



June 23 through June 26, 2026

Respect | Safety | Reciprocity
| Love |
Belonging | Hope

The logo for the American Indian Health Commission (AIHC) is located in the bottom right corner. It features the lowercase letters "aihc" in a large, white, sans-serif font. Below this, the words "AMERICAN INDIAN HEALTH COMMISSION" are written in a smaller, white, all-caps, sans-serif font. The entire logo is set against a dark teal background.

The Family Historian

by MacKayla S. Alvarez/Whe'Cho'Litsa

My grandpa calls me the family historian.
The one who remembers.
The one who carries stories the way our ancestors carried
cedar baskets—carefully, knowing what is inside is
precious.

I carry names.
Faces.
Old photographs with edges worn soft by time.
I carry the stories of those who walked before me, so their
footprints do not disappear with the tide.

Sometimes I think it's a heavy thing for a girl to hold.
To carry generations on young shoulders while still trying
to find her own place in this world.

And sometimes, the hardest part isn't carrying the stories. It's walking in two
worlds.

One foot planted in the old teachings—in cedar smoke, longhouse songs, the words
of our elders, and the understanding that we belong to each other.
The other foot planted in a modern world that moves too fast, asks us to forget
where we came from, and measures success in ways our ancestors never would.

Somedays I feel caught between them.
Trying to honor my culture while learning how to navigate a world that wasn't
built for people like us.
Trying to carry the old ways forward without letting them get lost in the noise.

Somedays I feel like I'm paddling against the current, fighting waves bigger than
me.

Other days I am learning, while the elders have always known—that not every
journey is meant to be forced.

Sometimes Creator asks us to trust the water, to let the canoe drift for a while, to
move with the current instead of against it.

After my grandma left, I to fill shoes that were never meant for a child.
I tried to be strong when my heart was breaking.
Tried to hold families together, carry responsibilities and become the kind of
person she would have been proud to call her own.



Somedays I still wonder if I'm doing enough.
But then an elder smiles and tells someone, "That's Jim and Sharon's granddaughter."
And their voice fills with pride.

They speak my name in rooms I've never entered.
Tell stories about my work, about my heart, about the way I try to help our people.
And for a moment, all those long days, all those late nights, all those prayers whispered into the dark feel worth it.
Because the work is paying off.
Not in money. Not in titles. But, in trust. In respect.
In hearing elders brag about me when they think I'm not listening.
In knowing they see not only who I am, but the people who raised me.

I am still finding my way.
Still learning.
Still carrying what I can.
A granddaughter trying to honor the old ways while surviving in a new world.
A girl who inherited stories and turned them into purpose.

And when the path feels heavy, I remember this;
I do not walk alone.
My grandparents walk beside me.
My ancestors walk behind me.
And the generations still to come are watching my footprints in the sand.

So, I keep going.
One story.
One prayer.
One act of service at a time.



Cultivating Healing, Prevention, & Resilience

Establishing common knowledge & activating
culturally grounded Tribal Youth
Leadership in connectedness, resilience, and
prevention strategies

Respect | Safety | Reciprocity | Love | Belonging | Hope

Respect - Honoring every voice in the circle - elder, youth, and all
between.

Safety - Body, mind, and spirit must feel safe before healing can begin.

Reciprocity - balance of maintaining mutual respect through actions -
mutual give and take - as active participants in a web of gratitude and
responsibility.

Love - Unconditional care is the foundation - not earned, but freely given
and accepted.

Belonging - We are not alone. The circle holds. You have a place here. We
hold space for each other. You are mine, and I am yours - we are all
connected.

Hope - The belief that a path to thriving exists, with the courage and
energy to take the chance.

