This comic was written and illustrated by Steven Christian of Iltopia Studios, with support from Erin Goodling, Donovan Smith, and Cassie Cohen. It is based on seven years of collaborative remembering, storytelling, and research by PHCC members and many others.

Established in 2012, PHCC is a coalition of Indigenous, Black, immigrant, refugee, and houseless-led groups, supported by environmental and neighborhood-based organizations. PHCC’s mission is to elevate the voices of communities most-impacted by pollution in the Portland Harbor Superfund site to ensure that impacted communities benefit from and lead the cleanup restoration, and redevelopment of the harbor.

*Most-impacted communities are defined as Native Americans, African Americans/Blacks, immigrants, refugees, houseless people and area residents.*

Check out a text-based version of the history depicted in this comic, written by Erin Goodling and Donovan Smith and published in Street Roots: news.streetroots.org/2018/07/13/below-surface-people-s-history-portland-harbor

For more work by Iltopia Studios, go to www.iltopia.com.
ARGH!!!

ARE YOU FLIPPING SERIOUS?

WHO ATE ALL THE HOTPOCKETS?

I TOLD YOU TO LOCK UP THE FOOD BEFORE THE RACOONS FIND IT...

WHICH WAY DID THEY GO? IMA GET THOSE LITTLE THIEVES!

OR I COULD JUST GO CATCH SOME FISH IN THE RIVER.

SORRY TO BURST YOUR BUBBLE BUT TIMES HAVE CHANGED...

BRO YOU TRIPPIN'!

PORTLAND'S SO GREEN THE TAP TASTES BETTER THAN THE VOSS.

MY GRANDPA WOULD FISH HERE ALL THE TIME WHEN HE WAS YOUNGER.

THAT RIVER AIN'T SAFE NO MORE.

NO LIE, THAT TAP DO BE HITTIN'!

AND IT'S FREE...

HOW YOU GONNA SAY THE FISH IS BAD?
**Although the river is safe most of the year for swimming, a 10-mile stretch north of the Broadway Bridge is so toxic the EPA had to get involved.**

**It got so bad that the Oregon Health Authority says to not eat the fish because of PCBs.**

**Did you know that perchlorate -- the main ingredient in rocket fuel -- is in our river?!**

**It hasn’t always been like this, though.**

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**Before the IHOOS, thousands of indigenous people called this area home.**

**People fished, traveled, traded, and lived alongside the river for generations.**

**The flow of the river inspired people to be patient and persistent in life.**

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**With the arrival of colonization, fur trade, and eventually the US government’s “Donation Land Act,” came hordes of white people flocking.**

**Native people have resisted and endured for years, the people fought to try to prevent the destruction that’s happened.**

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**Exchanging diseases for land and resources.**
It wasn't just white people, though.

On the contrary, my friend, black people were illegal in the lands until they were needed in World War 2.

On the backs of blacks, immigrants and native americans, Portland became a powerhouse in the war efforts for shipbuilding and shipbreaking.

Blacks were denied union participation which made them even more susceptible to toxic substances and lower pay.

Welcome to the monthly union meeting! We fight for your right!

No blacks! No cooks! No dogs!

Further pushing them into poverty.

Yeah, my great uncle used to be a paint chipper during the war.

He would always tell me about the catfish fries they would have on the beach.

Come to find out that the stuff he was working with and eating had lead, PCBs, and asbestos in it.

That mess has been getting in peoples' bodies for years!

As expected though, discrimination was rampant.
Communities from all over the world have migrated to Portland, relying on the Portland Harbor for fishing and relaxing—only to find out it's highly toxic.

All this time, people have looked to nature for resources only to find out that it was all a ruse.

Whether people rely on the river due to lack of information, language barriers, or down-right deceit— or just because they are hungry — people are suffering.

The corporations that got rich polluting the river over the last 100 years are still getting rich. Some are still in the industrial game, and others have switched to real estate. These are the companies avoiding payments to clean it up.

People with flashy cars and bikes say “the river is fine!” but they ain’t trying to survive on fish.
Tougher regulations and infrastructure projects like "the big pipe" have improved the water quality in the river, but it has had little impact on what is at the bottom of the river.

And when fish eat the critters, and birds and other animals eat the fish, the harm multiplies.

When people eat those fish, they are exposed to other harmful toxins in the air and the environment.

This makes advocating for cleanup complicated. People wanna fight for a cleaned-up harbor and the right to live there.

I'm gonna clean this mess up cuz those polluters shouldn't profit off the cleanup too.

The polluters should work with the community to clean it up.

Who will get those jobs to clean up anyway?

The river gets cleaned up, new developments come in, property value goes up, and the communities near the river get displaced for new residents.

There are polluter's lawyers and contractors who are mostly making money off the delay of the cleanup now—some making a living for the last 20 years off of it! But when it is cleaned up, the polluters that own property will benefit greatly from an increase in property value and land sales.
Y'all should join up with the Portland Harbor Community Coalition. PHCC was created in 2012 to elevate the voices of those most impacted by the contamination.

Communities have come together to lead the cleanup of the river, and to hold polluters accountable.

One huge goal is to make it safer to catch and consume fish. PHCC also wants to make sure that ordinary people can afford to live near the river, and can access riverfront lands.

The river is the lifeline of veins that run through Mother Earth, and we need to restore her health.

Really tho!