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.
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CARA ROMERO (Chemehuevi)
Co-Director

Cara Romero is a non-profit 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 Southwest Associations of Indian Art’s Best of Classification award (twice) and has been published in National Geographic and is widely collected by public and private institutions worldwide.

ALEXIS BUNTEN (Unangan/Yup’ik)
Co-Director

Alexis Bunten is a researcher, 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 at UCLA. She has published widely about Indigenous and environmental issues in academic and mainstream media outlets. Alexis has won several awards for her work from the National Science Foundation, Ford Foundation, MacArthur Foundation, Bristol Bay Native Corporation, and others. Her 2015 book “So, How Long Have You Been Native? Life as an Alaska Native Tour Guide” won the Alaska Library Association Award for its originality and depth.
DAISY ROSALEZ (Pueblo Coca, Mezcala Jalisco)
Special Programs Coordinator

Daisy Rosalez is currently an undergraduate at Williams College working towards a bachelor’s degree in Biology with a concentration in Cognitive Science. A Staff Sergeant in the United States Air Force Reserve, Daisy’s work at Bioneers focuses on supporting Indigenous-led cultural programming, cross-cultural communications, media-making and the use of technology to bridge intergenerational and intercultural gaps. She first attended Bioneers as a scholarship recipient of the Native Youth Leadership Program, and returned as an intern, which evolved into a staff position. Daisy graduated from Foothill College with honors in 2019, where her leadership was honored with Club of the Year and as graduation speaker.

NAZSHONNII BROWN-ALMAWERI (Diné)
Program Manager

Nazshonnii Brown-Almaweri is a farmer, STEM educator, and Union College Alumna (B.S Mechanical Engineering and Studio Arts and French and Francophone Studies Minor) from West Oakland. She also works at the Sogorea Te’ Land Trust in the Territory of Huchiun (East Bay), an urban Indigenous women-led land trust that facilitates the return of Indigenous land to Indigenous people. Prior to joining Bioneers, she was a STEM tutor, media educator, and youth program assistant for the American Indian Child Resource Center. Nazshonnii is passionate about STEAM education and advocates for exposure and opportunities for the 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.
Dear Friends of Indigeneity:

The Indigeneity Program would not exist without your participation, support and investment. We are so grateful for the platform Bioneers provides to amplify the voices of Indigenous leaders. We work tirelessly year round to bring recognition to the critical role Indigenous Peoples have to play in regenerating the planet.

We are gratified to share with you our program accomplishments in 2021. Over the past year, the Indigeneity Program continued to be flexible in light of the second year of the ongoing pandemic, shifting our areas of focus to respond to real time contexts and needs. We used this time as an opportunity to focus on creating accessible media, reaching more people than ever before, as well as provide COVID relief in the second year of the Indigiving mutual aid campaign.

Our most exciting accomplishments in 2021 revolve around our media. We launched the “Indigeneity Conversations” podcast. With the support of the communications team, we released more Indigeneity content than ever across our website and social media channels with 36 articles and blogs and over 200 Indigenous-themed content posts. (This was a threefold increase in blogs and articles from 2020!) Among these articles, we launched a “decolonization” series of articles that have been very well received by the Bioneers audience.

Our diverse audience is hungry for educational materials around how to be a good ally and ways to decolonize and indigenize their own lives without culturally appropriating. In response to this demand, we made more “live” opportunities for the public to learn about the ongoing and emergent social and environmental issues that Native Peoples (and all Peoples) through our original and cutting edge programming at the Bioneers Virtual Conference as well as our participation in many panels, guest lectures, webinars and events. This included an interactive training in “how to be a good ally” in the spring, followed by “what is cultural
appropriation?” in the fall. We also coalesced 5 years of the “Decolonize/Indigenize Thanksgiving” series into a webpage which had over 21,000 views during Thanksgiving week alone!

Finally, we made great strides in the Rights of Nature in Tribal Governance catalytic initiative. We deepened our networks and alliances with partner organizations and tribes interested in exploring Rights of Nature. This entailed assembling a Working Group Advisory Board made up of 28 tribal leaders, grassroots organizers, and legal experts who advised on our overall strategy, as well as a Rights of Nature Toolkit for tribal organizers and elected officials.

We hope you enjoy learning more about what we accomplished in 2021. For a deeper dive, we invite you to explore our website to find all of our media, stories and curriculum on our website. It is a treasure trove of hundreds of videos, blogs, articles, radio shows, podcasts, and curricula for you to learn from Indigenous wisdom - gathered from generations of living in place-- at the heart of the Indigeneity Program's mission.

