

BIONEERS

INDIGENEITY PROGRAM 2024 ANNUAL REPORT

BRINGING INDIGENOUS PERSPECTIVES TO GLOBAL CONVERSATIONS

Indigeneity is a Native-led Program within Bioneers that promotes Indigenous approaches to solve the Earth's most pressing environmental and social crises. We produce the Indigenous Forum within the Bioneers Conference, original media, educational curricula and catalytic initiatives to support the leadership and rights of First Peoples, while weaving networks, partnerships and alliances among Native and non-Native allies.

Photograph by Dauwila Harrison
(Pomo/Paiute/Diné)

Design by Mer Young
(Chichimeca & Apache)



INDIGENEITY PROGRAM TEAM



Co-Director, Cara Romero (Chemehuevi), is a nonprofit leader, communicator, change-maker, and award-winning artist. She brings special expertise in working directly with tribes, and in producing cultural events and gatherings. Prior to joining Bioneers in 2011, Cara served as the first Executive Director of the Chemehuevi Cultural Center and was an elected member of the Chemehuevi Tribal Council from 2007-2010. She served as the Chair of the Chemehuevi Education Board and the Chemehuevi Early Education Policy Council. With degrees in Cultural Anthropology and Fine Art Photography, Cara has won numerous awards for her photography, including the Southwestern Association of Indian Art's Best of Classification award (twice), has published in National Geographic, and is widely collected by public and private institutions worldwide.



Co-Director, Alexis Buntun, PhD (Unangan/Yup'ik), is a writer, media-maker, and curriculum developer. After receiving a BA in Art History, Alexis returned to Alaska, where she worked at the Sealaska Heritage Institute and the Alaska Native Heritage Center. Subsequently, Alexis earned a PhD in Cultural Anthropology. She has published widely about Indigenous and environmental issues in academic and mainstream media outlets. Alexis has won several awards from the National Science Foundation, Ford Foundation, MacArthur Foundation, Bristol Bay Native Corporation, New England Book Award, A Center for the Study of Multicultural Children's Literature Best Book of 2023, Rise: A Feminist Book Project List Selection, among others. She has been with Bioneers since 2016.



Program Manager, Nazshonnii Brown-Almaweri (Diné), is a farmer and educator from West Oakland. She has worked as a STEM tutor, media educator, and youth program assistant for the American Indian Child Resource Center. She's a farmer at the Gill Tract Community Farm, a volunteer-led farm that provides food, medicine, and green spaces to the community. Nazshonnii is passionate about STEM education and advocates for exposure and opportunities for historically excluded people, especially Black and Native youth. As an educator, Nazshonnii has provided middle and high school youth with the space to learn about STEAM at the intersection of ancestral knowledge and their lived experiences, creating space for youth to thrive in disciplines like engineering.



Special Project Coordinator, Britt Gondolfi, JD (Houma Descent) is a children's book author, community organizer, and mother. Britt has worked with the Bioneers Indigeneity Program since 2017 as a facilitator for the Intercultural Conversation Program. She joined the Bioneers Rights of Nature initiative as an intern while in law school and subsequently as a Special Projects Coordinator to bring together Tribal organizers, youth, and allies to advocate for the Rights of Nature in Indian Country. Britt recently took a stand for women's rights, running a fierce campaign for State Senate in Louisiana. Her first Children's book, "Look Up! Fontaine the Pigeon Starts a Revolution," is a hilarious social commentary on digital distraction and fight to save us from ourselves.

LETTER FROM THE



INDIGENEITY TEAM

Dear Friends of Indigeneity:

As we look forward to 2025, we are so proud to share our accomplishments in 2024.

With your generous support, we celebrated another banner year for the Indigeneity Program elevating Indigenous voices and solutions, bringing youth and communities together and making inspiring Indigenous-focused content accessible to all people through our original curriculum and media.

The Indigeneity Program grew in 2024 to 4 full-time and 1 part-time staff members, who bring decades of experience in networking across Indian Country, community organizing, cross-cultural communications, and media making. This highly talented and capable group of women work together to bring a one-of-a-kind collection of Indigenous-focused content that simply cannot be found outside of Bioneers.

Last year heralded Bioneers' 35th year and the 17th Indigenous Forum! In response to overwhelming demand from our Bioneers community, we increased the size of the Indigenous Forum (*but it was still standing room only).