The Generational Vision:

A Circle Unbroken | Youth rooted in who they are |
Elders' wisdom and knowledge honored | Communities
living the medicine of being connected to culture

Agenda – Tuesday June, 23

5:00 PM:

- Opening and Welcome: JanMarie Ward (Olmstead) and Mackayla Alvarez – Summit Facilitators
- Opening Blessing: Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe
- Calling of Witnesses: Kathy Pierre, Andy Joseph and Michaela Vendiola
- Opening from Tribal Leaders: Words of Inspiration and Wisdom: Melissa Gilman, Lower Elwha Councilwoman, hosting Tribe and Monica Tonasket, Spokane Councilwoman, co-host
- Introduction of Staff and Youth Leadership Committee: JanMarie Ward (Olmstead) and Mackayla Alvarez
- Introduction of Aunties, Uncles, and Chaperones: JanMarie Ward (Olmstead) and Mackayla Alvarez
- Engagement and introduction activity: Fern Renville and Justin Olmstead

6:00 PM:

- Storytelling and Instruction: JanMarie Ward (Olmstead)
- Announcement his new book: The Spirit River is Free: Roger Fernandes, Lower Elwha Klallam Elder, Artist, Storyteller and Author

6:30 PM:

- Introduction of Nettle Cordage project: Fern Renville and Justin Olmstead
 - All participants are asked to help in making cordage with the intention of completing a project as a thank you gift to the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe. Nettle Cordage making will continue throughout the summit.
 - Each participant will be able to make a necklace with a salmon pendant as a token to remember the Youth Leadership Summit.
- Clean up and transition to Hotel

7:30 PM:

- Evening Activities: Leave to Red Lion for Pool and Game Time
- Pool Hours: 9 am – 10 pm
- Fitness Room: 24 hours
- Games and other activities available in Peninsula Room (on ground floor)

Agenda – Wednesday June, 24

8:00 AM:

- Breakfast at Lower Elwha Tribal Cafeteria

9:00 AM:

- Welcome and Blessing
- Overview of the Day

9:40 AM:

- Water Safety Instruction – Chief Sam White

10:40 AM to 12:20 PM

- Sessions 1 and 2 with reflection periods

12:20 PM

- Lunch with Lower Elwha Klallam Elders program

1:20 PM to 3:00 PM

- Sessions 3 and 4 with reflection periods

3:00 PM

- Group activities – painting paddle, nettle cordage, and cultural arts and crafts

4:30 PM

- Dinner at the Lower Elwha Tribal Cafeteria

5:30 PM

- Movie Screening: The River Remembers
- Panel discussion and activity will follow the movie

7:30 PM:

- Evening Activities: Leave to Red Lion for Pool and Game Time
- Ice Cream Social at the pool
- Pool Hours: 9 am – 10 pm
- Fitness Room: 24 hours
- Games and other activities available in Peninsula Room (on ground floor)

Agenda – Thursday June, 25

8:30 AM:

- Welcome and Blessing
- Overview of the Day
- Group Activity

9:50 AM to 12:20 PM:

- Sessions 5, 6, and 7 with reflection periods

12:20 PM

- Lunch with Lower Elwha Klallam Elders program

1:20 PM to 3:00 PM

- Larger Group Activities: Talking Circle and Cultural Activities

3:00 PM

- Group activities – nettle cordage and collages

4:30 PM

- TraDish Dinner at the Lower Elwha Tribal Cafeteria with Tribal community

6:00 PM

- Coastal Jam

8:00 PM:

- Evening Activities: Leave to Red Lion for Pool and Game Time
- Pool Hours: 9 am – 10 pm
- Fitness Room: 24 hours
- Games and other activities available in Peninsula Room (on ground floor)

Agenda - Friday June, 26

8:30 AM:

- Welcome and Blessing

9:00 AM

- Young Leaders Interview with Peggen Frank
- Conversations with Rosalie Fish, Cowlitz Tribal Councilwoman

9:50 PM

- Nettle Cordage Fishing Net
- Salmon Activity - hopes and dreams

11:00 AM

- Gallery Walk

11:50 AM

- Evaluation and recommendations for next year

12:30 PM

- Presentation of Nettle Net to Lower Elwha Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe

1:00 PM

- Adjourn



Sessions

Session A: Amplifying Your Voice with Rosalie Fish, Cowlitz

Native Youth can amplify their voices and the voices of their communities by leaning into their passions and stories. This session will encourage youth to view their hobbies, interests, and motivations as an internal asset and possibly a platform to creatively amplify their messages. We will touch on storytelling specifically as a traditional practice, and how telling our stories not only keeps that practice alive but can amplify messages that we care about.