If you are inspired by our unique and valuable work, please consider supporting Bioneers and the Indigeneity Program in 2022.

Sincerely,

_Cara Romero and Alexis Bunten_
Indigeneity is a Native-led Program within Bioneers that promotes Indigenous approaches to solve the earth’s most pressing environmental and social crises. We provide the public, professionals, leaders across many issue areas, and our extensive networks with authentic, easily accessible tools for understanding and teaching contemporary Indigenous issues and illuminating pathways for engagement.

Since its inception, Bioneers has been fundamentally shaped and guided 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. The program expands the reach of Indigenous knowledge and approaches to solving environmental and social crises.

Our work includes a mix of live events, media production, curriculum development, and catalytic initiatives to support the leadership and rights of First Peoples, while weaving networks, partnerships and alliances.

We help produce the annual Bioneers conference, and the Indigenous Forum within the conference. We adapt these presentations and events into radio shows, TV broadcasts, online videos, media collections, articles, blogs and books. We support youth through cultural exchanges and curriculum.

We also mobilize special catalytic initiatives, which include the multi-year “Tribal Rights of Nature” movement, and our “Indigigiving” grant program initiated in 2020 to address COVID-19 impacts in Indian Country.

We prioritize cultivating future leaders through our annual Native Youth Leadership Program, and the Intercultural Conversations Initiative, providing life-changing experiences that introduce youth to new ideas, role models, and each other to form lasting relationships.

Your funding is the reason we can do this critically important and unique work. We do not take corporate funding, and you – our Bioneers community – are vital to our ongoing success. Now more than ever, the leadership and voices of Indigenous Peoples can and must help shape the wellbeing of our communities and planet for future generations.
INDIGENEITY’S IMPACT

- Amplifies Indigenous voices and campaigns
- Educates students and lifelong learners
- Provides opportunities for youth leadership
- Connects Indigenous leaders with each other and allies
- Advances Rights of Nature in Indian Country
- Leads progressive environmental and social change
- Advances movement building across sectors

INDIGENEITY PROGRAM OUTCOMES BY THE NUMBERS, 2021

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MEDIA AND CURRICULUM</th>
<th>VIRTUAL BIONEERS CONFERENCE 2021</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>200 Indigenous content posts across social media channels</td>
<td>16 Indigenous Speakers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36 Articles and Blogs</td>
<td>3 Indigenous Keynotes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Discussion Guides and Curriculum Bundles</td>
<td>137 self-identified Indigenous participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Indigeneity Conversations Podcasts</td>
<td>72 Tribal affiliations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

INDIGIGIVING COVID-19 RELIEF

- $110,000 raised
- $76,000 redistributed (as of December 31, 2022)
- 18 families received mini grants
- 35 organizations received grants

INTERCULTURAL CONVERSATIONS

- 22 Youth
- 9 Facilitators
- 11 Virtual events
The Bioneers Indigeneity Program is the go-to source for accurate and contemporary information about Indigenous science, media, and curriculum for social change.

MEDIA AND CURRICULUM FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

The Indigeneity Program has cultivated a rich repository of original videos, transcripts and audio recordings showcasing youth, elders and leaders from around the world who have shared Indigenous approaches to environmental, human rights, and social justice issues.

Our website is the only place to discover a wide array of Indigenous ideas and solutions to social and environmental justice issues we face together.

Our media reach thousands of people each year to share Indigenous perspectives and worldviews. Across all of Bioneers media shared in 2021, Indigenous themed videos were 2 out of our top 5 most watched among our diverse audiences!
INDIGENEITY CONVERSATIONS PODCAST SERIES

With the support of the Bioneers Communications Team, the Indigeneity Program Co-Directors developed and created the first Indigeneity podcast series, titled “Indigeneity Conversations.” In 2021 we released the first 3 episodes of the 6 episode series. In the format of conversations between indigeneity program co-directors, Cara Romero and Alexis bunten, this series is designed to shift the public narrative around the themes presented in each of the episodes, from Indigenous representation to rights of nature, land back and more.

