

# GROWING

*our  
collective  
power*



NA'AH ILLAHEE  
FUND



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**NA'AH ILLAHEE**  
FUND

A group of people are silhouetted in a canoe on a calm lake at sunset. The sky is a warm orange, and dark mountains rise in the background. The water reflects the light from the sky. The canoe is filled with people, and several paddles are visible. The overall mood is peaceful and inspiring.

*TOGETHER,  
WE MUST NEVER GIVE UP!*

*DAN NANAMKIN,  
YOUNG WARRIORS SOCIETY*

# A MESSAGE FROM OUR BOARD

Dear Relatives, Partners, and Community,

This year marks a powerful transition for Na’ah Illahee Fund. After more than two decades of Indigenous-led work, we step into a new chapter—honoring our roots while embracing the path ahead. Our name means *Mother Earth*, and it calls upon our collective strength and power as we face the times ahead.

Rooted in Seattle and reaching across the Northwest, our intention is to mobilize resources and shift power to Native-led organizations—addressing the disproportionate gap in philanthropic funding that we as Native people continue to face. Not only are our communities at the frontlines of the climate crisis, but we are leading with the ancestral knowledge, resilience, and values that have sustained our peoples for generations—offering powerful solutions for environmental justice, community healing, and a just, regenerative future.

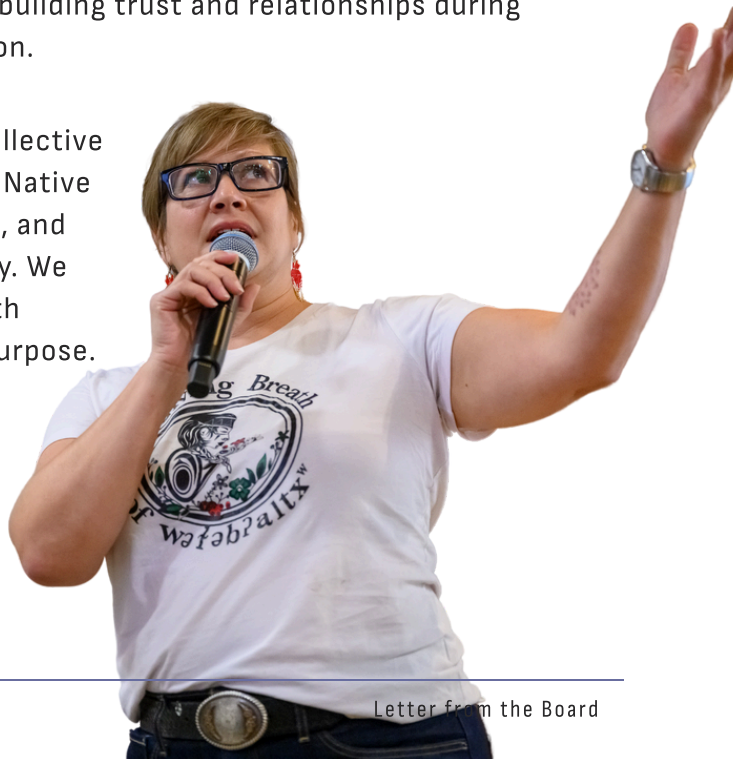
Through efforts like the Frontline Funding Collaborative, we helped steward almost **\$4 million in HEAL Act funds** to support Indigenous and BIPOC-led environmental justice organizations across Washington State (see our grantee story), all while rebuilding trust and relationships during this time of organizational transition.

These pages reflect the growing collective power being built alongside Tribes, Native and BIPOC-led organizations, allies, and the global philanthropic community. We are deeply honored to walk this path together in solidarity and shared purpose.



*B Ray*

Bridget Ray  
Interim Board President



# OUR PATH AHEAD

By Lisa Fruichantie, Interim Executive Director (Seminole/Mvskoke)  
lisa@naahillahee.org

## *HONORING OUR COMMITMENTS, ADAPTING TO THE FUTURE*

Over the years, programs such as E'lip Tilikum, the Sovereign Futures Leadership Society, our Fiscal Sponsorship Program, and our Grantmaking initiatives have created meaningful opportunities for leadership, learning, and community empowerment. As we reflect on the impact of these initiatives, we are also taking essential steps to evaluate their effectiveness and sustainability. This is not a departure from our mission; instead, it is an opportunity to evolve our commitments and refine our dedication to Indigenous self-determination as well as economic, environmental, and cultural resilience.

