

## **Witness Biography**

### **Frances G. Charles, Chairwoman Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe**

Frances G. Charles is the Chairwoman of the Tribal Council (also known as the “Business Committee”) of the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe (the Tribe), the governing body of the Tribe. Over her twenty-plus years in Elwha Tribal Government—dating from the beginning of the Tribe’s Self-Governance Compact relationship with the Bureau of Indian Affairs and Indian Health Service—Ms. Charles has gained the trust of the Elwha people and has led them faithfully into an era of strengthened self-determination. As Chairwoman, she is the highest-ranking elected official of the Tribe and has served in this position for the past eleven years, having been elected by the membership each year. She has been elected to the Tribal Council continuously since 1993.

Since the age of eleven, Ms. Charles has been involved in some way with every major cultural and natural resources protection, preservation, and restoration effort of the Tribe. She is also deeply involved in the ceremonial and cultural life of the Tribe, and regularly takes the time to comfort and assist tribal families in their most difficult crises. Prior to her service in elected office, she devoted 12 years of service to the United States Forest Service working with fire crews and earning her way to one of the top crew leaders in the North Olympic Peninsula area. During her time in elected office, she has received various awards and recognition for her work on these issues, including: the Woman of the Year Award from Washington Senator Cantwell in 2009; a Woman of Valor Award, for Community Leadership, from Washington Governor Gregoire in 2010; and Conservationist of the Year from the Society of Ecological Restoration, Northwest Chapter, in 2012.