PODCASTS RELEASED IN 2021

Transforming Indigenous Stereotypes: Stories By Us For Us with Crystal Echo Hawk
Indigenize the Law: Tribal Rights of Nature Movements with Casey Camp-Horinek Part 1
Indigenize the Law: Tribal Rights of Nature Movements with Casey Camp-Horinek Part 2
In 2021, we produced more than we ever have in the history of the indigeneity program! Over the course of the year, we released 36 articles through our website, and made over 200 social media posts that pointed back to our original media, as well as the stories and campaigns by partners throughout our Indigenous network.

ARTICLES RELEASED IN 2021

- Bioneers Indigeneity Education Takes Off
- The Power of Community: How Citizens Can Be the Change They Want to See in the World
- Let’s Get to Work: These Initiatives Will Make You Inspired
- Native American Food Sovereignty: An Interview with Filmmaker Sanjay Rawal
- Deb Haaland Confirmed as First Native American Secretary of the Department of the Interior
- Protecting cultural and biological diversity is central to solving climate change
- Transforming Indigenous Stereotypes: Stories By Us For Us with Crystal Echo Hawk
- Reclaiming Indigenous Voice - Tommy Orange
- Regenerating the Environment and the Economy: Conscious Businesses Take on Decolonization
- Good Fire: Indigenous Cultural Burns Renew Life
- Conversation with Oglála Lakhóta Elder Basil Brave Heart: Part 1
- Back To School: Resources for Indigeneity Education
- My Vision for American Agriculture
- Life in the City of Dirty Water | Clayton Thomas-Muller
- Bioneers Decolonization Series: Why We Should Indigenize Place Names
- Bioneers Decolonization Series: What Is Decolonization?
- Bioneers Decolonization Series | What Is Decolonization?: In Conversation with Alexis Bunten
- Stolen Land, Stolen Lives: Indigenous People and the Legacy of Colonialism
- Indigenous Activism NOW: Talking Story With Clayton Thomas-Muller and Julian NoiseCat
- 3 Ways to Decolonize Thanksgiving
- No More Stolen Sisters: Stopping the Abuse and Murder of Native Women and Girls
- Decolonizing Regenerative Agriculture: An Indigenous Perspective
- Julian Brave NoiseCat – Apocalypse Then & Now
- Black Food: An Interview with Chef Bryant Terry
- Nemonte Nenquimo – Indigenous Guardianship is Key to Halt the Climate Crisis
- It’s Time the Psychedelic Community Gave Back: The Indigenous Reciprocity Initiative
- Indigenous Pathways to a Regenerative Future
- Nina Simons - From Discipline to Discipleship: Cultivating Love, Collaboration, & Imagination
INDIGENEITY LEARNING

To support the use of Bioneers’ original content in the classroom, we’ve developed discussion guides and curriculum bundles aligned with common core standards for grades 9-12+. Our curriculum offers educators an invaluable toolkit for optimizing the educational potential of evergreen Bioneers media.

We created our first educational study guides in 2015 on topics including “Biocultural Conservation in the Amazon” led by Chief Almir (Surui Tribe), and “Survive and Thrive” based on the teachings of John Mohawk (Seneca).

Since then, we expanded these efforts through the establishment of the “Indigeneity Learning” curriculum, which now offers 10 weeks of instructional material across a number of subjects taught in high schools. Each curriculum bundle includes teacher instructions, activities, assessment, and extensions for a week of instruction aligned to the lesson’s theme.

In 2021, we produced four new curriculum bundles on the topics of “Introduction to Native Americans,” “Native American Stereotypes,” “The Real Thanksgiving,” and “The Three Sisters.” Ten curriculum bundles can be accessed free of charge on our dedicated. These curricula can be accessed for free at our Indigeneity Curriculum webpage.

This body of work represents a unique opportunity to bring Indigenous-created curriculum into both formal and non-formal learning environments. In 2022, we will focus on disseminating our curriculum to classrooms coast to coast!
At its core, Rights of Nature reflects Indigenous worldviews. While the Western philosophical system is underpinned by the ideology that humankind is separate from nature and has dominion over it, Indigenous worldviews conceive of humans as a part of nature, with an obligation to maintain its balance and the intrinsic right to life of all beings.

The Rights of Nature vision is to legally protect threatened lands and the peoples, wildlife, and ecosystems they sustain from human destruction. This movement has the potential to fundamentally shift the paradigm from a domination- and extraction-based relationship with nature to a more sustainable and regenerative future for every living being.
Integrating *Rights of Nature* into tribal policy is a long-term process. Like any major socio-environmental movement, it moves at the speed of tribal partners in it for the long haul.

