



A RENEWAL OF NATIVE UNITY & ADVOCACY

We Are Strong, Together

Seattle Urban Native Nonprofits (SUNN) collaborative serves the Seattle-King County area, a region that is home to a thriving and vibrant Native community encompassing a rich blend of Tribal cultures, multi-generational families, and individuals with many talents and professions.

The history of urban Natives in Seattle is one of persistence and resilience, and of resisting attempts to drive out, forcibly relocate and assimilate the people who first lived here. Today, 7 out of 10 Native people live in urban centers.

7 of 10 NATIVE PEOPLE LIVE IN URBAN SETTINGS

Our strength and unity come from shared adversity and a deep ancestral knowledge that we are all connected. We have a long history of coming together to take care of one another, build community connections, celebrate our diverse cultures, and advocate for our inherent rights, justice, and equality.

OUR VISION

We envision a healthy, safe, and thriving Native community collectively engaged in honoring our vibrant and diverse cultures in a gathering place and forum that both symbolizes, unites, and galvanizes the beauty, resilience, power, and sacredness of our being.



INTRODUCTION

Our Challenges

Despite our strengths, inequities continue to exist for our urban Native community. Rooted in historical oppression and institutional racism, these inequities result in disproportionately poor outcomes in health, education, housing, and economic opportunity.

Chronic underfunding of Native organizations and a lack of culturally responsive services designed to address the unique needs and traumatic experiences of the Native community compound these challenges, along with a continuing lack of representation in decision-making spaces and the invisibility of Native people in mainstream institutions, data, and the media.

A Renewal

Seattle Urban Native Nonprofits is the first collaboration of its kind in King County and represents a renewal and resurgence of unity and collective advocacy on behalf of the Native community.

As an urban Native community residing on the lands of the Duwamish, Suquamish, Muckleshoot, Tulalip, Puyallup, Snoqualmie, and Stillaguamish people in Coast Salish territories, we hold a responsibility to the first peoples of these lands and to our relatives from across Indian Country who migrate here every day.

In the tradition of Indigenous leadership, we look back on generations of Indigenous resistance, cultural knowledge, and community building to inspire and inform a new era of policy and system changes led by today's Indigenous leaders, with the goal of improving the health and well-being of our relatives both today and in the future.



A BRIEF HISTORY

A Collaboration Decades In The Making

The urban Native experience is rooted in collective advocacy. For generations, Native people in King County and across the nation have come together to advocate for political and social change to improve the health and well-being of our relatives and to address the longstanding inequities experienced by our communities.

Together, We Can Lift Up The Sky

In 2014, the United Way King County published a report* about the American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) community in Seattle-King County. While acknowledging the serious challenges facing the AI/AN community, the report also highlighted its considerable assets as well as a number of opportunities moving forward.

Seattle Urban Native Nonprofits

Seattle Urban Native Nonprofits was a direct outcome of the United Way report, convening decades of knowledge, expertise, and cultural wisdom from Indigenous leaders and community advocates from across King County.

Meeting regularly, these leaders are moving forward together by centering Indigenous strengths-based approaches, and identifying shared priorities and opportunities for mutual support—all while building collective power through dialog, education, action, and advocacy.

**Together we can lift up the sky: A Vision for the Urban Indian Community: Assessment of Assets and Opportunities for the King County Urban Indian Population* can be downloaded for free at www.liftupthesky.org. The report was developed by Kauffman and Associates, Inc., with the support of the City of Seattle, Seattle Foundation, and the Muckleshoot Charity Fund.

OUR MISSION

The SUNN Collaborative builds collective power in partnership with our Seattle-King County Native community through Native leadership and policy advocacy to advance our health, well-being, and inherent responsibilities.

INTRODUCTION

COMMUNITY ASSETS

The 2014 United Way King County report* identified the following as Seattle urban Native community's strongest assets. These strengths still hold true today.

Nonprofit Diversity

A large and growing community of diverse Native-led nonprofits and organizations is focused on meeting the needs of the AI/AN community in King County.

Hub for Native Arts and Culture

A thriving community of Native artists devoted to traditional, contemporary, and media arts is well supported by the wider community and helps keep alive distinguished art forms that remain living traditions among today's Native families.

