OUR GOAL IS TO SUPPORT THESE INDIVIDUALS AND GROUPS IN WAYS THAT WILL ULTIMATELY STRENGTHEN AND SUSTAIN TRIBAL COMMUNITIES.

-BROOKE PINKHAM BOARD PRESIDENT, NA’AH ILLAHEE FUND
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter From Board President</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Story: Food Sovereignty</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter from Executive Director</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Story: Rights Of Nature</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programs: E’lip Tilikum</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programs: Community Funding</td>
<td>10-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programs: Indigenous Leadership</td>
<td>12-15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Story: Food Sovereignty</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programs: Community Events</td>
<td>16-17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact Area</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Impact</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funders</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Join Us</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>22-23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Na’ah Illahee Fund** is an indigenous women-led organization that serves as a bridge builder, facilitator and resource partner as we work to catalyze a movement toward positive futures.

We are committed to remembering and revitalizing traditional values and practices rooted in indigenous ways of knowing and traditional ecological knowledge.

Our scope of impact includes urban, rural, island, and reservation-based indigenous communities from the Arctic to the Rockies in what is now known as Alaska, British Columbia, Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana and Wyoming.
Supporting Native communities through the pandemic years—and beyond.

“Now that the worst of the pandemic is behind us—and as we seek to lift up our relatives with the resources and support to move forward—the need for investment in Native communities is no less urgent.”
- Susan Balbas
  Executive Director, Na’ah Illahee Fund

Since the start of the pandemic in February 2020, Na’ah Illahee Fund has supported Native communities via our resourcefulness and vital connections. As we reflect on the last four years, one thing is clear, the unprecedented challenges have intensified our resolve to build lasting momentum as we strengthen traditional values, practices, infrastructure, food systems, ecologies, and economies.

Your investment in Native communities strengthens and expands community-based solutions for generations to come.

Join us in this sacred work!
WATERING THE SEEDS FOR TOMORROW

From our Board President
BROOKE PINKHAM

This past year Na’ah Illahee Fund’s board of directors has engaged in far-ranging conversations about moving forward from the height of the pandemic through our Indigenous cultural teachings, while acknowledging the difficulties of operating within in a colonial system.

With the guidance of elders and other knowledge keepers, we’ve collectively and individually had conversations on how to handle these difficulties. As a result, we’ve come together, reaffirming the strengths of our organization and envisioning our dreams for the future.

At Na’ah Illahee Fund, we are and will always be committed to nurturing the individuals and grassroots organizations who are the heart of our communities. Native people deserve the freedom, support, and encouragement to explore and build upon the unique visions that help our communities.

Na’ah Illahee Fund’s goal is to support individuals and groups in ways that lend to the collective strength and sustainability of Tribal communities.

The trusting relationships we’ve built within the communities we serve has cleared the way to partner through shared commonalities. An example of this relationship-building is our fiscal sponsorship program, through which Na’ah Illahee Fund serves as a fiscal sponsor for community-led groups as they build momentum and capacity. The intention is to create a jumping-off point, and nurture the creativity through incubation. Sometimes they come back to Na’ah Illahee for grant support after they’ve received the training and support they need to effectively fundraise.

This circular process is emblematic of Indigenous teachings to give back, share and support one another. It turns, it sustains our communities from the grassroots. We strive to continue to develop an increasingly robust fiscal sponsorship program, because we realize that helping to build capacity at grassroots levels provides access to philanthropic dollars. This is one of the most important things we can do.

Even during the height of the pandemic, Na’ah Illahee Fund was watering seeds that would later bloom. The E’lip Tilikum Land Conservancy is a good example of that. It’s been a work in progress, and taking care of one another has helped that to grow. Now the vision of a Seattle urban Native home base is moving forward with renewed purpose and energy.
ANITA Herring Camps: Passing On 12,000 Years of Knowledge

“For the Tlingit Kiks.adi clan, our identity is tied to herring. It’s the largest resource in our waters. It’s called Haa Kustseeyi – Our Way of Life. Many of my traditional clan emblems are symbolic and even include images of herring to tell our history.” Tommy Gamble (Tlingit) of the Kiks.adi clan from the Sitka Tribe of Alaska, reflected on this as he began to envision his herring camps. “Yet due to commercial harvesting, management strategies, or lack thereof, we could be facing a whole generation of people who may never know the taste of herring eggs.”

