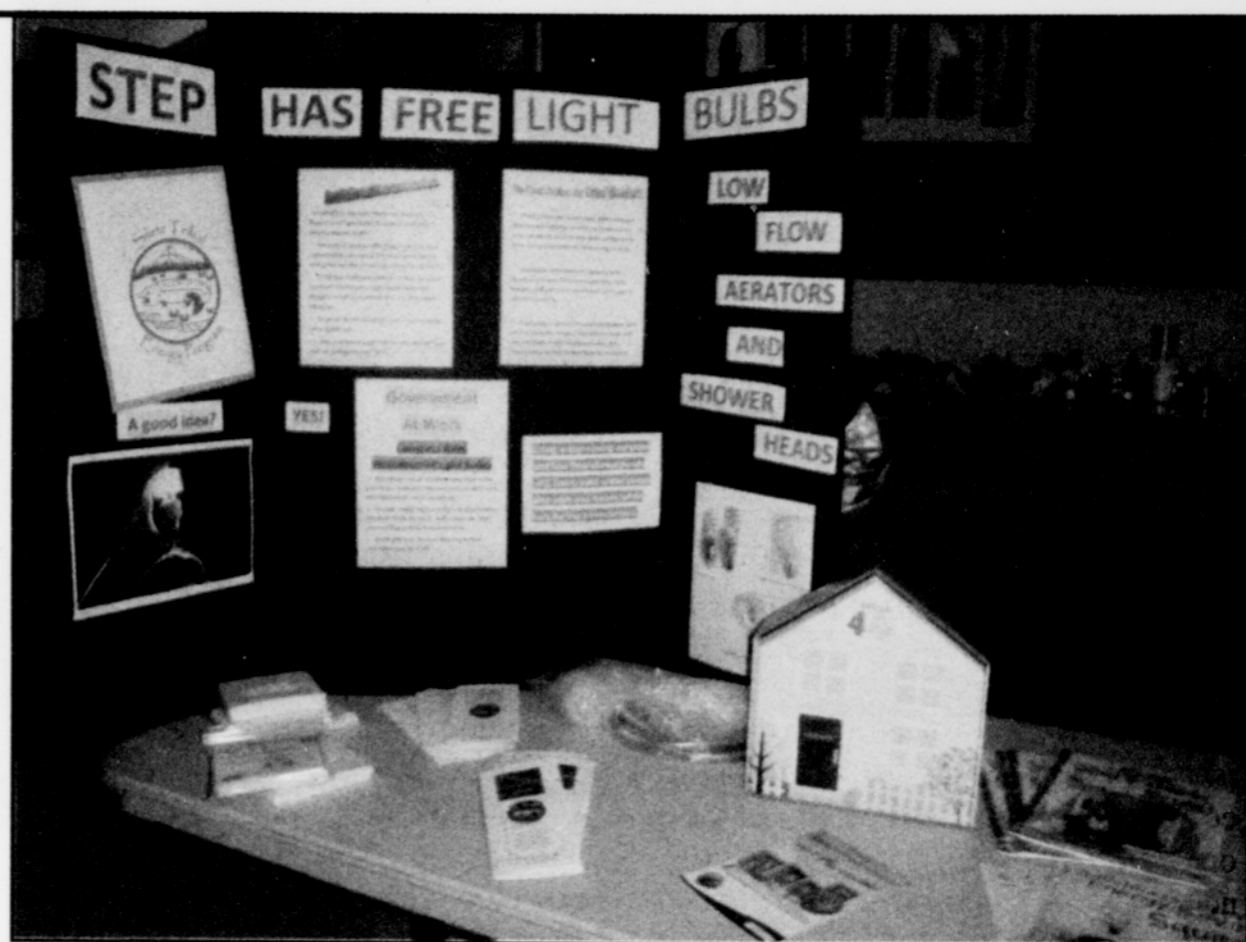




Courtesy photos by Tribal Planning Department staff

Tribal members in the Siletz community (above) take part in annual meetings conducted by the Tribal Planning Department. More than a dozen Tribal departments and programs made presentations and set up displays, including the Siletz Tribal Energy Program (right).



Community Meeting • Jan. 6, 2011  
Siletz Tribal Community Center

## Tooth Talk – Pond scum, yuck! Bacteria settle on teeth every 8 hours

By Mary Ellen Volansky, RDH, MS

This was written for December 2010 but got lost in the e-mail system changes and now is probably on Facebook, Linked In or in the ozone layer floating about. Letting you know of this delay might explain some of the comments in January's Tooth Talk and in this article. Enjoy, even if it is two months late.

From last month (referring to November's article), we reviewed the symptoms of periodontal disease, once called pyorrhea. This also included a review of medical conditions that could make the symptoms of periodontal disease worse or at least more likely to appear. And I invited you to schedule an examination with one of our dentists, Drs. Megan Saxton and Matthew Winkle.

Now that you know where we've been, I'll let you know where we're going. Here I'll review calculus, how recession happens and what makes our gums bleed. Oh yes, and pond scum.