22,000
INDIVIDUALS
SERVED ANNUALLY
BY OUR MEMBERS

Community Cohesion and Involvement

A strong cultural bond exists in the Seattle Native community, bringing together members of many tribes in a shared determination to meet needs, strengthen culture and advance traditional ways. Volunteerism is highly valued and widespread.

Native Leadership and Achievements

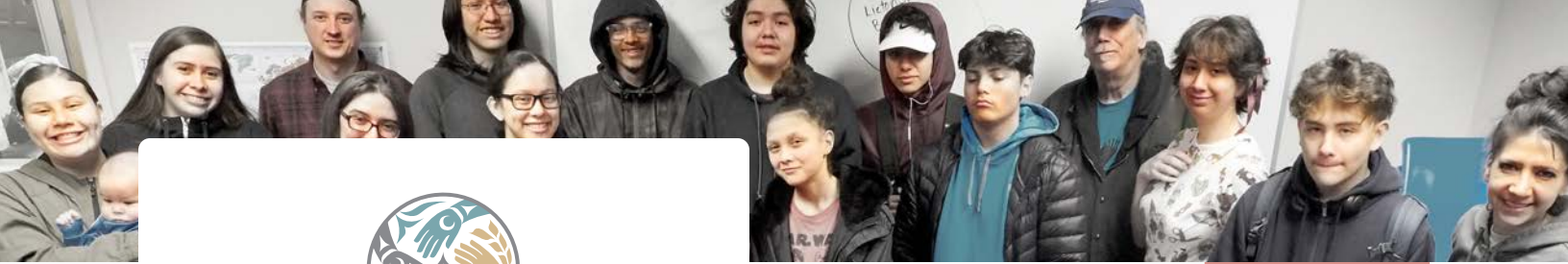
The Native community encompasses individuals with a wide range of professional achievements, education, and life experiences. This includes talented current leaders as well as youth leaders, who are deeply engaged with tribal and urban Native efforts.



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Seattle Urban Native Nonprofits (SUNN) collaborative convenes and strengthens Native-led organizations throughout King County to build collective power through dialog, education, action, and advocacy. To increase the well-being of our urban Native family, we call upon Indigenous strength, resilience, and wisdom to address systemic inequities and galvanize community-centered solutions.



**SEATTLE
URBAN NATIVE**
NONPROFITS

NATIVE UNITY

**Collective power through dialog,
education, action, and advocacy.**

Seattle Urban Native Nonprofits

Seattle Urban Native Nonprofits represents a new era of collective advocacy on behalf of urban Natives. Since 2017, the SUNN Collaborative has convened 13 urban Native organizations that serve and engage the American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) population in Seattle-King County through culturally attuned services and programs. Meeting regularly, leaders from these organizations gather for dialog and advocacy, and to advance the priorities of the urban Native community.

The SUNN member organizations represent civic engagement, health and social services, arts and culture, economic development, and education. SUNN creates a space for smaller organizations to join with larger organizations, amplifying their role in decision-making and their ability to advocate on behalf of the communities they work with. Together, these member organizations reach more than 22,000 individuals annually with programming and services.

A Unified Strategy

As the first-ever organization of its kind in King County, the SUNN Collaborative seeks to build a healthier and more sustainable urban Native community by focusing on:

Leadership Development and Training

To advocate for the urban Native community in the public and philanthropic spheres through leadership development, training, and cooperative strategic planning

Education and Advocacy

To work with policy decision makers on community priority issues through policy analysis and monitoring, grassroots mobilization, and collective advocacy campaigns.

OUR WORK

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Build Collective Advocacy and Visibility

With a focus on community driven solutions, a Native-led policy agenda and platform, and the strengthening of Native voices and leadership, we will unite to advocate and raise awareness for the urban Native community in the public sphere.

Nurture Community Engagement and Empowerment

Our community's cohesion is one of its greatest strengths. We will develop and nurture Indigenous leaders to serve in leadership capacities on boards, commissions, and advisory committees. We will harness existing organizational bases to develop a dedicated and empowered foundation of community advocates who can work effectively together for widespread systems change.