Session B: Native Leadership in Story and Art with Roger Fernandes, Lower Elwha Klallam

Storytelling is Teaching; Storytelling is Healing – This is how stories have been used for countless generations. Each human is a storyteller, including you. The Sacred Breathe: where we share our breath as we tell and listen to stories.

Session C: The People: Nurturing our Native Identity and Spirit with Fern Renville, Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate

What makes a person Native? Is it blood quantum? Enrollment status? Connection to a Tribal Community? Knowledge of Native culture or practice of Native lifeways? Have you ever felt that your Native identity is not seen, or that you are not “Native” enough? We will unpack all of this and more in an interactive talking circle designed to help us resist cultural erasure and gain trust in the ancestral gifts to stand strong and feel confident in our Tribal identities.

Sessions

Session D: QPR (Question, Persuade, Refer) with Diane Pebeahsy, Yakama and Comanche

An evidence-based suicide prevention approach that teaches you how to recognize the warning signs and respond with confidence and compassion. Through discussion, real-life examples, and interactive activities, you will learn how to ask direct questions when you are concerned about someone, encourage them to seek help, and connect them with trusted adults and resources. By building awareness, communication skills, and confidence, you will learn how to support friends, family members, classmates, and community members who may be struggling. Grounded in Indigenous values of caring for one another, community responsibility, and hope, this workshop promotes resilience, belonging, and help-seeking behaviors.

Session E: The Breath of Our Ancestors, The Strength of Our Futures with Peggen Frank, Arapaho and Oglala Lakota

Building Leaders from the Inside Out: Just as our bodies need a strong core, our communities need strong leaders with strong values. This interactive session empowers youth with practical tools to strengthen both body and mind through diaphragmatic breathing, core and pelvic floor activation, and full-body resistance training that can be performed at home, in school, or on the go, without equipment. You will learn how intentional movement and breathwork can improve physical health, emotional regulation, confidence, and overall well-being.

Sessions

Session F: Pulling Together for Wellness with JanMarie Ward, Marilyn Scott, and Mackayla Sharon Alvarez

An interactive introduction to the Pulling Together for Wellness framework: the balance of Native and Western sciences. It raises the significance of Native epistemology “ways of knowing” and practice-based knowledge. This session will include interactive activities focused on identifying youth priorities about community issues.

Session G: Generational Clarity with Justin Olmstead

You will reflect, share, and deepen your understanding of the effects of injustices experienced by Native people from historical trauma, ongoing racism, discrimination, and genocide. Generational Clarity also recognizes that our story incorporates much more than just the historic and current traumas; our stories also are ones of strength, love, empathy, wisdom, healing, and resilience, rooted in our cultural narratives, practices, and traditions. This understanding is to acknowledge a responsibility to the past, present, and future generations. You will walk away knowing that your actions are important, sacred, and have purpose.



CHILDREN OF THE SETTING SUN PRODUCTIONS PRESENTS

• LOWER ELWHA COMMUNITY SCREENING

Wed June 24th

5:30-7:15

LEKT Gym

From the Elwha to the Klamath, Indigenous leaders ignite a historic movement to free their rivers, proving that ecological restoration and cultural resilience flow together.



**THE
RIVER
REMEMBERS**

You're invited to
COASTAL JAM
Thursday June 25, 2026

Coastal Jam: 6pm-8pm

Where: Lower Elwha Tribal Center
2851 Lower Elwha Road Port Angeles, WA 98363

Join us for an evening of culture, connection, and community at the Native Youth Leadership & Prevention Summit! We invite you to gather for a coastal jam celebration.

This conference is proudly presented in partnership with the American Indian Health Commission, Washington State Department of Health, and the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe. We look forward to sharing this special experience with you!