The Alaska Native Indigenous Training Academy (ANITA) Herring Camps ended up being held in the field due to Covid-19 restrictions, with the young people and professionals working together in several day-long outdoor mini-camps. Gamble says, “I designed field camps that were more impactful than sitting in a classroom based on my experience of sitting in classrooms and not learning anything. ANITA’s focus for Indigenous education is to create meaningful opportunities to engage people so that they can be understood by a five-year-old — and appreciated by a doctor. Our mission is: Learn to love learning."

The camp was broken into several mini-camps spread over five days. The young people went by boat to witness different traditional harvest areas and to replicate the practice of setting trees to harvest herring eggs on branches. Elders shared specific information about sacred sites they visited with traditional messages about the land including Tlingit place names.

Each mini-camp had different teachings from field professionals on separate topics such as: herring as a keystone species and food resource, Tlingit territories and trade economies, herring management, alternative conservation strategies and health benefits. “All of the integrated lessons they learned in one day would take a semester in school,” noted Gamble.

The feedback from participants was extremely positive, and future camps are planned to include a Rights of Nature focus. He concludes, “I am honoring my mother through this work. It’s one way of keeping her memory alive.”
DEDICATED TO NATIVE COMMUNITIES

From our Executive Director
SUSAN BALBAS

How do you support and build sustainability in Native communities? That’s a question we ask ourselves a lot at Na’ah Illahee Fund, and a question that’s taken on even more urgency over the past four years. COVID-19 exposed for the world what we have long known—namely, that many Native communities are underfunded and under-resourced, leaving them disproportionately vulnerable to the sweeping disruptions and losses of a worldwide pandemic.

During this time, Na’ah Illahee Fund shifted gears to become the best grantmaker we could be. The needs in our communities were widespread and critical, and we committed our resources to be as responsible and responsive as we could during a time when the situation seemed to change on a daily basis. For almost 20 years, we’ve been steadfast in our approach, and what we do and what we bring for our communities hasn’t changed much—because we listen to them. This approach to our work, based on Indigenous values and relationship-building, is what makes us successful at reaching deep into our communities.

Na’ah Illahee is the definition of an Indigenous-led fund. Our board and staff members are embedded in our communities. Community experts serve on our grantmaking committees in order to bring Indigenous values, as well as expertise, to the process.

We are working with our philanthropic partners to develop new processes that are more responsive to our communities and more inclusive, and that help us walk our talk with our Indigenous values.

The past four years have reminded us why an organizations like Na’ah Illahee Fund are so needed. Many funders stepped up their giving to meet the most urgent needs during the worst of the pandemic. What we did, is what we always do, we got those resources where they were needed most—to our communities and the people in them, that many mainstream funders will likely never otherwise know about, or reach.

Now that the worst of the pandemic is behind us—and as we seek to lift up our relatives with the resources and support to move forward—the need for investment in Native communities is no less urgent.
Sacred Obligation: Protecting the Salish Sea

“We had no idea we were doing Rights of Nature all along.” Lummi Tribal member Raynell Morris believes it’s easier for non-Indigenous people to grasp the Western concept of Rights of Nature as a new concept.

“For the Lhaq’temish people, the Lummi people of the Lummi Nation, it’s known as our Xa Xalh Xechnging, our Sacred Obligation [in Xwlemi Chosen], to protect sacred sites, to care for our lands, the air, waters, and all living things on Earth, the trees, the salmon, the winged and two legged,” explains Morris, member of the Lummi Nation and board member of the nonprofit, Sacred Lands Conservancy. “It’s how we are raised in our families, it’s our way of life.” After being introduced to the global movement, Rights of Nature concept, she realized it was a natural fit for the work she’s already doing. Morris is one of several Native community members who attended Na’ah Illahee Fund’s Rights of Nature cohort, to learn about advancing the process of developing Rights of Nature legal frameworks for their Tribal territories.