Invest in Youth and Young Leaders

We will encourage and equip youth to take an active role in the community and to become advocates for issues that directly impact them. We will create opportunities for strengthening cultural identity and pride.

Invest in Health and Holistic Well-being

To counteract the racial inequities that persist in healthcare and result in disproportionately poor health outcomes, we will reclaim and integrate Indigenous lifeways and traditions and develop a holistic culture of wellness in the Native community.

Address Housing Affordability and Access

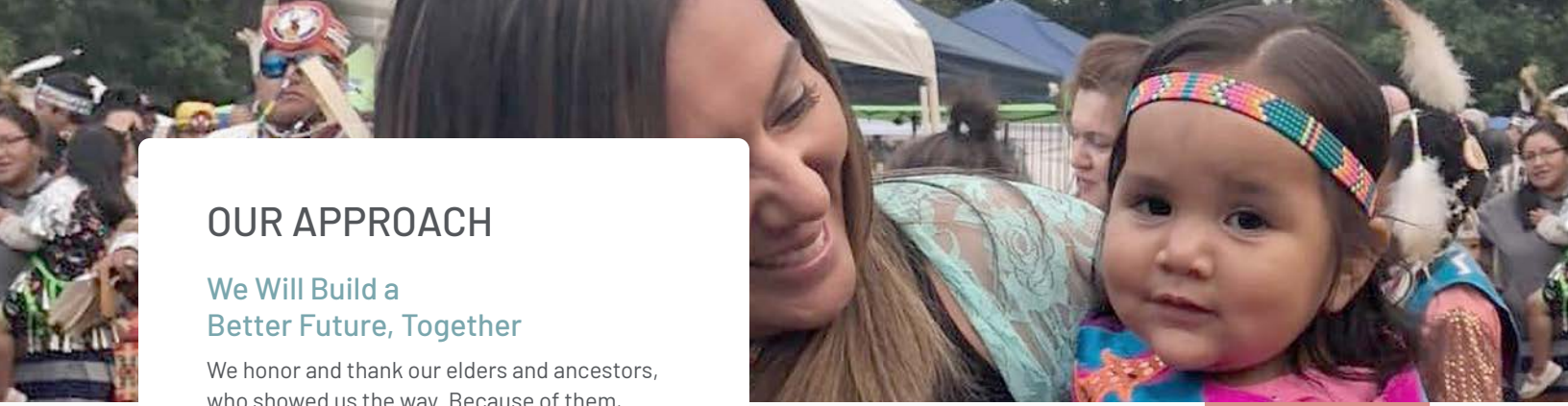
As the Seattle-King County area grows increasingly gentrified and unaffordable, we will support individuals and organizations working to decrease homelessness, make housing more financially attainable, and advance housing equity.

Increase Economic Opportunity

By creating more opportunities for Native small businesses, creating community capital through financial wellness classes, and developing more chances for youth to have paid internships, we will build a more secure and sustainable economic future for the Native community.

Enhance Partnerships with Funders

We will work to decolonize philanthropy's history, power dynamics, processes, and structures, while at the same time creating collaborative funding opportunities that strengthen all organizations involved.



OUR APPROACH

We Will Build a Better Future, Together

We honor and thank our elders and ancestors, who showed us the way. Because of them, we have access to the cultural wisdom and expertise needed to galvanize resilient, community centered approaches to address challenges and build collective power.

We undertake this work while acknowledging the historical and intergenerational trauma in our organizations and communities.

Our approach is resilient and strengths based, recognizing that culture and tradition are the practice-based evidence models that will heal the impacts of historical trauma in Native communities.

SEVEN GENERATIONS

We approach this important work with a deep understanding of our interdependence and responsibility to seven generations: the three that preceded us, our own, and the three that will follow us. For their benefit and well-being, we will join hands to address the complex, entrenched, and painful injustices caused by institutional and structural racism.

SHARED VALUES

Leadership: Rooted in love, compassion, courage, accountability and humility.

Reciprocity: Acknowledging that we are all connected and dedicated to the well-being of our community, and that we cannot achieve the balance, dignity, and respect for our community without one another.