For more information contact:
Melaine Wheeler at 564-215-1724



Washington State Department of
Health



Leadership



Chairwoman Melissa Gilman, Lower Elwha Klallam Tribal

Melissa Gilman is the newly elected Tribal Chairwoman. She has served on the Lower Elwha Tribal Council going on her fourth year. Melissa has a background in finance, serving as the Grants Administrator for five years prior to being elected to Tribal Council. Melissa has a history of youth engagement, serving as the chair for the former Elwha Youth Coalition as well as a HeadStart Parent Policy committee member. She continues to advocate for youth and community engagement.



Councilwoman Monica Tonasket, Spokane Tribe of Indians

Monica Tonasket is an enrolled Member of the Spokane Tribe of Indians. She currently serves on the Spokane Tribal Business Council as the Council Secretary and is in her second term. She has 30 years of experience working in various positions at Casinos, Enterprises and Tribal Government. She serves as the Eastern Washington Vice Chair for All Washington Tribes (AWT) and Co-Chair for the Washington State-Tribal Opioid and Fentanyl Task Force. She serves on the WSU Native American Advisory Board, the WSU Native Health Sciences Board, CWU Native Advisory Board, and the Community Colleges of Spokane Tribal Advisory Board, and is the Board Treasurer for the Healing Lodge of the Seven Nations. She serves as a Co-chair to the Trust Reform and Human Resources Committee for the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians. She serves on several boards and committees and serves as an advocate in the areas of Health, Youth, Drug Prevention, Education, Natural Resources, MMIW, Environmental Justice, and more. Monica graduated from Gonzaga University with a Bachelor's degree in General Studies with a concentration in Organizational Leadership. She is a mother of four children and is very involved with her family and community and enjoys participating in community events.

Leadership



Councilwoman Frances G. Charles Over her thirty-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. She has been elected to the Tribal Council continuously since 1993 and has served as the previous Lower Elwha Tribal Chair for 20 years. 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: Woman of the Year Award from Senator Cantwell in 2009; a Woman of Valor Award for Community Leadership from Governor Gregoire in 2010; and Conservationist of the Year from the Society of Ecological Restoration, Northwest Chapter, in 2012.



Tia Skerbeck is a Tribal Councilmember for the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe. She holds a Master of Public Health from the University of Washington, a Master's Certificate in Health Law from the University of Arizona, and dual Bachelor's degrees in Community Health and Communication from Western Washington University. With twenty-one years of distinguished service in the U.S. Army Reserves as an Environmental Health Officer and Preventive Medicine Specialist, she brings deep experience in health protection and emergency preparedness. She most recently served as the Public Health Officer for the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe, continuing her commitment to advancing the health and well-being of her community.

Leadership



Marilyn M. Scott (Whe-Che-Litsa) (she/her), Councilmember (Upper Skagit Indian Tribe), credits her maternal grandparents' traditional values and upbringing for her wisdom and encouragement to serve the people of her tribe and all of Indian Country. She has served on the Upper Skagit Tribal Council for 38 years. She has served her tribe as the Health & Social Services Administrator for 30 years and as the Policy Analyst for Health, Education and Employment for 20 years. She had many former Tribal leaders as mentors (Violet Hillaire, Joe Delacruz, Mel Tonasket, Robert Joe "WaWalton" to name a few). Throughout her tenure, she has also served on numerous local, regional and national boards, committees and commissions. Marilyn has served as Chairwoman and Treasurer of the American Indian Health Commission for Washington. She is a champion of Pulling Together for Wellness, a tribally led, culture-grounded, and evidence-informed prevention framework. She continues to serve as the Upper Skagit Indian Tribe representative on the AIHC and DSHS Indian Policy Committee, Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board, Northwest Washington Tribal Health Board, and the Washington State Tribal leaders Association. She has received numerous acknowledgements and awards in recognition of her contributions for Health Advocacy on behalf of Indian Country.



Rosalie Fish, Cowlitz - I am a twenty-five-year-old advocate for Missing and Murdered Indigenous People, and a tribal council member for the Cowlitz Indian Tribe. I grew up on the Muckleshoot reservation in Washington and graduated from the Muckleshoot Tribal School in 2019. I dedicated my athletic career in cross-country and track to raise awareness for the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Peoples crisis and completed a master's in social work from the University of Washington. I am passionate about preventing violence in Indigenous communities, empowering Native youth, and trauma-informed leadership.