We hosted Native Peoples from over 115 diverse Tribal Nations, and the connecting and networking was prolific and joyful. Our Indigenous participants noted that, rather than being peripheral to the Conference, their experience was that they were in partnership, engaging with the event in vitality and appreciation. We brought Indigenous Speakers' presentations, writings, and films beyond the Bioneers Conference through our web platform, making original Indigenous content easily accessible around the world.

We were thrilled to offer two new courses on the Bioneers Learning Platform, Being a Good Relative: Allyship with Indigenous Peoples and Indigenizing the Law.

We provided life-changing opportunities to Native youth to attend the Bioneers Conference and other events curated exclusively for them.

We mobilized knowledge around the Indigenous Rights of Nature movement.

We disseminated information and resources to grow the Indigenous Rights of Nature movement through numerous events and presentations across Indian Country.



CONT. LETTER FROM THE

INDIGENEITY TEAM

We are most proud of expanding our “Native Youth Ambassadors” initiative from 1 Tribal youth group to 6, all of whom are passionate about stewarding their ancestral homelands for generations to come.

Of course, we couldn't have done any of this without the support from the staff members within the broader Bioneers Organization who uplift our program every day of the year.

What We Are Looking Forward to in 2025

We are thrilled to share a sneak peek of a few of our upcoming plans. You do not want to miss the Bioneers Conference Mainstage and Indigenous Forum in 2025. Expect to see influential Indigenous changemakers from elected officials to artists, traditional knowledge bearers, and more.

In the spirit of honoring youth-led environmental movements, we are shifting our Indigenous Rights of Nature strategy from solely focusing on creating groundbreaking media and educational materials to providing necessary resources and catalytic experiences to Indigenous Youth.

We can't give it away just yet, but we are producing a major written work featuring Indigenous wisdom from heretofore unpublished works by leading culture bearers from around the world.

You can stay on top of all our activities, from the annual Bioneers Conference to media making, cultivating youth leadership, forwarding Rights of Nature, and providing world class educational material, through our Bioneers Learning courses, articles and multimedia.

We can't wait to see you in 2025!

Sincerely,

Cara Romero Alexis Buntan

Cara Romero and Alexis Buntan
Indigeneity Program Co-Directors



INDIGENEITY PROGRAM

OVERVIEW

ABOUT INDIGENEITY PROGRAM

Since its inception, Bioneers has been fundamentally shaped by Indigenous knowledge, participants, and partners, the original “Bioneers.” Bioneers’ Native-led Indigeneity Program invites allyship to support the leadership, rights and cultural survival of First Peoples.

Our program creates live events, media, curriculum, and catalytic initiatives to support the leadership and rights of First Peoples while weaving networks, partnerships, and alliances.

We co-produce the annual Bioneers Conference and the world-renowned Indigenous Forum. We adapt these presentations and events into radio shows, TV broadcasts, videos, media collections, articles, blogs, curricula, and books.

We coordinate life-changing experiences for youth through our Native Youth Leadership Program, introducing participants to new ideas, role models, and each other to foster transformative learning.

Our Indigenous Rights of Nature initiative mobilizes knowledge through original resources, programs, and InterTribal events. Our flagship Native Youth Ambassadors Program supports youth in leading efforts for their Tribes to protect species and ecosystems.

Through these efforts, many of our Indigenous partners have achieved international acclaim and policy change through the environmental and social justice campaigns they champion at the Bioneers Conference and Indigenous Forum. More and more people are recognizing that “Indigenous issues” are all of our issues and that Indigenous pathways to community, spiritual, and ecological restoration have the power to solve our biggest global problems.

Indigeneity is a Native-led Program within Bioneers that promotes Indigenous solutions to the Earth’s most pressing environmental and social crises.

