

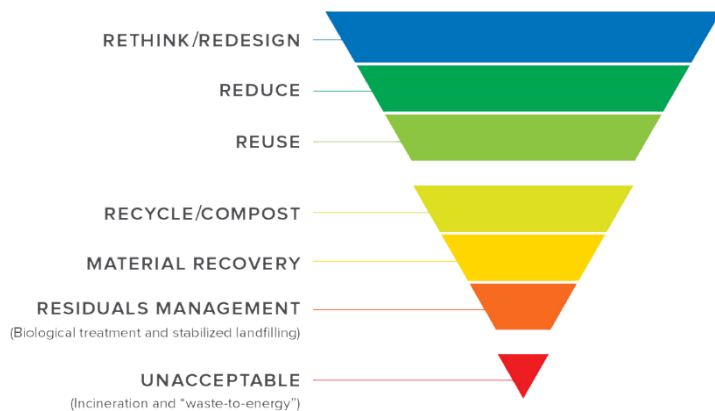
Solid Waste Concerns Among Tribes in Washington State

In 2022-23, the Pollution Prevention Resource Center (PPRC) worked with six tribes in Washington state to help prevent the generation and reduce the toxicity of solid waste and move toward Zero Waste. PPRC provided training and activities to engage tribal leaders in this effort. The training was provided in conjunction with the Tribal Solid Waste Advisory Network (TSWAN), which includes tribes from Washington, Idaho, Oregon, and Alaska.

The principles of Pollution Prevention Zero Waste (P2ZW) include using the Zero Waste hierarchy to “move up the ladder” and prevent waste generation through rethinking and redesign as well as deal with waste that is generated by recycling, composting, or other environmentally responsible methods. Pollution prevention is especially interested in preventing toxic wastes. Green purchasing is a tool that can help reduce waste and especially reduce the use of toxics. Therefore, these three strategies formed the basis of the training.

THE ZERO WASTE HIERARCHY 8.0

For detailed version visit www.zwia.org/zwh



The state of solid waste for tribes varies greatly. Some tribes have mature solid waste programs with extensive recycling and collection in their communities. Some tribes have very small reservations with only a few properties that may include some tribal offices, a casino, and a hotel. While many tribes have Integrated Solid Waste Management Plans, these are typically 10 years old. There is interest in managing solid waste effectively and the P2ZW training focuses on “upstream” decisions to reduce the amount of waste being generated and toxic products being used.

At the beginning of the training, the participants named their primary waste streams or processes of concern. The results of that exercise follow:

E-waste	Disposables	Pesticides	Recycling (including paper and cardboard)	Disposal
“big” batteries like for computer servers	Plastic utensils	Mold fungicides	Where to take recycling	Illegal dumping of all kinds
Marine batteries	Food-soiled and non-recyclable Paper	Herbicides	Styrofoam (packaging)	Tires
Single use batteries	Plastic bottles	Fuel use	Plastic	Dumping from non-reservation

Fluorescent tubes	Dunnage	Oil spills	Contamination of recycling	Dumping at transfer station
Electronics recycling	Packaging	Refrigerants from appliances	How to increase recycling	Open Dump
Lead-acid batteries		Mercury in stormwater	How to add food composting	Disasters (e.g., Wildfires)

These results show the great variation in the solid waste issues facing tribes. Tribes that have only a few buildings have the opportunity for more control of purchasing, processes, and management of solid wastes and toxics. Some tribes have green teams and are actively working toward becoming Zero Waste properties. Some tribes with more land area have a harder time with their communities. They may have an open dump that has been in existence for many years. People are used to taking their wastes to these sites and they continue to do so. Some tribes are teaching recycling in the schools and the children are teaching their parents and grandparents but old habits die hard.

Most of the tribes reported a problem with used tires. Sometimes there are people who will come and grind the tires and remove them but these people are not always reliable. TSWAN applied for a grant from EPA to help four tribes in western Washington implement more robust recycling programs. It will include purchasing infrastructure like trailers and balers, and it includes funding for staff to manage the program. They're working with researchers from Washington State University to find markets for used tires.

Illegal dumping is a big problem. Both tribal and non-tribal members dump trash illegally. Even if the dumpers can be identified, it's difficult for tribes to enforce penalties. One tribe reported that farmers near the reservation leave their plastic chemical containers on the ground and stormwater carries them to the reservation, where the tribal members must pick them up to keep the chemical out of the stream. But there's not a good option for reusing or recycling these containers.

It is important for tribes to be supported as they try to reduce solid waste and increase recycling, reuse, and composting organics. They need staff to help educate young people and change practices in the