Rights of Nature is a growing worldwide movement calling for a shift toward recognizing the Rights of Nature – recognizing the rights of ecosystems to “exist, thrive and evolve in natural cycles.”

The Global Alliance for the Rights of Nature states that the Rights of Nature is often led by Indigenous people whose cosmology is rooted in the idea of reciprocity with the Earth and living in balance with the Earth’s offerings. Until we embrace the fundamental rights of Tribal Nations to set legal frameworks that sustain all life, governments and major corporations will continue to harm ecosystems and erode Tribal sovereignty.

For Morris, the in-depth cohort training shed light on the necessity of working with local and county governments—along with Tribal councils and sister Tribes—to develop proclamations and resolutions in support of Rights of Nature, which is the first stage in the process.

Morris sees a path towards advancing the movement to indigenize and institutionalize the Rights of Nature into Tribal governments starting with collaborations and partnerships that are already in place with her relatives across the border. For example, Tseli–Waututh and Homalco sister Tribes, are in different parts of the Salish Sea yet also share salmon with the Lummi people. She is grateful for the cohort experience and the aha! moments when she saw how her traditional teachings and the Western concept of Rights of Nature are aligned—and can bring people together to protect our sacred sites.

*www.umm.org/universal-declaration-for-the-rights-of-mother-earth*
The E’lip Tilikum (First Peoples) Land Conservancy program seeks to help remedy centuries of dislocation, displacement, and enforced disconnection from Mother Earth through returning land to the stewardship and guidance of Indigenous communities throughout the area.

768 Relatives participated in Native Neighborhood Community Study

“Even during the pandemic, Na’ah Illahee Fund was watering seeds that would later bloom. The E’lip Tilikum Land Conservancy is a good example of that.”

- Brooke Pinkham
Boad President, Na’ah Illahee Fund
2020-23 IMPACT: COMMUNITY FUNDING

Na’ah Illahee reinvests in and provides resources for Native communities through funding Indigenous-led projects and providing community-responsive support, technical assistance and leadership development.

FOOD SOVEREIGNTY FUND

69 Recipients $1,112,000 Awarded

Our most requested grant, these projects aim to revitalize or increase Indigenous life ways and practices through access to traditional foods and medicines. Our unique model is full circle—by complimenting financial support with technical assistance, leadership development, and capacity building. Through this work we support our relationship with Mother Earth—and food sovereignty as a fundamental right.

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE GRANT

27 Recipients $795,000 Awarded

We seek to fund the development of projects that aim to revitalize and strengthen Mother Earth and her living systems. We fund the capacity of groups who are doing the work on-the-ground, and who are reclaiming the stewardship practices that our people have done for millennia.

INDIGENOUS ARTS & CULTURE GRANT

24 Recipients $335,000 Awarded

We seek to fund projects led by Indigenous people that aim to increase or create access to arts and cultural activities through community programming, workshops, and skill sharing. Our goal is to fund those uplifting traditional and/or modern art forms of the various Tribes represented in the Seattle urban Native population.
Granting over $4.5 million to Native communities.

**Power of Ceremony Grant**

76 Recipients  
$317,500 Awarded

Na’ah Illahee Fund and Potlatch Fund are deeply honored to have partnered in a collective giving campaign to bring forward the Power of Ceremony & Healing Grant to help bring unity to our people by providing support to those that lift up our people culturally and spiritually.