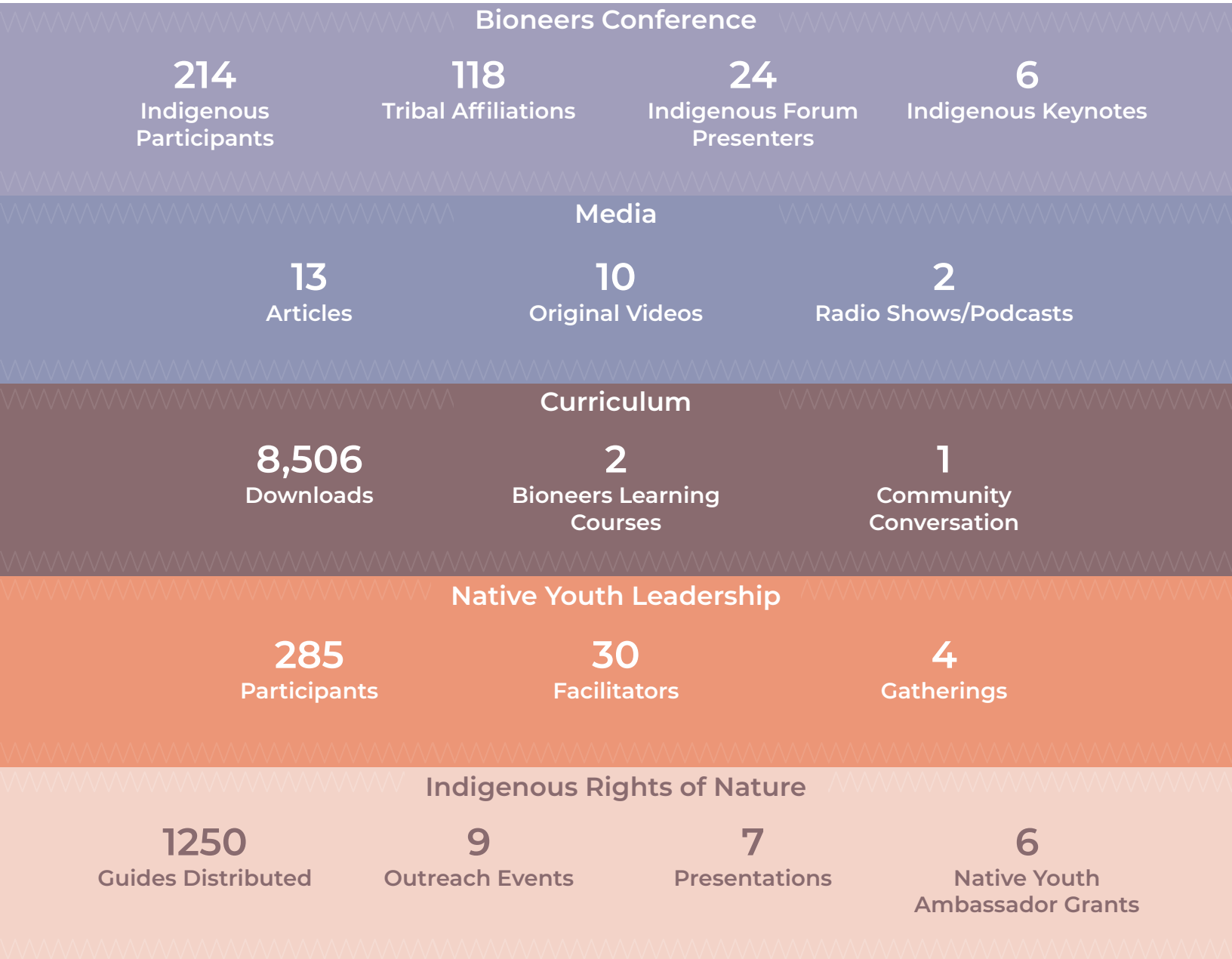


Indigeneity Program Goals

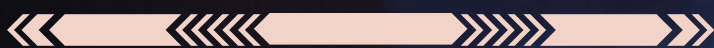
- ▶ Amplify Indigenous Voices
- ▶ Create Educational Material
- ▶ Foster Youth Leadership
- ▶ Invite Cross-Cultural Allyship
- ▶ Mobilize Indigenous Rights of Nature