## *LISTENING TO OUR COMMUNITIES*

We actively engage in open dialogue with our partners, grantees, and community members to ensure that our resources and opportunities meet their changing needs. Our focus is on in-person engagements and site visits. By partnering with our elders and trusted messengers, who serve as mentors and bridge builders, we navigate this transition and explore new possibilities. This approach includes strengthening our grantmaking practices, enhancing support for emerging Indigenous leaders, and refining our program offerings to align with our communities' aspirations.

## *BUILDING TOWARD A SOVEREIGN FUTURE*

As we refine our efforts, we remain committed to the belief that true sovereignty is achieved through collective power, self-determination, and resource access. Our dedication to funding Indigenous-led initiatives, supporting visionary leaders, and fostering community-driven solutions is central to our mission. Through ongoing evaluation and adaptation, we ensure that Na'ah Illahee Fund continues to be a strong, responsive, and impactful force for Indigenous communities, honoring the wisdom of the past while embracing future possibilities.

# OUR PROGRAMS

**FISCAL**  
*sponsorship*

**INDIGENOUS**  
*leadership*

**TRUST-  
BASED**  
*grant making*

# A MESSAGE FROM SHELLY

HAʻI SLƏXIL, TI DʻIIŠƏD ʻI TI DSYƏYAʻYAʻ

'Good day, my family and friends. I greet you in our Lushootseed language. I am of swədabs (enrolled Swinomish tribal member) and Visayan (Filipino) heritage. My late father was from Waipahu, Hawai'i, we have many family members still living on the islands. One of my powers is in strengthening relationships through the practice of peacemaking and conflict resolution. Much of my work has culminated in offering consultation in the areas of facilitation, communications, community engagement, and strategic planning. We support native individuals, communities, and organizations who seek to work together in developing resiliency strategies to address the climate crisis, environmental injustice, cultural preservation, and community engagement! No small feat in an ever-changing and very diverse world.

As a Peacemaker I embrace the way of the mycelium, the mass network of fungi threads that send energy from one plant to another. In my forest bathing I imagine the network under the forest floor, I see the mushrooms and know the mycelium are serving as vessels pumping energy from a stronger tree to an adjacent weaker tree.

'It's wondrous to observe the teachings of the trees and plants in this manner. And it is in this capacity that I continue to provide support within and throughout our Na'ah Illahee Fund (NIF) family.'

- Shelly Vendiola

*we raise our hands to you, shelly! ❤️*

# A MESSAGE FROM SHELLY

'Most recently, in my work at NIF, I serve on the Department of Health, Environmental Justice Work Group. This is a diverse group of environmental justice and thought leaders throughout Washington who are tasked with developing strategies within our communities to raise awareness and educate our citizens about the HEAL Act and how to access their funding and resources.

The Healthy Environment or All (HEAL) Act was passed in 2021 to reduce environmental disparities and improve the health of all people in Washington state.

It is the first statewide law to create a coordinated and collaborative approach to environmental justice, making it a priority and part of the mission of key state agencies. The HEAL Act mandates that agencies:

- Develop and implement a community engagement plan
- Require Tribal consultation frameworks
- Incorporate environmental justice into strategic plans, budgeting, and funding
- Identify and address overburdened communities through the [Environmental Health Disparities \(EHD\) map](#)

This work is a continuation of the efforts led by our ally BIPOC organization Front and Centered, known for their statewide civic engagement advocacy efforts. We seek justice for the most marginalized and impacted—frontline and fence-line communities experiencing a disproportionate amount of contamination, toxic pollution or unhealthy environments.