Responsibility: To care, share power, and support our relationships as a collective in service to the Native community.

Unity: in trust, respective traditions, collective power, and a community culture grounded in inclusion, inter-tribal history, and inter-generational perspectives.

OUR WORK

COMMITTEES

Policy Committee

Creates and oversees public policy, advocacy campaigns, and systems changes that advance the collective advocacy priorities of the SUNN Collaborative.

Leadership Committee

Prioritizes the leadership development of people across the urban Native community to ensure that generational leadership is rooted in Indigenous knowledge and community values.

Sustainability Committee

Fosters long-term sustainability, empowering the SUNN Collaborative to engage in advocacy efforts to improve the health and well-being of the urban Native community in Seattle-King County.

Communication Committee






Enhances and expands SUNN's communication and outreach in the Native community by developing a central clearinghouse of information to inform, engage, educate and advocate within the Native community as well as to external audiences.

OUR MEMBERS

Chief Seattle Club
Duwamish Tribal Services
Indigenous Showcase
Na'ah Illahee Fund
National Urban Indian Family Coalition
Native American Women's Dialog On Infant Mortality
Native Action Network
Northwest Justice Project
Potlatch Fund
Red Eagle Soaring
United Indians Of All Tribes Foundation
Urban Native Education Alliance



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SEATTLE
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NONPROFITS

COMMUNITY SNAPSHOT

Seattle-King County Urban Natives

**2% OF POPULATION
ARE NATIVE PEOPLE**
OUT OF 1.9 MILLION PEOPLE IN KING COUNTY

Native People were the first residents of the area now known as King County, and Seattle is a city that visibly celebrates its Indigenous heritage. Yet Native presence has been over the years actively resisted, obscured, ignored and even prohibited within its borders.

Today's urban American Indian and Alaskan Natives (AI/AN) in King County grapple with a number of serious issues including:

- Persistent invisibility in funding circle.
- Disproportionately poor health outcomes.
- Elevated rates of homelessness.

Despite these and other challenges, the Native community in and around Seattle is multicultural and vibrant, and increasingly served by Native-led nonprofit organizations providing culturally attuned services and support.

¹ 2014 Report -Together we can lift up the sky. United Way

² 2019 Report -Seattle Indian Health Board-Policy Profile

³ First Nations Development Institute

⁴ (NOTE: In the 2019 American Community Survey, the total population for King County had increased to 2,252,782, and 1%—or 22,527—identified as AI/AN alone. Not sure how to get the “in combination” number? Number looks low.)

⁵ United Indian Health Institute Report

⁶ (Seattle King County Point in Time Count of Persons Experiencing Homelessness, 2018 (online). (Note: in the 2020 report, that percentage had grown to 15%)



OUR COMMUNITY

FUNDING CHALLENGES

Native-led organizations, which play a vital role in Indigenous communities, are chronically underfunded.³

Chronic Underfunding: Although overall foundation giving at large steeply increased between 2006 and 2012, funds to AI/AN organizations and causes decreased by nearly a quarter in the same time period.³

Only .23% of philanthropic funds are awarded to Native-led nonprofit organizations (NPOs), despite Native People representing 2% of the national population and are among communities of greatest need.³

Pieced Together Funding: Unlike federally recognized tribes, urban Native populations do not have the government-to-government relationship with the U.S. government that allows them to make their case for assistance. Instead, they are forced to compete for discretionary funding when it's available, piecing together local, state, federal and private resources to try to meet enormous need.¹

False Perceptions and Assumptions: The perception persists among funders that Native-led organizations lack the capacity to handle large investments. An interview with funders revealed these factors for this chronic underfunding:

- A lack of knowledge about the history of Native People, which leads to a disconnection from Native communities.
- A held the perception, common in philanthropy, that Native communities have access to federal funds and casino money, and therefore do not need philanthropic dollars
- An assumption that all Native People live on reservations and thus fail to incorporate Native communities within their urban strategies.
- A persistent perception that Native-led organizations lack the capacity to handle large investments.³

**JUST .23% PHILANTHROPIC DOLLARS
GO TO NATIVE CAUSES**
NATIVE PEOPLE ARE 2% OF THE POPULATION



DEMOGRAPHICS

Hundreds of tribes are represented by the Seattle-King County urban Native population.