What makes our gums bleed? Simply put –infection caused by the bacteria that grow on our teeth.

Only a few species of bacteria actually cause the infections called gingivitis and periodontal disease. Only one species of bacteria generally is considered to shoulder the responsibility for causing cavities. The rest of the bacterial species, about 500 or so, usually are harmless and even can be helpful by preventing other bacteria species from taking over our mouth and causing us sore throats, mouth sores, etc.

Bacteria live in the darkness and moistness of our mouths. Eight hours after a thorough brushing and flossing, those few species begin to grow as a film on our teeth. People have been known to describe their teeth as furry or wearing socks. This furry feeling, this film, is a biofilm.

The word biofilm is generic for a thin layer of bacteria growing on a surface. The bacteria in a biofilm make sticky materials to hold themselves together and hold onto whatever surface they choose – living and non-living, teeth or dentures.

Pond scum is a biofilm. Seagoing ships develop a biofilm on their hulls. Another kind of biofilm forms inside our water pipes, eventually causing an expensive replacement of our home's plumbing.

Pond scum and plaque are both biofilm. They are not the same biofilm. Each has its own bacteria species growing within it. The bacteria that form a biofilm on the outside of ships wouldn't grow inside our less-salty mouths and vice versa, the bacteria in our mouths would die in the salty sea.

Plaque – biofilm – grows on the surfaces of our teeth above and below the gum line. It forms on our teeth eight hours after we remove it.

In water pipes, the biofilm picks up calcium from the water and hardens onto the inside of the pipe as a thin layer. In our mouths, the biofilm/plaque picks up calcium from our saliva and hardens in 24 hours onto our teeth. Every eight hours, another layer of soft thin biofilm lays itself down on top of the other(s) and 24 hours later it's hard.

In one day's time, three layers of plaque settle on our teeth and work to calcify there. This calcified biofilm is called calculus or tartar. It can be yellowish, off-white and even black in color.

The calculus feels rough to your tongue. It can build up enough to fill in the spaces between our teeth. This buildup then will displace the gum tissue that lives there – no more sharp triangles of pink tissue growing between our teeth. Consider calculus as a sliver that grows bigger each day.

Plaque is what begins a gum infection or bacteria. Within a few days the irritation is minor – puffy and red gums, bleeding and tenderness when flossing and brushing. We call those symptoms gingivitis.

Over time this irritation continues as the gums swell, bleed even more easily (maybe when eating or doing home care) and become sore for longer time as calculus displaces the gum tissue around our teeth.

Over time, more of a tooth or teeth become visible above the gum line. The teeth become loose. Sometimes a painful abscess forms. We call these symptoms periodontal disease, a fancy name for a gum infection or pyorrhea.

Remember having an instrument placed around all your teeth and gums and the dentist or hygienist calling out a bunch of numbers? This is done to measure the placement or displacement of gum tissue round each tooth. Also measured is whether teeth are moveable to slight pressure.

This information and the details found on an X-ray can help determine the level of infection and the risk of future tooth loss. When gum tissues are healthy, probing generally does not hurt.

All cavities and gum disease are preventable, even if you have your parents' genes. Your home care can make a huge difference, whether that care is thorough or poorly done.

The professional dental staff at the Siletz Community Health Clinic is looking forward to helping you have healthy teeth, gums and overall good body health. Call at 541-444-1030 or 800-648-0449 to schedule an appointment with Drs. Saxton and Winkle or a cleaning with me, the hygienist.

Have questions? E-mail me at [maryellenv@ctsi.nsn.us](mailto:maryellenv@ctsi.nsn.us).

### Send Us News

Siletz News is looking for information about Tribal members, positive news about you or someone you know.

Here's an example of what we'll include: births, graduations, awards, the Armed Services, new jobs or businesses, weddings, anniversaries and deaths.

Contact information is on page 2.

## Potlatch Fund seeks executive director for community-based leadership

Potlatch Fund is a Native-led leadership development and operating foundation based in Seattle, Wash. Its mission is to inspire the Native tradition of giving and to expand philanthropy to Northwest Indian Country. In particular, Potlatch Fund focuses on Native communities operating within Washington, Oregon, Idaho and Montana.

Potlatch Fund is seeking a dynamic executive director to maintain its high

standard of community-based leadership and guide it to an even more vigorous future. The ideal candidate for this position will have significant experience with and knowledge of Indian Country.

A successful candidate will have a proven track record of strategic planning,



fund-raising and the vision needed to cultivate a growing base of diverse local volunteers as well as inspiring staff and community leaders in support of Potlatch Fund's mission.

Interested candidates should submit a letter of application outlining skills/background, a résumé and

letters of reference to Executive Director Position, Potlatch Fund, 801 Second Ave., Suite 304, Seattle, WA 98104. Telephone enquiries can be placed to current Executive Director Ken Gordon at 206-624-6076 or Board President Kirby Jock at 253-926-0276.

This position will be open until filled. More details are available at [www.potlatchfund.org](http://www.potlatchfund.org).