This impact is seen in our kin, the salmon people who have dwindled significantly and are closer to the brink of extinction. Our most precious keystone species is our salmon. Our people are people of the salmon; we are the people by the water; it feeds our spirit and gives us sustenance. And it is in this spirit that I continue with the good work—the important work of engaging communities and strengthening relationships. Onward ever onward.'

the

# FISCAL SPONSORSHIP

PROGRAM

Na'ah Illahee Fund's Fiscal Sponsorship Program supports grassroots Indigenous-led projects by providing a culturally aligned, community-rooted framework for financial stewardship and organizational growth. We offer community infrastructure, capacity-building support, and relational accountability to help emerging initiatives focus on their mission while navigating funding systems. This program is part of our broader commitment to uplifting Indigenous innovation, self-determination, and community-led change.

## THE YOUNG WARRIOR SOCIETY

The Young Warrior Society is an Indigenous-led community alliance based on the Colville Confederated Tribal homelands in North Central Washington. We aim to empower our community's health through food sovereignty, Indigenous cultural resiliency skill-sharing, land-based education, and the arts, inspiring healing, success, humanity, and hope. By following in our ancestors' footsteps through the seasons, we strive to maintain and teach traditional food systems and rites of passage, fostering environmental and racial justice through education and cultural preservation.

" NIF's commitment to Indigenous-led initiatives has provided us with the resources and guidance necessary to strengthen our community and preserve our heritage for future generations."

-Dan Nanamkin, Young Warriors Society



# FISCAL SPONSEE STORIES

## GATHERED IN THIS PLACE

Gathered in This Place (GITP) is an intertribal community for Native 2S LGBTQIA+ and Indigenous QT-identified relatives, convening on Coast Salish Territories to foster safe, welcoming spaces.

Rooted in kinship and resilience, GITP provides gatherings where our community can come together in support, celebration, and healing—free from the impacts of homophobia and transphobia.



“This sponsorship has allowed us to do our community work and organizing without the pressure of obtaining our 501 c3 status. This has given us access to funding that would otherwise be unattainable.”

– Shawn Peterson, GiTP

## NATIVE FAMILY LEARNING LODGE

The Native Family Learning Lodge (NFLL) is a Black, Indigenous, and matriarch-led birth-to-five childcare collective offering an Indigenous-centered and community kinship-modeled educational experience. By upholding our values for ourselves and our children, we aim to promote community healing, inclusion, joy, and futurism.



# *the* **INDIGENOUS LEADERSHIP** **PROGRAM**

Na'ah Illahee Fund's Indigenous Leadership Program invests in the growth, resilience, and visibility of Indigenous leaders across generations. Through mentorship, skill-building, cultural teachings, and community connection, the program strengthens leadership rooted in Indigenous values and lifeways. By supporting individuals who are creating change in their communities, we help cultivate a network of empowered leaders advancing justice, sovereignty, and collective well-being.

## **SOVEREIGN FUTURES**

Sovereign Futures Cohort is a leadership program that equips Indigenous changemakers with the tools, knowledge, and networks to shape just, regenerative futures grounded in sovereignty and self-determination.

## **TRUSTED MESSENGERS**

Trusted Messenger is a community-based initiative that uplifts Indigenous voices to share vital information, resources, and advocacy through trusted relationships and culturally rooted communication.



# GRANT MAKING

Na'ah Illahee Fund's Grantmaking Program provides vital resources to over 150 Native grassroots leaders and organizations each year, supporting community-driven solutions in climate justice, food sovereignty, cultural revitalization, and more. Our grantmaking is relational, responsive, and rooted in Indigenous values, ensuring that funding reaches those closest to the work and most impacted by systemic inequities.

*EACH YEAR, WE PROVIDE  
CATALYTIC SUPPORT TO OVER  
150 NATIVE-LED ORGS!*




# GRANTEE STORY

## PORT GAMBLE S'KLALLAM TRIBE: HEALING THROUGH TRADITION

### Integrating Traditional Medicines and Foods for Indigenous Wellness in Transitional Housing

The healing garden, nestled within the Tribe's transitional housing, will embody a vision of restoration through cultural connection and land-based practices. It offers formerly incarcerated community members a place to grow food and medicine, reconnect with plant relatives, and rebuild a sense of belonging. Funded by NIF through the WA State HEAL (Healthy Environment for All) Act, the garden is a powerful example of what healing truly means to us as Indigenous people.