Roger Fernandes is a Native American storyteller, artist, and educator. He has worked in these fields for over 50 years. He is an enrolled member of the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe and currently lives in Saint Paul, MN. He has a B.A. in Native American Studies from the Evergreen State College and an M.A. in Whole Systems Design from Antioch University. He teaches art and storytelling classes at a variety of institutions and programs, including the University of Washington, Highline College, Northwest Indian College, American Indian Health Commission, and the Evergreen Council on Problem Gambling. He is the father of five children and grandfather to 18 grandchildren.

Summit Facilitator and Presenter



JanMarie Ward (Olmstead) – I am Chumash, a descendant of the Santa Ynez and Barbareño California Mission Indian. I am a public health strategist with many years of experience working across non-profit, state government, Tribal, and community settings in the Pacific Northwest. I partner with Tribal Leadership and communities to build culturally grounded, Tribally-led health approaches rooted in self-determination, with a vision for health across generations. I am a grandmother and a dedicated supporter of nurturing the inherent brilliance of Native youth and sharing generational knowledge.

As a first-generation college graduate, I hold a BA in Public Sector Leadership and Strategic Planning and an MPA with a concentration in Tribal Governance from The Evergreen State College. I'm a certified NEAR (Neuroscience, Epigenetics, Adverse Childhood Experiences, and Resilience) master trainer and believe understanding historical and cultural context is itself a trauma-informed path to healing.

Since 2011, I've served as Senior Public Health Policy and Project Advisor/Consultant with the American Indian Health Commission, advancing maternal, infant, child, family, and community health; promoting Native youth voices in prevention; and conducting policy and programmatic work grounded in Tribal sovereignty and traditional knowledge.



Mackayla Alvarez, traditional name Whe'Cho'Litsa, is a proud Lummi tribal member born and raised on the Lummi Nation Reservation. Raised by her grandparents, she is deeply rooted in her Coast Salish culture and way of life. She shares her traditional name with her aunt, Marilyn Scott of the Upper Skagit Tribe, and carries it with great pride and respect. Mackayla serves as a Medical Assistant at the Lummi Nation Health Center, where she is dedicated to providing compassionate, culturally grounded care to elders, children, and families within her community. She became a Medical Assistant to help improve the health and well-being of her people and is passionate about serving her community through healthcare.

Since the age of 15, Mackayla has worked alongside her aunt, JanMarie, as a public speaker, sharing cultural teachings, community perspectives, and Indigenous voices. She remains committed to honoring her culture, serving her people, and carrying forward the teachings of those who came before her.

Speakers, Presenters, Workshop Facilitators



Sam White, Chief of Police is a member of the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe and has a 30-year career in law enforcement. Born in Port Angeles, he has served several Olympic Peninsula police departments and was named chief of the Lower Elwha Police in March 2019.



Darrell Charles is a member of the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe, and has been an artist since he was 17 years old. He started learning to forge tools, repair canoes, and carve rattles, masks, and paddles. His first instructor was Tribal elder Chucky Mike, and since then has participated in various apprenticeships in Canada and the U.S. He has carved ocean-going canoes, paddles for decoration plus personal use, and masks of various styles. He prefers to build functional cultural items-rattles, paddles, masks, and other ceremonial property. Contributing to the growth of his self and other artists is his main goal. Teaching and being taught helps boost creativity. Seeing how others teach helps him to be a better instructor.



Peggen Frank is an enrolled member of the Northern Arapaho Tribe, a descendant of the Oglala Lakota Nation, and of German and Polish heritage. Raised on the Wind River Indian Reservation, she is deeply committed to advancing Tribal sovereignty, protecting treaty rights, and strengthening Tribal communities. Peggen is married to Willie Frank III, the youngest son of the late Billy Frank Jr., and is honored to help preserve and advance his legacy of environmental stewardship and advocacy. With nearly a decade of experience in government relations and public policy, Peggen is a respected lobbyist and owner of a 100% Tribally owned firm. She specializes in Tribal affairs, natural resources, healthcare, technology, gaming, and environmental policy. As Executive Director of Salmon Defense, she has built strategic partnerships, secured critical funding opportunities, and fostered collaboration between Tribal and non-Tribal communities.