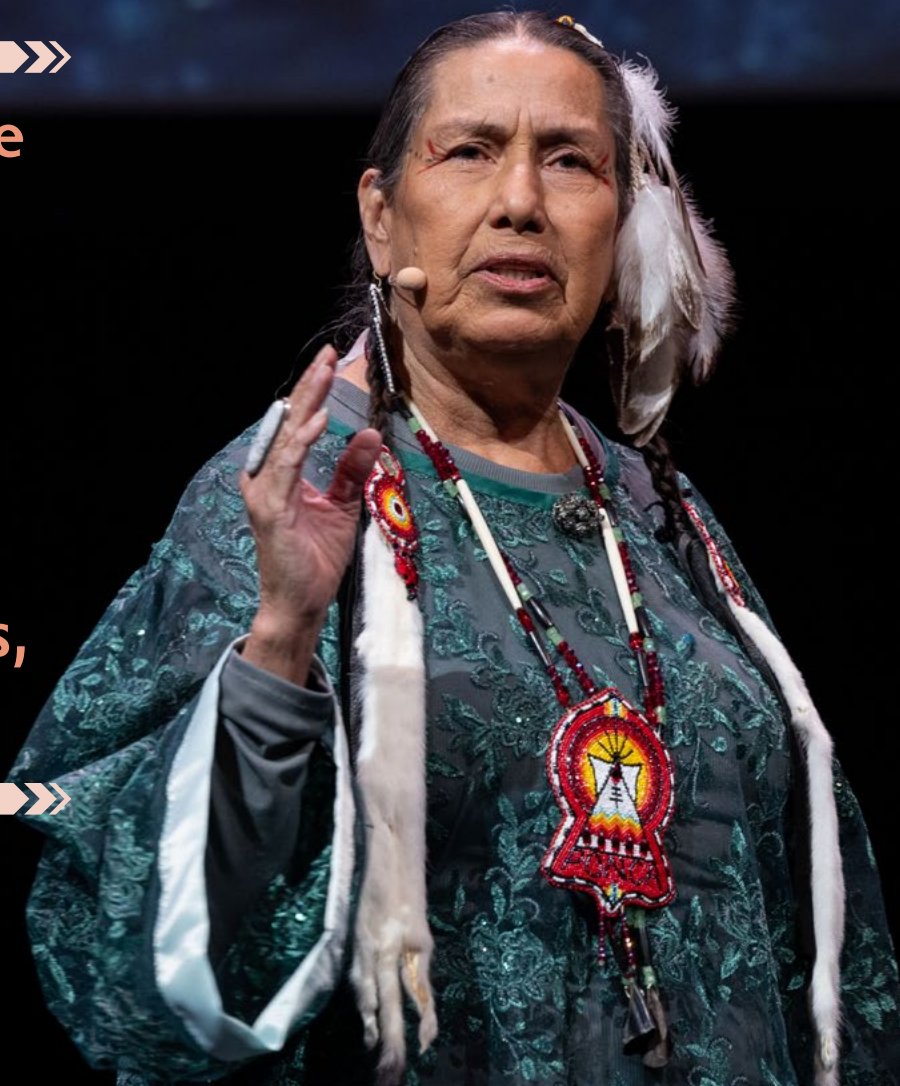
2024 Impact By the Numbers



BIONEERS CONFERENCE



Bioneers amplifies the voices of Indigenous leaders to connect people from all over the world through shared wisdom, practices, movements, and solutions.



Indigenous perspectives are central to Bioneers' mission to restore people and planet. In 2024, this tradition continued as over 140 Indigenous community members representing over 118 distinct tribal affiliations joined us. You won't find such a diverse array of Indigenous presenters and presence in a welcoming, cross-cultural format than at the Bioneers Conference.

INDIGENEITY ON THE BIONEERS MAINSTAGE

Rematriation: Indigenous Women's Work to Recover, Remember & Heal

Corrina Gould (Confederated Villages of Lisjan)

The Restorative Revolution and a River of Reciprocity

Colette Pichon Battle (African/Caddo/Choctaw Descent)

To Survive, We Must Transform Our Values

Oren Lyons (Haudenosaunee)

Expanding Our Movements for Climate Justice

Colette Pichon Battle (African/Caddo/Choctaw Descent)

Abolition as Amends to Mother

Claudia Peña (Nahua/Maya)

Walking the Red Road - It's Elemental

Casey Camp-Horinek (Ponca)

INDIGENOUS FORUM



The Indigenous Forum is a Native-led space for sharing knowledge and frontline solutions with an intergenerational and multicultural audience. It is one of the most highly anticipated and attended spaces within the Bioneers Conference. In 2024, the Indigenous Forum was standing room only for the second year in a row.

Indigenous attendees look forward to the Indigenous Forum as an annual gathering to convene, learn, plan, and spend time together.

Non-Indigenous attendees make cross-cultural connections as they listen and learn from Native leaders. Everyone leaves feeling inspired and equipped with knowledge to support Indigenous-led campaigns.