Tribal Affiliations: The Seattle urban Native population includes two federally recognized tribes, the Muckleshoot Indian Tribe and the Snoqualmie Tribe, but hundreds of tribes are also represented by the urban Native population. Historically, in the area now known as King County the indigenous peoples included the Duwamish, Suquamish, Nisqually, Snoqualmie, and Muckleshoot.¹

Statistics:

- 7 out of 10 AI/AN live in urban areas¹
- Of the 1.9 million people living in King County, 39,117 or 2% identify as AI/AN alone or in combination with another race.⁴
- 24% of the AI/AN population lives in poverty, compared to 10.2% of the general population.¹
- The median age of the AI/AN population is 30.7 years compared to 37.1 years for the general population.¹

**24% LIVE IN POVERTY
COMPARED TO 10.2%
IN THE GENERAL POPULATION**

Housing

Gentrification: Due to rising income disparity and gentrification the AI/AN population in King County is not clustered in the urban center but has moved to south, north and western sections of the county.¹

Lack of Home Ownership: There is a much lower rate of home ownership among the AI/AN population in King County with only 36.8% owning their homes versus 59.9% of the general population.¹

Homelessness: Despite representing just 2% of the population in King County AI/AN make up 15% of the population experiencing homelessness.^{1,6}

Household Size: Rather than larger families, 1-2 person households comprise 77% of total AI/AN units served by the Seattle Housing Authority.¹

**10% OF HOMELESS ARE NATIVE
IN SEATTLE KING COUNTY
NATIVE PEOPLE ARE 2% OF THE POPULATION**

Health

AI/AN health indicators in Washington and throughout the country are consistently lower than that of the general population.

Food Insecurity: 31% of AI/AN 6th graders in Seattle public schools lack access to breakfast, contributing to childhood hunger and community food insecurity.²

Health Disparities: Statistically significant disparities exist between AI/ANs and the general population in education, poverty status, unemployment, asthma, obesity, alcohol use (binge drinking), smoking, teen birth rate, infant mortality, mortality, suicide, social support, mental distress and access to healthcare.⁵

Co-Morbidity and Mortality: Urban Natives experience a disproportionate burden of disease, including chronic disease, infectious disease, and unintended injury with extraordinarily high levels of co-morbidity and mortality.²

**31% FOOD INSECURE 6TH GRADERS
LACK ACCESS TO BREAKFAST
IN THE SEATTLE PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

Education

Low Preschool Attendance: Native children have lower rates of preschool attendance between the ages of three and four than their Non-Native peers.²

Higher Rates of Discipline: Native students in Washington are more than twice as likely to be disciplined than Non-Hispanic White students.²

Fewer High School Diplomas: 21.6% of Native people in King County do not have a high school diploma, compared to 5.8% of Non-Hispanic White people.²

Despite attempts to assimilate and erase Indigenous ways of life, tribal and urban Native communities are transforming early learning and youth and adult education systems by revitalizing Indigenous culture, traditions, and knowledge to strengthen protective factors for Indian communities and close the achievement gap.²

**21.6% NO HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA
COMPARED TO 5.8%
OF NON-HISPANIC WHITE PEOPLE**



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OUR MEMBERS



OUR MEMBERS

United through indigenous knowledge and strength.

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Chief Seattle Club

Chief Seattle Club provides a sacred space to nurture, affirm, and renew the spirit of urban Native people. At our Day Center in the Pioneer Square district of downtown Seattle, we provide food, primary health care, housing assistance, an urban Indian legal clinic, and a Native art job training program, as well as frequent outings for members to cultural and community-building events.

www.chiefseattleclub.org

Duwamish Tribal Services

The mission of Duwamish Tribal Services, Inc. is to promote the social, cultural, political and economic survival of the Duwamish Tribe, to revive Duwamish culture, and to share our history and culture with all peoples.