Following a 2-year pilot program, we launched Year 1 of a four-year plan to bring Rights of Nature to Indian Country in 2020. As a part of this strategy, our team developed a toolkit and training workshop to support tribal leaders and grassroots organizers.

In 2021, we made great strides in the tribally led rights of nature movement. We deepened our networks and alliances with partner organizations and tribes interested in exploring Rights of Nature. This entailed assembling a Working Group Advisory Board made up of 28 tribal leaders, grassroots organizers, and legal experts who advised on our overall strategy, as well as a Rights of Nature Toolkit for tribal organizers and elected officials. Additionally, we conducted deeper research into the intersections of different types of laws and municipal codes pertaining to the various kinds of tribal contexts affecting tribal policy making and enforcement.
In 2022, we will facilitate regional workshops to train tribal members and elected tribal officials to learn how to organize and implement Rights of nature into their own tribe’s governments, as well as educate non-Native partners. These trainings are designed to build capacity within local tribal frameworks, unique histories, languages and cultures. They are also intended to be accompanied with wraparound services and support offered by our team such as legal costs, travel, grassroots campaigns, and public outreach.

In 2023, we’ll continue to expand our outreach across the US, and support the legal work that needs to take place for each tribe so that no tribe will be stopped due to a lack of money. We’ll scale these materials and practices to a national scope of interconnected networks of tribes, while seeking non-Native allies in specific bioregions to advance these laws both on Native lands and beyond. And we’ll tell the stories using multi-media throughout the process to educate tribes, policy makers, activists and the public.
RIGHTS OF NATURE MEDIA

Starting in 2006, Bioneers has featured the world’s leaders in the rights of nature movement in our media to educate the general public about the importance of the Rights of Nature movement for all people.

PANELS
► 2009: Who Speaks for the Trees?
► 2011: The Rights of Nature: An Idea Whose Time Has Come
► 2015 Seven Things We Must Do to Advance the Rights of Mother Earth
► 2017: Indigenous Rights of Nature
► 2018: Advancing the Legal Rights of Nature in a Time of Environmental Crisis
► 2019: Aligning Human Law with Natural Law
► 2020: Fighting for the Rights of Nature

RADIO & PODCASTS
► 2010: Earth Justice: Corporate Rights vs. The Rights of Nature
► 2021: Indigenize the Law: Tribal Rights of Nature Movements Part 1
► 2021: Indigenize the Law: Tribal Rights of Nature Movements Part 2

ARTICLES
► 2017: Rights of Nature – Codifying Indigenous Worldviews into Law to Protect Biodiversity
► 2020: What do the Rights of Nature have to do with Indigeneity?
► 2020: Bioneers Partners with Community Environmental Legal Defense Fund on Rights of Nature in Indigenous Communities
► 2020: Putting Community Rights and Rights for Nature Above Corporation Rights
► 2020: Compassion & Kinship: Astounding Intelligence in Nature
► 2020: Advancing Change in a Time of Disruption: Forging a New Pathway for Nature with Center for Democratic and Environmental Rights
► 2020: Bioneers Decolonization Series | What Is Decolonization?
► 2021: The Politics of the Rights of Nature
► 2021: New Pathways for Old Wisdom: Mari Margil on the Rights of Nature
INDIGIGIVING: COVID-19 RELIEF IN INDIAN COUNTRY

When COVID-19 reached North America, we knew that it would disproportionately impact Indigenous communities. In the spring of 2020, we rapidly organized to gather impact as it was happening so that we could help mitigate the suffering, harms and death. With generous gifts from private donors and foundations, we have raised nearly $300,000 for COVID relief to date.

Our strategy has been to reach out to the hardest hit communities through grants to organizations doing on the ground aid, and to the most vulnerable individuals, elders and children who are typically outside of traditional banking systems and do not have formal mailing addresses. These families have typically not been reached by NGO's, their tribes, and federal CARES Act aid. To support these families when they needed help the most, we reached out to our vast network by phone, asked who needed help, and for help distributing PPE and funds.

Most of our efforts have been focused on Tribal Nations in the Southwest, whose citizens are in such dire need and danger. Other giving has focused on partners across Turtle Island, to Amazonia, and international Indigenous communities. In addition to helping to keep the lights on, bills paid and food on tables, these funds have helped to fixed broken roofs and windows in the middle of winter, dig a well in the middle of a severe drought, a provided families with water tanks, purchased seeds, and supported community members to attend funerals and ceremonies they would not otherwise afford to organize or attend.