INDIGENOUS FORUM PANELS

Fog Song

Gregg Castro (T'rowt'raahl Salinan/Rumsien/Ramaytush Ohlone)

Rematriation: Indigenous Women's Leadership to Restore Land and Water

Cara Romero (Chemehuevi), Corrina Gould (Confederated Villages of Lisjan), Dr. Jessica Hutchings (Maori); and Caleen Sisk (Winnemem Wintu)

Natural Law and Food Sovereignty

Alexis Bunten (Unangan/Yup'ik), Rowen White (Mohawk), and Marcus Briggs-Cloud (Maskoke)

Listening to Wisdom Keepers

Alexis Bunten (Unangan/Yup'ik), Jeannette Armstrong (Okanagan), Casey Camp-Horinek (Ponca), Oren Lyons (Haudenosaunee), and Marlowe Sam (Wenatchi/Lakes)

From the Bottom Up: How Indigenous Action Is Affecting Climate Change

Eriel Deranger (Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation), Jayce Chiblow (Anishinaabe), Rande Cook (Kwakwaka'wakw)

Native Youth Organizing for the Rights of Nature

Britt Gondolfi (Houma Descent), Talia Landry (Mashpee Wampanoag), Ciara Oakley-Robbins (Mashpee Wampanoag), Jyrzie Alves (Mashpee Wampanoag), Amaya Balbuena (Mashpee Wampanoag), Jacelle Steiding (Mashpee Wampanoag)

Sustainable Practices with Native Professionals

Nazshonnii Brown-Almaweri (Diné), brooke smiley (Osage), Ras K'dee (Pomo)



BIONEERS MEDIA

AND CURRICULUM

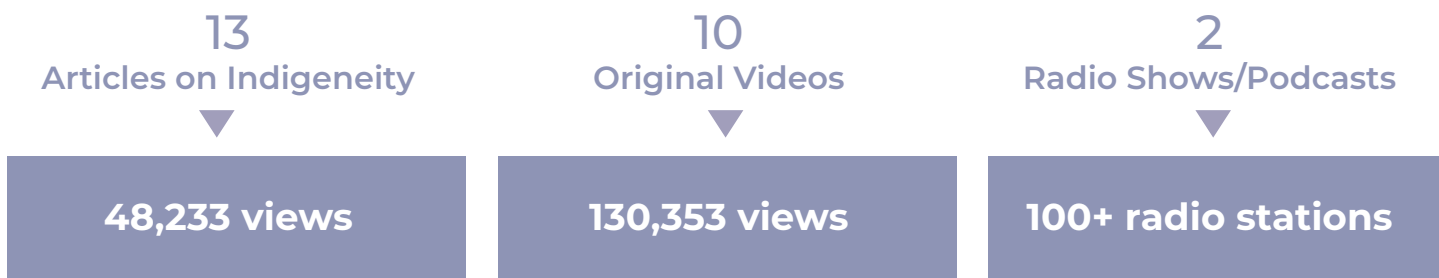
The Bioneers Indigeneity Program is an incomparable source for highlighting Indigenous solutions to environmental, human and social justice problems.

Over the past 35 years, Bioneers has cultivated an extensive archive of original Indigenous media including articles, videos, podcasts, and radio shows.

This media is always produced and distributed with contributors' free, prior and informed consent.