Peggen holds a Bachelor of Arts from The Evergreen State College and a Master of Public Administration in Tribal Governance. She is also the Sponsor of the USNS Billy Frank Jr. (T-ATS 11). A strong advocate for personal wellness, she believes effective leadership is rooted in physical fitness, mental resilience, and spiritual well-being.



Joe Law is the Health Education, Health Promotion, and CHR Consultant for the Portland Area Indian Health Service. Joe is an enrolled citizen of The Klamath Tribes and has blood with the Confederated Tribes of Siletz and Northern Cheyenne Tribe. Joe has 21 years of federal service and is a former schoolteacher. Joe has four children and one grandson.

Speakers, Presenters, Workshop Facilitators



Justin Olmstead (Chumash), MiT, is an Educator, Storyteller, and Painter. Justin serves as a private consultant for the American Indian Health Commission (AIHC) with a focus on working with youth using Indigenous trauma-informed frameworks to support leadership development, promotion of healthy lifestyles, understanding brain development, and addressing concerns of Native youth in dealing with commercial tobacco, cannabis, and other substances in their communities.



Fern Naomi Renville is an enrolled citizen of the Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate, storyteller, and teaching artist based in the Dakota homelands of St Paul, Minnesota. Fern's mission as an educator is to encourage learning how to be a good relative to all of Creation.



Diane Pebeahsy (Bewithque) is Yakama and Comanche and serves as the Executive Director of the Peacekeeper Society, a Native-led nonprofit focused on community wellness, youth support, cultural connection, and mutual aid. She has worked for the Yakama Nation for nearly 25 years in roles including youth programs, elder services, family support, suicide prevention, and as an Associate Judge.

Diane is also the proud mother of three children. Her passion for suicide prevention comes from both professional experience and personal loss after losing her son to suicide at age 18, following struggles with mental illness related to a brain injury and impulsivity. Through her work and lived experience, Diane is committed to helping others feel seen, supported, and connected. In this QPR (Question, Persuade, Refer) training, participants will learn how to recognize warning signs of suicide, ask direct and caring questions, offer hope and support, and connect individuals to appropriate help. Diane believes that anyone can learn these life-saving skills and become a source of support in their family, school, workplace, or community.



Kevin Seyler is an enrolled member of the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs and serves as the Behavioral Health Consultant for the Portland Area Indian Health Service. Seyler holds a Master of Science in Social Work with a clinical concentration from Columbia University and a Master of Business Administration with a healthcare administration specialty from Oregon Health and Science University. Seyler is a licensed clinical social worker in the State of Oregon and has worked for IHS for nearly 10 years. For enjoyment, Kevin Seyler loves spending time with his miniature schnauzer Todd, husband, family, friends, playing games, watching movies, and going on adventures.

Youth Leadership Committee



Graciela Broncheau, Nez Perce

Hello! My name is Graciela Broncheau, and I am a proud Nez Perce tribal member, college student, and youth advocate. I have been involved in youth prevention efforts since middle school and currently serve on the NAHOVA Youth Council, helped co-found the Hinewi Young Adult Council, and serve as a Youth Delegate for the Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board. I am also a member of the Nez Perce Youth Salmon Protectors, Nimipuu Youth Adventurers, and work with the University of Idaho 4-H Program to support youth leadership and development. Through these roles, I help promote mental health, substance abuse prevention, youth wellness, environmental stewardship, and leadership opportunities for Native youth. I have had the opportunity to speak and present at local, regional, and national events, and I am passionate about using my voice to represent Indigenous youth and create positive change in our communities.



Audrey Gales, Lower Elwha

Audrey Gales has been part of the Lower Elwha Klallam tribal community for about 10 years and is the daughter of Melissa Gilman and granddaughter of the late Kimba Charles. Previously, Audrey worked as the receptionist at the Lower Elwha Justice Center. She can't wait to join the community health team. In her free time, Audrey enjoys traveling, playing basketball, and practicing her culture.