Deer-skin drums, made as gifts by the residents 



Chris Barone and Selina Ramirez (left, right) from the Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe Court Services, with Janine Savok, Na'ah Illahee Fund (middle).



# OUR APPROACH TO INCLUSIVE IDENTITY

By Lisa Fruichantie, Interim Executive Director (Seminole/Mvskoke)

At Na'ah Illahee Fund, we understand that indigeneity is vast, dynamic, and deeply interconnected across lands, cultures, and histories. Our responsibility to the Northwest Region of Turtle Island involves creating spaces where all Indigenous people—whether urban or rural, federally recognized or not, multi-racial, displaced, or reconnecting—feel seen, valued, and empowered. This commitment to inclusive indigeneity is a philosophy essential for fostering community and advocacy.

## INDIGENEITY IS NOT A MONOLITH

Our histories are complicated—woven with stories of survival, displacement, adoption, forced assimilation, and resilience. Many of our peoples continue to navigate the ongoing impacts of colonization, including the erasure of our identities through imposed borders, blood quantum policies, and federal recognition systems that fail to reflect the full scope of who we are.

The truth is that not all Indigenous nations are federally recognized, which creates significant inequities within our communities. Our funding model extends from the Arctic to the Rockies, covering six U.S. states and British Columbia. This means that recognition, or the lack of it, influences access to resources, sovereignty, and even the right to be acknowledged as Indigenous.

At Na'ah Illahee Fund, we define Indigenous as anyone who has tribal affiliation with or identifies with Indigenous nations in North, Central, or South America, including those who identify as Native Hawaiian. Our identities go beyond colonial definitions. Indigeneity is rooted in our relationships with the land, our communities, and our cultures. It reflects how we carry forward our traditions and languages.





WE MUST ALSO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT THIS COMPLEX HISTORY

*has been exploited.*


There are those who have falsely claimed indigeneity—so-called “pretendians”—who have used these systemic injustices to their advantage, gaining access to opportunities, resources, and spaces meant for Indigenous people. This harm runs deep, creating further division and distrust within our communities.

## **ACTIVATING INCLUSIVE INDIGENEITY**

Activating Inclusive Indigeneity requires both internal accountability and external commitments to community. This involves enhancing relational accountability by deepening our community partnerships and engaging in difficult conversations to address this reality with care and discernment, ensuring that our commitment to inclusive indigeneity does not mean the unchecked inclusion of those who seek to benefit from our struggles without genuinely belonging to them.

## **NAVIGATING THE COMPLEXITY OF IDENTITY AND HARM**

As we work toward Inclusive Indigeneity, we must also recognize the profound harm caused by the misuse and misrepresentation of Indigenous identity. There have been individuals who have been called out for being unenrolled or adopted out, and in some cases, they have been labeled as “pretendians.” While it is necessary to hold accountable those who knowingly misrepresent their identity for personal gain, it is also critical to acknowledge the lasting damage caused when these accusations are levied against individuals with complex histories shaped by colonization.

A person with long, dark, curly hair is shown from the back, wearing a blue denim jacket. A rainbow flag patch is sewn onto the back of the jacket, and a large, stylized feather pendant hangs from the top of the patch. The background is a blurred, colorful pattern.

Forced removal, adoption, displacement, and the systemic erasure of Indigenous identities have separated many of our relatives from their communities. Blood quantum laws, enrollment policies, and the violence of child welfare systems have fractured families and made reconnection difficult, if not impossible, for many. When individuals who have been displaced or disconnected are met with hostility instead of pathways to healing, we risk perpetuating the very exclusion and division that colonial systems were designed to create.

We must also recognize the harm caused by online and keyboard warriors who engage in public callouts without meaningful efforts toward mediation and resolution. True accountability is built through relational dialogue, not digital exile. When discourse around identity occurs in spaces prioritizing spectacle over healing, we lose opportunities to address harm in ways that strengthen rather than fracture our communities.

The harm is twofold: first, to those who are targeted and ostracized despite having legitimate histories of removal and disconnection; and second, to our communities, which suffer from internal division and lateral violence when identity is used as a weapon rather than a bridge to healing.

Our responsibility is to hold space for difficult conversations about belonging while ensuring that our approach is rooted in care, relational accountability, and a deep understanding of our shared histories.