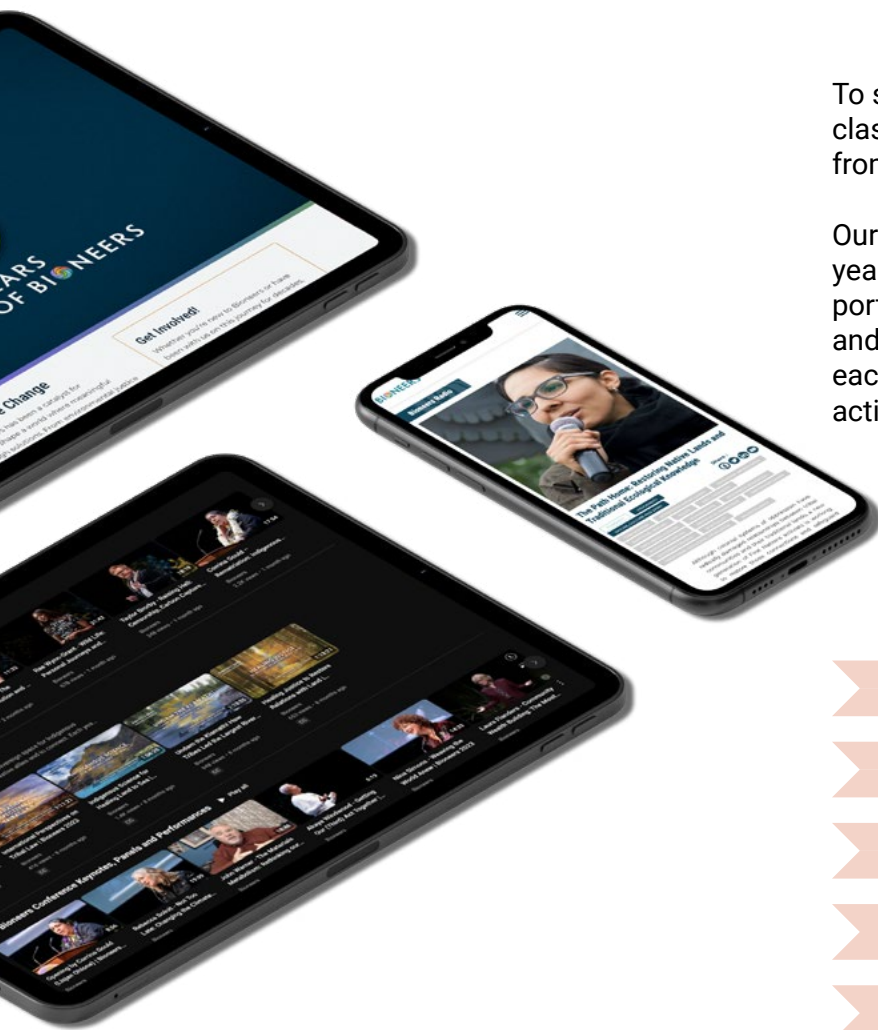


Media Published in 2024



Top 3 Articles in 2024

Becoming Earth: Experimental Theology with Robin Wall Kimmerer	▶	16,780 views
Claudia Peña and Erin Matariki Carr on Reconnecting with the Earth and Each Other	▶	6,572 views
Oren Lyons - To Survive, We Must Transform Our Values	▶	2,995 views

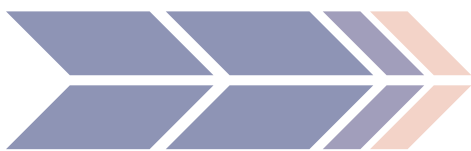


To support the use of Bioneers' original content in the classroom, we create educational materials drawing from our original media.

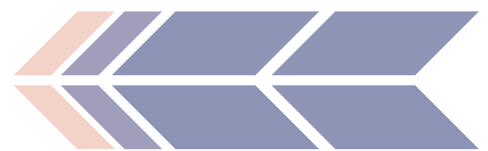
Our curriculum reaches thousands of people each year, replacing erasure and stereotypes with accurate portrayals of Indigenous Peoples, histories, cultures, and sciences. Aligned to Common Core standards, each curriculum bundle includes teacher instructions, activities, assessments, and extensions.

THEMES INCLUDE:

- Alcatraz
- A Just Transition
- Borderlands
- Cultural Appropriation
- Honoring Women
- Solutions to the Climate Crisis
- The Real Thanksgiving (9-12)
- The Three Sisters
- Water is Life
- Thanksgiving (K-1)



CURRICULUM REACH



32,182

Visits to the Indigeneity Curriculum Webpage

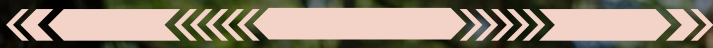
20,072

Downloads of all Indigeneity Educational Resources

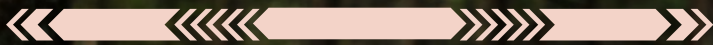
13,126

Views of Indigeneity Educational Videos

BIONEERS LEARNING



Bioneers Learning is an online course and connection platform offering engaging classes led by some of the world's foremost movement leaders, equipping engaged citizens and professionals with knowledge, tools, resources, and networks.



BIONEERS LEARNING

Participants experience Bioneers year-round through the platform, connecting with peers from around the world to build skills for social and environmental change.

In 2024, Bioneers Learning partnered with the Indigeneity Program to offer two unique and innovative courses: Being a Good Relative: Allyship with Indigenous Peoples and Indigenizing the Law.



Being a Good Relative: Allyship With Indigenous Peoples

This 10-week Learning Journey addressed questions including: "What is an ally?" and "How do we create spaces where genuine collaboration for social change is possible?"

"A profoundly rich curriculum that addresses critical issues regarding Native American history, culture, identity, current events, and ways for non-Natives to understand and develop Allyship relationships with Native Peoples."