Tamika Heath, Yakama

My name is Tamika Heath, and I am 26 years old. I am enrolled in the Yakama Nation and am also Warm Springs. I work at Ideal Option as a Peer Recovery Specialist. I am currently studying Human Services and hope to become a Substance Use Disorder Professional (SUDP). My passion lies in supporting the wellness of Indigenous individuals, families, and communities impacted by substance use disorders.

Youth Leadership Committee



Damien Kamkoff, Lummi

Now' siam

Hello my friends and relatives!

My name is Damien Kamkoff, a proud member of the Lummi Nation. Through my advocacy work, I support the families, community, and most importantly, our youth; empowering them to have a voice in their own future!!



Kenna Marie Miller, Lummi

My name is Kenna Miller, also known as Kamishaè. I am 19 years old, and I'm from the Lummi Nation tribe. This is my first year on the Inter Tribal Youth Council Coalition with Micheala Vendiola, Damien Kamkoff, and Zachary Williams. I enjoy traditional songs/dances and collecting traditional necklaces.



Helen Sekaquaptewa, Yakama Nation

Hi! My name is Helen Sekaquaptewa, my pronouns are they/them. I am an enrolled member of the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation, and a descendant of the Hopi Pueblo, Diné (Navajo), and Nʉmʉn̄x̄ (Comanche) Tribes. I am currently a student at Toppenish High School (Class of 2027). I have participated in programs such as the Harvard University Summer Program, studying Intercultural and Global Competence for a semester, where I earned four college credits, and the Stanford University pre-collegiate program, studying Organizational Leadership. My academic interests include federal Indian law, tribal administration, and law, fields in which I hope to one day serve their community both as a legal advocate and a member of the Yakama Nation's general or tribal council. I serve as Co-President of the Yakama Nation Youth Council, where we organize culturally relevant events and attend leadership conferences. My work and advocacy extends to their recognition as Boys & Girls Club of the Yakama Nation Youth of the Year, where I represented the only tribal club at state level, advocating for increased visibility and representation of Native youth. I currently have an internship at the Yakama Nation Higher Education Department, where I write press releases, advocate for youth initiatives, and attend community events.

Youth Leadership Committee



Michaela Vendiola, Walker River Paiute Tribe and Swinomish yai duʔac / Koso / Michaela Vendiola (Walker River Paiute, Swinomish, Lummi) was born in Bellingham, WA, and raised on the Lummi Indian Reservation. She is an enrolled member of the Walker River Paiute Tribe and is also from the Swinomish Indian Tribal Community and Lummi Nation. Michaela Vendiola serves as the Tribal Liaison for North Sound Accountable Community of Health (North Sound ACH) in Washington State.

Before joining North Sound ACH in 2019, Michaela worked as a Community Health Representative for the Home Visit Program through the Lummi Tribal Health Center. In 2017, Michaela graduated from Western Washington University with a B.S. in American Cultural Studies with an emphasis in American Indian Health and Policy. Michaela is an early-career professional with deep respect and ties to her Native communities; this, paired with her dedication to public health and community wellbeing, her role provides a suitable opportunity to exemplify a standard for intentionally honoring, upholding, and advocating for tribal sovereignty when serving alongside Indian health care systems in WA.

In her free time, Michaela loves spending time with her intergenerational family. Some of her favorite activities include: dancing at big drum pow wows, going to parks and being outside, working on beadwork, going camping, and relaxing with her daughter.



Zachary Williams, Nooksack Tribe

Nooksack Youth Council Advisor

Hello everybody! My name is Zachary Williams, and I'm a proud member of the Nooksack Indian Tribe. In my work as a Men and Boys Advocate, I work within the Tl'íls Ta'á'altha program to support community members. As the Nooksack Youth Council Advisor, I assist in advising and coordinating the Nooksack Tribal Youth Council to promote leadership, cultural pride, and civic engagement among youth ages 13–24.

Setting Sun Circle



Adonia Cairns is an artist, teacher, and producer with Children of the Setting Sun Productions whose work centers on Indigenous storytelling, cultural revitalization, and community-rooted arts education. A Makah Tribal member, she helps produce Setting Sun Circle films and cultural programs, building partnerships with schools, artists, and communities to uplift Indigenous intertribal voices and bring transformative learning experiences to thousands of students each year.