www.duwamishtribe.org

Indigenous Showcase

Indigenous Showcase was founded in 2007 in partnership with Tracy Rector and Northwest Film Forum to present an ongoing series showcasing emerging talents in Indigenous communities. This exciting program exemplifies how Native American and indigenous filmmakers are at the forefront of the industry, successfully establishing a dialogue and creating images that challenge and change long established cultural attitudes towards Indigenous culture.

www.indigenousshowcase.org

Na'ah Illahee Fund

Na'ah Illahee Fund is an Indigenous women-led organization dedicated to the ongoing regeneration of Indigenous communities. Through grantmaking, capacity-building and community-based intergenerational programming, we seek transformative change by supporting culturally grounded leadership and organizing. Our scope of impact includes urban, rural, island, and reservation-based Indigenous communities throughout the Pacific Northwest region and beyond.

www.naahillahee.org

National Urban Indian Family Coalition

The National Urban Indian Family Coalition elevates a national voice and sustains Indigenous values and culture through a strong network of urban Indian organizations. NUIFC advocates for American Indian families living in urban areas by creating partnerships with tribes, as well as other American Indian organizations, and by conducting research to better understand the barriers, issues, and opportunities facing urban American Indian families.

www.nuifc.org

Native American Women's Dialog On Infant Mortality

The Native American Women's Dialog on Infant Mortality (NAWDIM) is a Native-led collective who advocate, educate and support American Indian, Alaska Native and First Nations infants, moms and families. We work primarily in the Puget Sound region. We meet monthly with allied organizations and agencies, with the vision that social equity and respect for tribal sovereignty are key to improving infant survival rates in our communities. www.website.com



OUR MEMBERS

Native Action Network

Native Action Network (NAN) is a nonprofit organized to promote Native women's full representation, participation, and leadership in local, state, tribal, and national affairs. NAN achieves this by hosting intergenerational leadership forums, youth academies, 10-month Legacy of Leadership cohorts, leadership luncheons, nonprofit capacity building workshops, as well as other community development and civic participation activities. www.enduringspirit.org

Northwest Justice Projects Native American Unit

Northwest Justice Project Native American Unit (NJPNAU) provides legal advocacy for American Indian and Alaska Native individuals while tailoring services to be responsive to Native communities. Northwest Justice Project (NJP) is Washington's largest publicly funded legal aid program. NJP works to secure justice through high-quality legal advocacy that promotes the long-term well-being of low-income individuals, families, and communities. www.nwjustice.org

Potlatch Fund

The Potlatch Fund is a Native-led non-profit that provides grants and leadership development to Tribal Nations in Washington, Oregon, Idaho and Montana. Our mission is to build on the Native tradition of giving in two ways: Increasing philanthropy for and among Tribal communities, and empowering community leaders with the tools they need to succeed. www.potlatchfund.org

Red Eagle Soaring

Red Eagle Soaring serves Native American youth ages 10-19 with free programming integrating contemporary theatre and traditional Native performing arts. RES engages Native youth and their families in critical discussions about the issue affecting their lives and provides a cultural peer group in which to build confidence, identity, and community. www.redeaglesoaring.org

United Nations Of All Tribes Foundation

The United Nations Of All Tribes Foundation provides educational, cultural and social services that reconnect Indigenous people in the Puget Sound region to their heritage by strengthening their sense of belonging and significance as Native people. Our offices are located inside the Daybreak Star Indian Cultural Center, which is in Discovery Park in the Magnolia neighborhood of Seattle. www.unitedindians.org

Urban Native Education Alliance

Urban Native Education Alliance offers culturally responsive and relevant support to Native youth and families through social, cultural, and educational support services. Our programs are all youth centered, youth driven and designed for promoting health, wellness and academic, socio-cultural success for youth, families and community. www.urbannativeeducation.org



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ORIGIN STORY

A HISTORY OF SEATTLE'S URBAN NATIVES

Generosity, Oppression, Resilience, Renewal

GENEROSITY

The People of This Land

At the foot of what is now Yesler Way in downtown Seattle, medicinal plants once flourished. Abundant young salmon found refuge, and well-worn trails wound their way past expansive tide flats, creeks cascading into deep ravines, and peat bogs bursting with cranberries to the freshwater shores of present-day Lake Washington.