- Bioneers Learning Participant



Indigenizing the Law

The 6-week workshop examined the prominent cases, laws, and legal theories that make up "Federal Indian Law" while exploring the intersections between the movements for Native Sovereignty and the Rights of Nature.

"The course was jam-packed with relevant legal and community-based practical information. My understanding about how Tribal Nations can apply the Rights of Nature is much clearer after taking this course."

- Bioneers Learning Participant

NATIVE YOUTH LEADERSHIP

An umbrella program, the NYLP coordinates three initiatives, "Healing for Food and Land Justice," Intercultural Conversations, and Native Youth Ambassadors.

"Healing Together for Food and Land Justice" gathers Native, B.I.POC., and migrant youth to participate in special events throughout the year from the greater San Francisco Bay Area.

Intercultural Conversations brings diverse youth together virtually and in person for cross cultural exchange centered on Indigenous themes.

Native Youth Ambassadors provide leadership opportunities for Indigenous youth groups to bring the Rights of Nature movement to their communities.

Each year, we invite all NYLP participants to come together at the Bioneers Conference offering need based scholarships to cover registration, transportation and lodging. In addition to experiencing all that the broader conference offers, we curate a special track of presentations, discussion and activities designed to nurture experiential learning, leadership and friendship.

IMPACT BY THE NUMBERS:

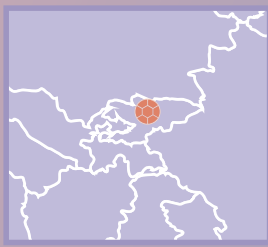


"I saw a huge Native presence within this type of work that I don't normally see at environmental conferences. And it is beautiful to see just the amount of cultural respect we have towards our Indigenous communities."

-Youth Participant (Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe)

NYLP EVENTS:

- ▶ **March 13th** - Community Conversation on Youth Activism: A Conversation on Youth-Led Movements and Actions
- ▶ **October 12-13th** - "Healing Together for Food and Land Justice" Youth Gathering with Pie Ranch and Deep Medicine Circle
- ▶ **October 14th** - "Farming While Black" Dinner and Discussion Screening with the Filmmakers
- ▶ **October 15th** - Indigenous Peoples' Day Sunrise Ceremony on Alcatraz Island
- ▶ **November 19th-21st** - National Recycling Congress, Youth from Hawaii and Louisiana presented on Environmental Justice



NYLP CONFERENCE TRACK

Orientation with Bioneers Youth Programs

"EARTH.SPEAKS" Earthen Build with brooke smiley (Osage)

East Bay Solidarity Tour with Acacia WoodsChan and Ethnic Ties

Basket Weaving Workshop with Judy Aguilar (Diné) and Celeste Aguilar (Diné)

Silversmithing Stamping with Keevin Hesuse (Diné)

Zine Making with Neetz (Chamorro)

Natural Dyes with Isabel Rodriguez-Vega

INTERCULTURAL CONVERSATIONS (IC)

Intercultural Conversations (IC) fosters youth leadership and facilitates cross-cultural exchange between Native and non-Native youth via Indigenous-centered discussions and original curricula developed by Indigenous culture bearers.

Since its inception in 2017, the Intercultural Conversations initiative has served 358 youth towards our goal of serving 400 by 2026. In 2024, we partnered with 7 groups serving a total of 85 youth from across the nation.

At the Bioneers Conference, we dedicate one evening to sharing culture and gifts during our annual potluck. Youth groups create and present dishes from their cultural traditions such as gumbo, poi, fry bread, Lū'au, Arepas, blue cornmeal pancakes, peach cobbler, chicken karahi, roasted sweet potatoes, and corn cakes made from a recipe passed down from James Beard-winning, Mashpee-Wampanoag chef, Sherry Pocknett. Throughout the event, youth and facilitators share cultural performances from song to dance, poetry, and more, cementing intertribal connections and friendships that last far beyond the 3 days of the Annual Bioneers Conference.

"Bioneers is a space where I feel empowered in my learning and I am around people that want to learn. You can do so much with the knowledge gained from the conference and the cultural exchanges build up who we are to ensure that we leave whole and empowered to use that knowledge."

-The New School,
12th Grader

CATALYTIC INITIATIVE

INDIGENOUS RIGHTS OF NATURE



Our Indigenous Rights of Nature Initiative is a By Native, For Native educational resource for Tribal citizens, particularly youth, dedicated to protecting ecosystems and cultural landscapes.