## EMBRACING INDIGENOUS FUTURISMS

In Indian Country, we often encounter individuals who hold onto an idealized version of a time before contact, upholding it as the ultimate standard. While knowing our cultures, histories, languages, plant relatives, and our traditional foods and medicines is essential, we must also recognize that we are still here in a time of prophetic change, standing together in resilience and adaptation. Embracing Indigenous futurisms—visions of Indigenous self-determination, innovation, and sovereignty—requires us to lift one another before we tear one another down.

Our survival has never been about staying frozen in time but about evolving while maintaining our core values. By standing in solidarity, we can reclaim our futures, define our own narratives, and shape a world where Indigenous knowledge, creativity, and leadership thrive. The future is ours to create, and we must do so together to build a future we want to live in.

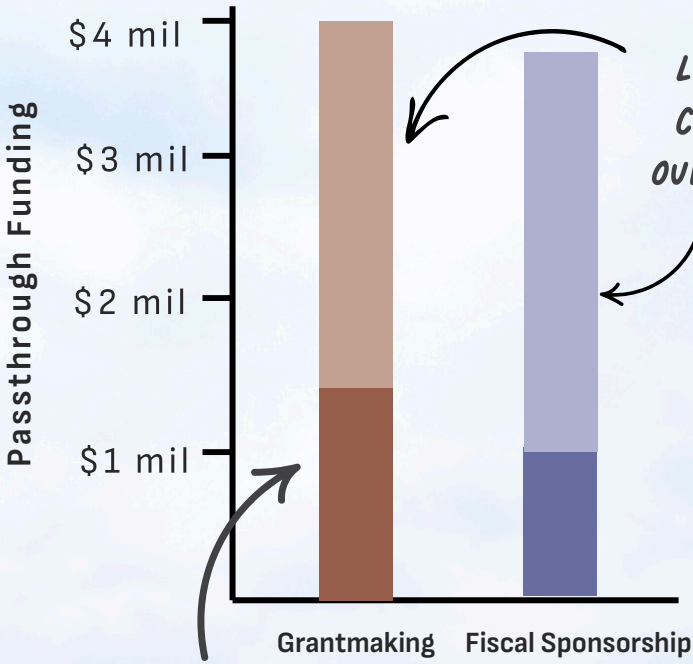
## ACTIONIZING INCLUSIVE INDIGENEITY

As we move forward in this new chapter, our commitment to Inclusive Indigeneity means embracing the full breadth of Indigenous experiences—urban and rural, recognized and unrecognized, displaced and reconnecting while centering truth, accountability, and relational responsibility. It means the spaces we create, the funding we distribute, and the advocacy we engage in reflect the diversity of our people in an authentic and meaningful way.

This is a responsibility we hold with deep care. The path to justice requires us to recognize that we are a colonized people, in our collective lifetimes, we might never know what it means to truly be decolonized. But together, we can strengthen the relationships that sustain us by INDIGENIZING OUR FUTURE. We are committed to this rebuilding work, knowing that healing and liberation must be collective. Our future depends on it.

*indigenizing our future~*

# OUR COLLECTIVE RESOURCING POWER



*LOOK AT THE LEVELS OF  
COMMUNITY READINESS!  
OUR ANNUAL UNMET NEED:  
7 MIL*

*DIRECT RESOURCING PER YEAR  
TO NATIVE-LED ORGS AND  
FISCAL SPONSEES:  
2.5 MIL*



# INVESTING IN INDIGENOUS-LED PHILANTHROPY

This is a time of renewal for Na'ah Illahee Fund—a moment to lean into possibility, strengthen our foundations, and dream boldly alongside our community.

As we reflect, refine, and reimagine our path forward, our commitment remains clear: to uplift Indigenous leadership, invest in community-driven solutions, and protect the lands, waters, and cultural knowledge of the Northwest.

This is not just a time of transition—it is a time to build, deepen trust, and forge new paths toward lasting impact. We move forward with open hands and hearts, grounded in the collective power of our people.

**HELP US GROW  
OUR COLLECTIVE POWER!**

*donate  
today* ❤️



For information on partnerships  
and donations, contact  
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