Natives knew this area as “Little Crossing Over Place” in their common language, Whulshotseed. Members of the area’s tribes frequently gathered here to socialize, trade, and share traditional knowledge.

Giving and receiving was honored as a regular part of Native culture, a way for tribes to reinforce relationships and tend to one another by allocating the area’s abundant resources where needed. This interdependence was reinforced by communal living in traditional longhouses, each of which might shelter several generations of the same family or different families. Within these dwellings, Native children were taught early by their elders to care for the others in their tribe, especially the vulnerable.

Seasonal gatherings, ceremonies and potlatches linked tribal communities and provided them with opportunities to reaffirm their interconnectedness and shared values such as honor, respect, generosity, and reciprocity.

OPPRESSION

Disease, Broken Treaties, Erasure Policies

With the arrival of European colonizers in the late 1400s, many local Native communities were decimated by disease and war.

The Native people who remained often worked alongside and supported White settlers, even as the pressures of aggressive westward expansion threatened their lands and livelihoods. Two treaties—the Treaty of Point Elliott and the Medicine Creek Treaty—forced the majority of Native people onto reservations while promising them rights of access to their traditional hunting and fishing grounds. For the most part, these promises were broken.

Those who remained in and around Seattle survived on the fringes, while others traveled from reservations to the city to work, trade and socialize. But with the Indian Relocation Act of 1956, the U.S. Government adopted a new policy of termination toward Native populations by eliminating government support for Indian tribes and ending the protected trust status of all Indian-owned lands. Native people were expected to assimilate, or be absorbed into the dominant white culture.

With promises from the government of help locating housing and employment, many Native people returned to the city of Seattle. But instead of the promised assistance, they faced unemployment, low-end jobs and discrimination. Cut off from their tribes, they also struggled with the loss of traditional community and cultural supports.



WE ARE STILL HERE

We were expected to assimilate....and disappear. But we didn't disappear. Instead, we found one another. We restored our connections to one another, and we cared for our children, youth, and elders. We gathered together to celebrate and share our traditional knowledge. We refused to be erased.

— Optional : Quote Here

ORIGIN STORY

RESILIENCE

The Rise Of Native Nonprofits and Activism

As Native people moved off reservations and into the city, the first Native nonprofit organizations appeared. In Seattle, seven Native women founded the American Indian Women's Service League in 1958 and opened the Indian Center to provide much-needed social services, as well as a hub for information and connection to community.

By opening the Indian Center and expanding its services, they also helped plant the seeds of Indian activism for the next 20 years. This activism resulted in several important local developments with far-reaching implications for tribal recognition and sovereignty, among them:

Rise of Nonprofits

The rise of additional Native-led nonprofits, including the United Indians of All Tribes Foundation and the Seattle Indian Health Board.

Reclaiming of Fort Lawton

The reclaiming of the Fort Lawton site in present-day Discovery Park, which led to the establishment of the Daybreak Star Indian Cultural Center.

Landmark Boldt Decision

The landmark Boldt Decision, based on Tribes rights guaranteed in the Medicine Creek Treaty, to gather, hunt, and fish on their usual and customary lands and waters.

Presently, over twenty Native-led nonprofits provide a wide range of services to the Seattle-King County Native population, continuing a long legacy of generosity and reciprocity. And Seattle has once again become a bustling Native center for tribes from across the Pacific Northwest, Alaska, and the Great Plains.

RENEWAL

Community Cohesion and Unity

Today, the strength and cohesion of the urban Native community in Seattle are evident all around us including widespread volunteerism, a shared desire to strengthen cultures and preserve languages, the emergence of young Native leaders, a thriving community of Native artists and the diversity of nonprofits focused on meeting the needs of the AI/AN community.






We celebrate these strengths at a time of renewal and resurgence in the Indigenous community. Our community continues to face great challenges, but history and our experience tells us that by building collective power, we are better able to challenge colonialist policies and the persistent invisibility of Native people in mainstream institutions, data, and the media.

By remaining united, we are empowered to advocate for policy and system changes that are created by Native people to benefit the Native community. We are strong, together.



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