OVERVIEW

Tribal Nations across the United States are codifying traditional knowledge to honor the Rights of Nature and affirm their rights to protect their ancestral homelands. The Indigenous Rights of Nature Initiative (IRoN) bolsters Tribes' ability to self-determine laws and practices to safeguard threatened ecosystems. Over the past six years, the Bioneers Indigeneity team has developed educational materials –from guidebooks to articles, radio shows, and videos– to support Tribes interested in adopting Rights of Nature policies. This initiative has evolved into a program focused on youth leadership, offering funding, resources, tools, and collaborative experiences to inspire a movement to “Indigenizing the Law.”

NATIVE YOUTH AMBASSADOR PROGRAM

Bioneers Indigeneity program knows that youth are the most powerful advocates for paradigm-shifting legal movements because they will inherit the failures of our currency system. In the spirit of honoring youth-led environmental movements, we are shifting our strategy from solely focusing on creating groundbreaking media and educational materials to also providing necessary resources and catalytic experiences to Indigenous Youth on the front lines.

In 2022, the Bioneers Indigeneity Program and the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe collaborated on a Rights of Nature initiative to protect herring. Bioneers sponsored community gatherings, provided honorariums and supported youth participation in events, including an interTribal “Herring Camp” in Alaska and Climate Week in New York. At the camp, the youth group drafted a resolution declaring the Rights of Herring, which the Tribal Council adopted unanimously. Subsequently, the youth organized a Rights of Herring Declaration Day to plan to restore herring ponds and runs in coordinating local stakeholders and their Tribe.

Inspired by the success and dedication of this Mashpee Wampanoag youth group, our IRoN initiative expanded the Native Youth Ambassador Program (NYAP) to serve six Native Youth organizations from 2024 through 2025. Each cohort receives grants, travel scholarships, and educational resources to bring the Indigenous Rights of Nature movement to their communities. We also support them to attend the annual Bioneers Conference to connect, collaborate, and ally with the other cohorts and Indigenous youth.



"This program has not only inspired me to fight for the natural world and my ancestral territory, but it has also given me the chance to grow. I am a better speaker and more confident, and I feel like I have the personal strength to advocate for my Tribe and community. There is a huge movement happening to protect nature, and I am honored to be a part of it."

-Youth Participant (Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe)

2024-25 NATIVE YOUTH AMBASSADOR GROUPS

Mashpee Wampanoag, in
partnership with Mashpee
Native Environmental
Ambassadors

Herring Pond Wampanoag
Tribe

Eastern Band of Cherokee,
in partnership with Junior
NAIWA (North American
Indian Women's Association)

Lummi Nation, in
partnership with Children of
the Setting Sun Productions

Kanaka Maoli Youth
from Big Island, HI, in
collaboration with Recycle
Hawaii

Southern California Tribes,
in partnership with Native
American Land Conservancy



OUTREACH:

To promote the Rights of Nature movement in Indian Country, we sent our Special Project Coordinator to key Indigenous gatherings to share information, present, and distribute guides on the Rights of Nature. We are gaining more strategic partnerships and building alliances across Indian Country.

Rights of Nature Impact by the Numbers

Shared Resources and Information across Indian Country



1250 Rights of Nature Guides Distributed at 9 Indigenous Gatherings

7 Rights of Nature Presentations Made at Major Indigenous Gatherings

Expanded Our Native Youth Ambassador Program



6 Native Youth Groups received:

10k in Community Organizing Grants

6 Travel Scholarships to the 36th Bioneers Conference

30 Youth/6 Facilitators Served Overall

Hosted Our First Indigenizing the Law Course



6 Classes featuring 7 leaders in the Rights of Nature Movement

Over 100 attendees registered; the highest-attended Bioneers Learning Course

100% positive feedback from course attendees in a follow-up survey

We are proud to say that 40% of our IRoN operating budget went to youth organizing grants, 33% to youth travel scholarships, and 27% to advocacy and the creation of IRoN media. We are looking to fully fund this program next year at \$500,000.00



If you are moved by what we accomplished in 2024 and want to see our groundbreaking initiatives flourish, we invite you to support our game-changing initiatives to the highest level you can. Together, we will amplify Indigenous solutions to restore, revitalize, and regenerate our planet for the ecosystems and people that depend on it.

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SAN MANUEL
BAND OF  **MISSION INDIAN**