INDIGIGIVING COVID-19 RELIEF AT A GLANCE

- $110,000 raised
- 55 individuals received mini grants
- 37 organizations received grants

The contributors to this campaign have helped support the lives and health of hundreds of individuals, prioritizing elders, and children. We are deeply grateful for our kind donors’ understanding, generosity and fierce compassion during this challenging time.

We view this effort as one more step to “decolonize” philanthropy. We know that these funds have made an impact on health and safety, as well as on peoples’ mental health and well-being. It is such an honor to work in partnership with our generous funders and transform our philanthropy into practical justice and compassion in action, while we simultaneously work to change the structures and systems that generate such harms.
Delivering these items to their homes was essential in keeping these families safe.

She is over the moon grateful and said she deeply needed this help. Tears of joy and gratitude on all sides.

While others may be giving in a similar and decolonized way, yours by far, is more substantive, direct, and impactful. So kudos to all the hard work you and your team have done — my giving would not have mattered as much otherwise!!!

For our unhoused recipients, the covid relief has supported them in paying for a hotel room and or food for them and their children.

I’m just so very grateful for all you’ve shared with me and my community. The individual checks went to traditional practitioners, craft folks and people who aren’t always the 1st in line for ‘assistance’.

She was crying when she received $500 of mutual aid because she didn’t know how she was going to pay the light bill at her after school program.

The Covid mutual aid relief provided the American Indian community and families a sense of first and foremost that they are not alone. In a historic period of isolation, uncertainty and overwhelmed systems, many families are struggling with the rising cost of food, rent, gas, and medical expenses. The aid has helped them in their most dire time of need as it allowed them to meet the immediate concern of just surviving in one of the most expensive cities and states in the nation.
Indigenous wisdom has always been central to Bioneers’ mission to address real-world issues practically and holistically. Over the past 31 years, we have met this commitment by featuring and amplifying the voices of Indigenous leaders to connect people from all over the world with authentic Indigenous wisdom, practices, movements and struggles in the larger context of the re-indigenization of all of us.

INDIGENEITY AT THE ANNUAL BIONEERS CONFERENCE

Indigeneity had a major presence in the 2021 Bioneers virtual conference. The conference featured 19 Indigenous speakers in keynote talks, panel discussions, and interactive sessions throughout.

We believe that real change takes all people. Since its inception, Bioneers has prioritized the creation of a space that nurtures cross-cultural dialogue and understanding among all peoples. We open the floor for cross-cultural discussion with a diverse audience, and we let people know what they can do where they live, as well as culturally appropriate ways for non-Native allies to get involved with Indigenous issues.

Tribal leaders, activists and youth also look forward to the annual conference as a place to convene, learn, plan and spend time together. Despite not being able to be in person in 2021, this tradition continued as over 130 Indigenous conference goers with 72 distinct tribal affiliations joined the virtual conference community.
As an educator who focuses on place, ʻāina, and the stories of our ancestors in Hawaiʻi I found the ideas and initiatives talked about at Bioneers to be important for my own healing and also critical to better understanding how I can help those in my community and the educational system in Hawaiʻi to address the issues of imbalance, inequity, and past mistakes.

“Thank you all from the bottom of my heart. I will carry my learnings with me into the classroom and in my community. I look forward to supporting the Bioneers community in the future and cannot wait to join in for 2022!”

Nemonte Nenquimo (Waiorani) speaking to the Bioneers conference
Special kudos to Cara Romero and Alexis Bunten for creating a brave space to discuss cultural appropriation, and wading right in. Truly excellent!

INDIGENOUS EVENTS AND SPEAKERS AT THE BIONEERS CONFERENCE

Opening Ceremony with Manny Lieras (Diné/Comanche)

Indigenous Guardianship is the Key to Halt the Climate Crisis with Nemonte Nenquimo (Waîorani)

Laughter as Medicine: The Power of Native American Comedy with Jackie Keliaa (Yerington Paiute and Washoe) and Cara Romero (Chemehuevi)

Embodied Healing Approaches to Personal, Generational, and Socio-Political Trauma with Dr. Ruby Gibson (Lakota, Ojibwe, Mediterranean) and Staci K. Haines

Apocalypse Then & Now with Julian Brave NoiseCat

Indigenous Activism NOW: Talking Story with Clayton Thomas Müller, Julian NoiseCat, and Alexis Bunten

