Young Artists' Exhibit
Confluence Gallery

An exhibition by five local artists under age 50 dedicated to environmental advocacy.

Complete information at mvcitizens.org/events.



*Raising a strong
community voice
since 1976.*

PO BOX 774
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Not by Accident

Without generations of citizens speaking up for the land, water and wildlife of this place there may have been a ski resort or a golf course development in this photo.

A place as beautiful and unique as the Methow isn't protected by accident, it requires a persistent and tenacious commitment by all of us who love it. As Methow Valley Citizens Council marks fifty years, we're celebrating all we've accomplished while looking forward to how, together, we can sustain this special place into the future.

Renew your membership today at mvcitizens.org/membership

Photo: Sharon Birchfield.