Trained in fine woodworking, Adonia creates and teaches across mediums, supporting both emerging and traditional artists. She is helping shape the new Setting Sun Circle gallery in downtown Bellingham, an Indigenous-led creative space dedicated to cultural sharing.

Guided by values of belonging, creativity, and care, Adonia's work weaves together story, education, and art to help communities feel connected, inspired, and rooted in who they are.



Noelani Auguston (Shxwha Village of the Stóō Nation, Nooksack, and Kanaka Maoli) is a screenwriter and producer with Setting Sun Circle. She earned her MFA in Creative Writing with a focus in Screenwriting from the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and holds a BA from the University of Washington. Based on her traditional homelands in Nooksack, Washington, Noelani's work centers Indigenous storytelling, knowledge systems, education, and impact. Her film credits include *The Last Salmon*, *The Sound*, *The River Remembers*, *Return to the Water*, *Preserving a Way of Life*, *The Story Pole*, and *West Shore*.

Reina Heinz, Senior Program Development Officer, Setting Sun Circle

Reina is an environmental social scientist and conservation standards coach with over 20 years of experience as an applied researcher and connector supporting project and program development across Setting Sun's portfolio of work spanning environment, climate justice, tribal sovereignty, and health and wellness initiatives.

She is passionate about centering Local Communities, Indigenous Peoples, and Traditional Ecological Knowledge in advancing cultural-ecological resilience and environmental decision-making. She holds an M.S. in Conservation Leadership, having worked across global conservation action prioritization, small-scale fisheries, experiential education and OneHealth initiatives to build meaningful partnerships advancing solutions-oriented, human-centered approaches to social-ecological resilience.



Cedar Smoke & Old Spirit

By MacKayla S. Alvarez/Whe'Cho'Litsa

They call me an old soul because I carry grief gently.
Because I speak softly to children and listen hard when elders talk.
Because I learned too young that silence can hold entire storms.

They say it when I choose cedar smoke over crowded rooms, when I stand near the water too long like I'm waiting for someone beneath it to answer me back.
Maybe it's because my spirit remembers things my body is still learning. Because when the drums begin echoing through the longhouse walls, something ancient inside me wakes up and says, "You have been here before".

I think old souls are born from generations of surviving.
From grandmothers who prayed in whispers, hands rough from weaving and healing yet still reached out tenderly to wipe tears from children's cheeks.
I come from women who carried nations in their bones. Women who buried loved ones and still cooked for the community after.
Women who sang mourning songs with cracked voices, so nobody had to grieve alone.
So yes—
Maybe I am an old soul.
I feel ancestors beside me when sunlight breaks through cedars trees.
I hear them in the tidewater, in the eagle's cry, in the steady heartbeat of the drum calling us home again, and again.

The old people say some spirits arrive already carrying memory.
Already knowing how sacred life is.
Already understanding that kindness is not weakness but medicine.
And maybe that is why I love so deeply it hurts.
Why I fight so hard for my people.
Why even after everything, I still choose softness.
Because my soul was shaped by generations who survived without letting the world turn hearts to stone.

And every time someone calls me an old soul, I think of my grandmothers smiling, somewhere their hands reaching through the stars, whispering proudly:
"There she is...that spirit has walked with us for a very long time."

Thank you to host and sponsors



The Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe



Spokane Tribe of Indians



American Indian Health
Commission

Lower Elwha Klallam Cooks, Council,
Staff, and Volunteers

Elders, Aunties, and Uncles

Kaufman and Associates Inc
Native and Strong program

WA State Department of Social and
Health Services

Washington State Developmental
Disabilities Administration (DDA)

WA State Department of Health
Washington State Prevention and
Community Health Division

Native Youth Leadership Committee

and

American Indian Health Commission
Staff and Consultants



Please complete this
survey so we can work to
improve our future events.



aihc
AMERICAN INDIAN HEALTH COMMISSION

Decisions



Handy Capemano