Nature + Justice + Women’s Leadership: A Strategic Trio for Effective Change with Naelyn Pike (Chiricahua Apache), Amisha Ghadiali, Osprey Orielle Lake, and Nina Simons

Sacred Manhood: An Intergenerational Conversation on Trauma and Healing for Boys and Men of Color (“BMOC”) with Jerry Tello (Coahuiltecan), Jason Seals, and David Bouttavong

Being in Right Relationship—The Indigenous Wisdom of the Four Sacred Gifts with Anita L Sanchez, Ph.D., (Aztec/Mexican American)

Indigenous Pathways to a Regenerative Future with Sikowis (Plains Cree/Saulteaux), Nick Estes (Lower Brule Sioux Tribe) and Alexis Bunten (Unangan/Yupik)

Earth, Water and Fire: A Permaculture and Indigenous Approach to Managing Land with Carmen Gonzales (Diné); and Bill Tripp (Karuk Tribe)

What is Cultural Appropriation? with Alexis Bunten (Unangan/Yup’ik) and Cara Romero (Chemehuevi)

It’s Time the Psychedelic Community Gave Back: The Indigenous Reciprocity Initiative with Joseph Mays, Bia Labate, and Daniela Peluso

Averting a Hot, Toxic Endgame: Strategizing & Mobilizing for Climate Justice with Eriel Tchekwie Deranger (Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation), Leila Salazar-Lopez, Osprey Orielle Lake, and Nina Simons
Alexis Bunten (Unangan/Yupik), Nick Estes (Lower Brule Sioux Tribe), and Sikowis (Plains Cree/Saulteaux)

Cara Romero (Chemehuevi) and Jackie Keliaa (Yerington Paiute and Washoe)

Julian NoiseCat, Clayton Thomas-Müller, and Alexis Bunten (Unangan/Yupik)
We believe that youth inherently possess the knowledge of what matters in life. Youth who connect across cultural boundaries grow up to become more empathetic adults, able to draw connections between ongoing environmental threats and systematic structures of oppression.

INTRODUCTION

Intercultural Conversations (IC) is an annual educational exchange between a diverse group of 40 Native and non-Native youth who come together to address critical issues facing Indigenous and all peoples.

OVERVIEW

2021 marked our 5th year and cohort for the Intercultural Conversations initiative. Intercultural Conversations (IC) is an educational exchange between Native American and non-Native youth who come together to address critical issues facing Indigenous and all peoples. IC fosters future environmental and social justice leaders through talking circle discussions and in-person cultural exchange, except during the pandemic. Based on the evidence that exposing youth to cross-cultural issues and contexts will provide a foundation for leadership, IC provides a platform for diverse youth across America to learn together through facilitated discussions and accompanying Native American Studies curriculum.

In 2021, we partnered with 5 groups:

- The New School, Atlanta, GA
- Rez Refuge, Fort Defiance, AZ
- Bishop O Dowd, Oakland, CA
- American Indian Child Resource Center, Oakland, CA
- Bogalusa High school, Bogalusa, LA
I love this program, I love to talk about issues going on in the world around us and talking about how we can change that. I like the fact that everyone can express themselves without feeling uncomfortable and can hear each other’s thoughts.

- Participant with the American Indian Child Resource Center (AICRC)

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we delivered an “all virtual” program with monthly gatherings from February - December. Despite the pandemic and not being able to come together in person, the IC program was transformative for student participants. Together, facilitated talking circle discussions built upon participants’ inherent assets and engaged their multiple intelligences (e.g. interpersonal, visual, kinesthetic, etc). Instead of being treated as passive learners, youth participants were engaged as change-makers, supportively encouraged to work through cognitive dissonance through active listening based in Indigenous ways of learning (pedagogies).

Through this process, youth participants experienced profound personal development in their ability to empathize with others, understand complex issues, and communicate cross-culturally.

Native youth enhanced and developed leadership skills by being placed in the role of expert based on their personal experiences. Non-Native youth learned how to be good allies on Indigenous issues. All participants learned how to understand intersectional environmental and social justice issues critical to the future health and well-being of the planet.

We are so grateful to the generous partners and sponsors of our youth programming, which is intimately tied to our media work, curriculum development and outreach. We feel incredibly privileged to support and witness the Native and non-Native youth we work with as they develop into leaders. Over the years, we have cultivated and watched as they developed networks that lead to real outcomes to make the world a better place for peoples of all backgrounds, plants and animals who share it.