**Let’s Help End Gender-Based Violence**

114 Recipients  
$525,778 Awarded

This grant opportunity provided financial support to those who bring innovative, collaborative activities to raise awareness and strengthen gender-based violence and MMIWP work. This also includes the Red Blanket Fund which provides direct assistance to Indigenous individuals and families most in need in the wake of this Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women People (MMIWP) epidemic.
2020-23 IMPACT:

INDIGENOUS LEADERSHIP

We know that innovative solutions lie in the brilliance of our people, and we work to lift up our community leaders to draw upon deep resilience and to realize their dreams. Education and skill sharing, strengths and asset mapping, strategic planning, networking, and resourcing are the components of our Indigenous Leadership Program.

RIGHTS OF NATURE

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Rights of Nature is a leading-edge strategy to legally protect the plant and animal relatives and ecosystems that are at risk. Indigenous people around the world are leading this effort, and this cohort allowed groups from our region to participate for the first time, and pilot Rights of Nature projects in their own communities.

YOUTH COHORT

RISING STAR

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To build capacity and interest in Indigenous-led Philanthropy, the Na’ah Illahee Fund put the funding decisions in the hands of Native youth. They decided to fund scholarships for continuing education, to enable more youth to explore their dreams.
Over 400 Native community leaders trained.

We build capacity by providing trainings to approximately one hundred leaders each year, each of whom has their own impact in their communities.

yahowt
LAND & FOOD
RESTORATION

Na’ah Illahee leads numerous projects and cohorts related to indigenous ecology, traditional food and medicine stewardship, and environmental restoration projects. The goal is to build traditional ecological and modern knowledge, while re-imagining what green jobs could look like for the next generation of environmental and climate justice leaders.

SOVEREIGN FUTURES
LEADERSHIP
Society

This leadership cohort helps leaders design and implement a community-based project from start-to-finish. Learnings include elements of project management as well as blending traditional and modern ecological knowledge. This cohort provides a seed grant for all participants to take a first step towards their vision.
Remembering & Reclaiming Indigenous Birthing

During pregnancy, Alaska Native women have a strong desire to connect to traditional knowledge; and then to reclaim those teachings to support them as they grow their family. “These are the most common requests we get,” says Helena Jacobs (Koyukon Athabascan).

Jacobs, originally from the Native Village of Ruby, along with a network of volunteers, founded the Alaska Native Birthworkers Community (ANBC). It began as a group text thread of Native women who, although balancing full-time jobs, family and community duties, would show up to be available to pregnant women from rural Alaska villages who requested care from the community while waiting out their last month of pregnancy all by themselves at the Tribal hospital in Anchorage.

Alaska has a healthcare system that requires pregnant women living in villages to be evacuated mandatorily at 36 weeks gestation, or sometimes earlier. They leave their villages and travel to a community hub hospital, or in higher risk situations, Anchorage. Companion travel costs are not covered so they are often all by themselves. This can be a lonely and frightening experience. Some villagers have never been to the city or are unfamiliar with it and find it disorienting.

ANBC’s workshops and trainings often include elders and culture bearers from key cultural groups from across the state who share their birthing and pregnancy traditional knowledge.

Pregnant women learn about Indigenous prenatal nutrition, and traditional foods and plants that supply an abundance of critical nutrition for a healthy pregnancy. They learn how to make traditional plant medicine infusions, teas and headache roll ons to help with pregnancy symptoms like headaches and nausea, or simply for comfort during pregnancy. Moms are treated with foot baths, wholesome snacks, gift bags, and lots of knowledge to empower them on this journey.

The group’s work is entirely free to families thanks to funding provided in part by Na’ah illahee Fund Food Sovereignty grant. These foods are truly First Foods.

The Alaska Native Birthworkers Community is a grassroots group of volunteer Alaska Native reproductive justice advocates, full circle birth helpers (doulas), childbirth educators, breastfeeding counselors, healers, caregivers, public health researchers, scholars, parents, aunts, and a midwife organizing to reclaim Indigenous birth practices and support families from preconception through postpartum with culturally-matched care.
Responding to the pandemic.

**Native Community Crisis Response Grants**

$589,000 Awarded

We helped leverage partnerships across the region to support Native communities during the COVID-19 crisis. We also collaborated with Native businesses to provide over 1200 Food and Medicine Bundles to elders and families of youth.

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**Natives Count Census Project Grants**

$800,000 Awarded

Through tremendous resourcefulness in the face of a global pandemic, Na’ah Illahee Fund and other Tribal partners employed a Trusted Messenger model in a collective effort to make Native voices count. This project resulted in almost 80% of WA Tribes increasing their previous Census rate—thereby ensuring more representation and funding for the future.

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“Board and staff members are embedded in our communities. Community experts serve on our grantmaking committees in order to bring indigenous values, as well as expertise, to the process.”

- Susan Balbas, Executive Director, Na’ah Illahee
2020-23 IMPACT:
COMMUNITY EVENTS

BLUE JAY festival

Na’ah Illahee Fund, celebrates Indigenous community brilliance and resilience, at our “Blue Jay Brings Back the Moon” Festival. We gather on the traditional lands of the Coast Salish people at Daybreak Star Indian Cultural Center to connect and enjoy Native speakers and traditional foods.
OUR ROOTS
OUR HEARTS
food & medicines
GATHERING

This event is held to nourish our hearts and spirits as Indigenous peoples by re-imagining and reconnecting with our plant relatives and ancestral roots. With speakers and our Youth Panel, this event brings us together to share knowledge on traditional foods, wellness, and sovereignty. The fully virtual event includes presentations, breakout discussion groups, raffle items and more.

LIVING BREATH
INDIGENOUS FOOD SYMPOSIUM

Na’ah Illahee Fund partnered with University of Washington’s American Indian Studies Department to bring together people to share knowledge on topics such as traditional foods, plants, and medicines; environmental & food justice; food sovereignty; health & wellness; & treaty rights. This event serves to foster dialogue & build collaborative networks as we, Native peoples, strive to sustain our cultural food practices & preserve our healthy relationships to the land, water, and all living things.
OUR IMPACT AREA

Supporting Indigenous Communities

Na’ah Illahee Fund serves diverse Indigenous communities from the Arctic to the Great Basin in the Northwest corner of Turtle Island, areas known as:

- Alaska
- British Columbia
- Washington
- Oregon
- Idaho
- Montana
- Wyoming

"We are our ancestors. When we can heal ourselves, we also heal our ancestors..."

- Grandma Rita Pitka Blumenstein | Yup’ik

COMMUNITY MEMBERS
READ ABOUT OTHERS WORK.
SEARCH BY STATE AND TOPIC.
IMPACT TOTALS 2020-23

Cumulatively we have gifted over $4.5 MILLION to Native community-based organizations.

$9 2020-23 MILLION UNMET NEED

13% We are efficient! PERCENT
Our average admin costs are 13% of our annual budget.

Please contact: kate@naahillahee.org for detailed copies of our 990 or for partnership opportunities.
Join us in this sacred work!

$14 MILLION community funding

2024-27 EXPECTED NEED

We know that over the next four years community grant requests will be over $14 Million for our entire impact area. Many of those communities are in locations that are most vulnerable to climate change.

Our recent selection for a new innovative EPA grant program will help us meet the needs within the Puget Sound watershed - but our impact area covers seven states and provinces!

We’re inviting funders to help build collective strength across all our communities throughout our impact area.

Contact Kate Riley for donations & partnership opportunities: kate@noahillahee.org
OUR PARTNERS

Thank you to all our funding partners from 2020–23. Your support for our Native communities helps them thrive.

More Partners
Visit our website for a list of our private donors.

SCAN TO VIEW ALL OUR PARTNERS
Masi! Niá:wen!
Nunu-doí! Chioke!
Pesha-yu!
Siokwel!
Tsatø’mes!
Åeeko!
Qe’ci’yew’yew’!
Aliilamoloo!
Wado!
Miigwetch!
Philamayayapi!
Thank you!