2021 INTERCULTURAL CONVERSATIONS PARTICIPANTS

- 22 Students
- 6 Facilitators
- 3 Bioneers Staff
- Average age: 16 Years Old
I found it very valuable to learn about how different my way of life has been compared to other people and it made me a lot more conscious of how I live in this world.
- Participant with The New School

I love hearing others’ points of view and life stories. It helps me have more empathy and more understanding for the world around me.
- Participant with the American Indian Child Resource Center

2021 DISCUSSION THEMES AND EVENTS

- **February 20**: Introduction to Native Americans
- **March 20**: Native American Diversity - Stereotypes
- **April 17**: Indigenous Representation - Tribal Diversity
- **May 15**: The “Real” Pocahontas
- **June 19**: Indigenous Representations - Creation Stories and Identity
- **July 17**: Decolonization and Landback Movement
- **August 21**: National Parks and Sacred Sites
- **September 18**: Allies and Accomplices
- **October 9**: Indigenous Peoples Day
- **October 12**: Indigenous Peoples Day Gathering
- **November 11-13**: Virtual Bioneers Conference
IC MUTUAL AID

For the final meeting of the year, Intercultural Conversations focused on the theme of mutual aid, teaching students what it is, how it is more broadly related to philanthropy, as well as tips and ideas for distributing mutual aid. Within this gathering, the youth participants determined how they wanted to allocate the funds provided by the program via an Indigenous, consensus-based decision making model.

Mutual Aid funds were distributed for the following:
- ✖️ Offsetting the cost of essentials (rent, school books) for participants in need
- ✖️ Supporting Black and Indigenous families with bereavement funds
- ✖️ Contributing to Rez Refuge's COVID relief for the Navajo Nation
- ✖️ Contributing to Native Conservancy’s climate change mitigation and workforce development via kelp farming
- ✖️ Contributing to the Houma Nation's Hurricane Ida relief
- ✖️ Affirming the work and initiatives Morris Brown, a Historically Black College/University

To our knowledge, no other youth program has distributed mutual aid in this way. This ground breaking programmatic pivot, fostered and further developed youth leadership in new ways, as well as taught participants how to ask for help with pride, and understand underlying structural reasons (land theft, slavery, genocide, etc.) for disparities across the US.

“I really enjoyed some of the smaller group discussions since they made me feel a lot more comfortable sharing. The talks gave me a ton of new information, especially the “Real” Pocahontas and LANDBACK talking circles. They gave me space to connect to new voices that I would likely have not had connected with otherwise.”

- Participant with The New School
PROGRAM OUTREACH: TALKS AND PRESENTATIONS

- “What Does it Mean to Remember?” Indigenizing the Past: Roundtable Remembering the First Thanksgiving from a Wampanoag Worldview with Alexis Bunten Society for Early Americanists | March 5

- Introduction to Allyship With Indigenous Peoples with Cara Romero and Alexis Bunten for the Climate Reality Project | March 30

- Decolonizing Ethnobotany with Alexis Bunten for the Society for Ethnobotany | April 17

- The Tribally-led Rights of Nature Movement with Cara Romero and Alexis Bunten for Vision Maker Media | April 17


- Nation-based and Place-Based Economies with Alexis Bunten for Indigenous Economics: Reclaiming the Sacred with Indigenous Climate Action | June 12

- Being a Good Relative: Introduction to Allyship with Indigenous Peoples with Cara Romero and Alexis Bunten for the Belvedere Center | September 29


- The Legacy of Settler Colonization in Alaska with Alexis Bunten. Presented to the Poverty and Opportunity Legislative Task Force for the State of Alaska | November 10

- Native American Heritage Month Panel with Alexis Bunten. Presented to Qualcomm | Nov 17

PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

American Indian Child Resource Center  
Apache StrongHold  
Ceibo Alliance and Amazon Frontlines  
Freedom Lodge  
Great Plains Action Society  
Indigenous Climate Action  
National Compadres Network  
Stop the Source - 350.org
If you are moved by what we accomplished in 2021 and want to see our groundbreaking initiatives flourish, we invite you to support our game-changing work at the highest level you can. We thank each and every one of you who already support this sacred work. Together, we will amplify Indigenous solutions to restore, revitalize and regenerate our planet for the ecosystems and people that depend on it.

Indigeneity Program

email: natives@bioneers.org
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