



Association on American Indian Affairs

2019 SUMMER CAMP REPORT

NATIVE YOUTH SUMMER CAMP GRANT RECIPIENTS

The Association on American Indian Affairs is the oldest non-profit serving Indian Country protecting sovereignty, preserving culture, educating youth and building capacity. The Association was formed in 1922 to change the destructive path of federal policy from assimilation, termination and allotment, to sovereignty, self-determination and self-sufficiency. Throughout its 97-year history, the Association has provided national advocacy on watershed issues that support sovereignty and culture, while working on the ground at a grassroots level with Tribes to support the implementation of programs that affect lives on the ground.

The Association began providing grants to Native Youth Summer Camps in **1963** as a powerful way for the Association to achieve its goals: to protect sovereignty, preserve culture, educate youth and build Tribal capacity. There is significant research that shows when young Native people are connected to their culture, they fare better mentally and emotionally than those who are not. Healthy and strong Native American youth will sustain strong Tribal cultures and protect Tribal sovereignty for years to come.

The Association provides funding for summer camps who are connecting Native youth with cultural experiences as well as providing curriculum on health, wellness and self-care. Between 2003 and 2019, the Association has granted \$212,395 to 136 Native Youth Summer Camps! This year the Association provided funding for ten summer camps that provided educational opportunities regarding health and wellness, cultural practices and languages. **In total, the 2019 Summer Camps reached 527 youth from at least 82 Tribes!**

The following Summer Camps received funding for 2019:

- Kamiah Nimiipuu Health Youth Wellness & Culture Camp, Kamiah, ID
30 Native youth attended from 5 Tribes
- Zuni Youth Enrichment Project, Zuni, NM
180 Native youth attended from 2 Tribes
- Pathkeepers 7th Annual Native Youth Leadership Camp, Culpeper, VA
35 Native youth attended from 14 Tribes
- American Indian Resource Center, Oakland, CA
50 Native youth attended from 10 Tribes
- American Indian Education Association, Phoenix, AZ
35 Native youth attended from 8 Tribes
- Herbal Garden Wellness Native Immersion Camp, Hartsel, CO
25 Native youth attended from 17 Tribes
- The Living Well Traditionally Diabetes Prevention Youth Camp, Happy Jack, AZ
66 Native youth served from 17 Tribes
- Native Youth Summer Program: Camp TAMIT, San Fernando, CA
13 Native youth attended from 5 Tribes
- Dlóó' Yázhí Day Camp, Thoreau, NM
63 Native youth attended from 1 Tribe
- Indigenous Youth Empowerment Program, East Lansing, MI
30 Native Youth attended from 3 Tribes

The Association's 2019 Summer Camp Program Awardee stories are included in this Report and provide a sample of the minimum we can do for Native youth. But we must do more!

Currently, the majority of our summer camp program is funded through a single donor: the Ben Plucknett Charitable Trust, and through other small individual donations. In 2019, this single grant totaled \$6,000 and \$5,400 was distributed between the ten Summer Camps. It cost the organization approximately \$3,000 to administer this program as it stands currently.

The Association sees a demonstrated need to develop a consistent national program throughout Indian Country that will address self-advocacy and build the Native youth voice. In doing so, a national summer camp program will help youth develop leadership skills that will support Tribal sovereignty and self-determination while fulfilling the Association's vision of creating a world where Native American cultures are lived, protected and respected. The Association is developing a detailed project design that

will support its vision to develop this annual national opportunity to Native youth. If you would like to participate in the development of this national opportunity, please contact the Association!

Help the Association build a NATIONAL YOUTH CAMP that is available consistently every summer to Native youth in regions across Indian Country. Curriculum is currently being developed that will provide education through diverse cultural teachings that include:

- Self-care and self-advocacy so that Native youth are not taken advantage of.
- Suicide prevention so that Native youth have a network of support and ways to seek help.
- Health and wellness to stay strong and brave.
- American Indian History and the U.S.-Tribal government-to government relationship to understand what Tribes need to grow and provide for their peoples.
- Develop political leadership and advocacy to support sovereignty, self-determination and protection of cultures.

BE A PARTNER
BE A TEACHER
BE A MENTOR

END THE CYCLE AND SUPPORT A NATIONAL NETWORK OF
NATIVE YOUTH ADVOCACY AND SELF-DETERMINATION!



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ZUNI YOUTH ENRICHMENT PROJECT (ZYEP)



- June 3-July 19, 2019
- Zuni, New Mexico
- 180 Native youth attended
- Ages 6-12
- Tribes Represented: Zuni, Navajo

ZYEP is a camp offered to Native youth from 8:30am-1:00pm, Monday through Friday for five consecutive weeks. The summer camp curriculum included Zuni language, traditional waffle gardening, Zuni pottery, traditional dancing, culturally significant hikes, art with meaning, self-love life skills, and time connecting with elders. These activities were blended with S.T.E.M. (science, technology, engineering, mathematics), nutrition, physical activity, and stress management activities.

A cultural celebration was held where the youth and summer camp counselors performed three social Zuni dances for their families and the broader Zuni community. The youth and camp counselors practiced the mixed dance (buffalo, deer, and eagle), butterfly, and harvest dance during camp and performed these dances at the cultural celebration. On the final day of camp, the youth participated in a conference where summer camp counselors presented a range of personally important topics including mental health, LGBTQ identity, dangers of excessive technology use, self-love, and parental separation.

Pathkeepers 7th Annual Native Youth Leadership Camp



- July 14-21, 2019
- Culpeper, Virginia
- 35 youth attended
- Ages 11-17
- Tribes represented: Salt River Pima-Maricopa, Zuni, Laguna, Navajo, Chippewa Cree, Muckleshoot, Oglala Lakota, Citizen Band Potawatomi, White Mountain Apache, Cheyenne, Haliwa Saponi, Waccamaw Siouan, Sault St. Marie Chippewa, Ute Indian Tribe

Pathkeepers for Indigenous Knowledge held its 7th Annual Native Youth Leadership Camp on a horse farm in Culpeper, Virginia, southwest of Washington, D.C. This year's theme was *My Imagination is My Path*. Under this theme youth participated in cultural and educational activities, identified healthy food and life choices, and explored their personal interests and identity. Pathkeepers follows a unique Free Learning Method, which combines alternative education approaches with Native cultural curriculum and experiential learning. Campers had the time and freedom to choose what they wanted to learn, exchange and offer ideas without fear of judgment and the freedom to explore and play. This style of learning builds self-confidence, leadership, consensus skills, educational goals, creative and independent thinking, health and wellness resulting in the youth undergoing significant intellectual and emotional transformations.

AMERICAN INDIAN CHILD RESOURCE CENTER



- July 19 & August 10-11, 2019
- Oakland, California
- 50 youth attended
- Ages 2-14
- Tribes represented: Blackfeet, Cherokee, Diné, Hoopa, Karuk, Oglala Lakota Sioux, Paiute, Pomo, Yurok, Washoe

The American Indian Child Resource Center provided a cultural day camp for foster families consisting of Native youth, their parents, board members, elders, and staff. Tribes represented by families and staff were Blackfeet, Cherokee, Diné, Hoopa, Karuk, Oglala Lakota Sioux, Paiute, Pomo, Yurok, and Washoe. The day started with a gathering where introductions were made. The elders offered a prayer for the food, loved ones, and those in need of medicine. Parents and staff received *I Love ICWA* t-shirts that were provided through fundraising with the California Tribal Families Coalition. The T-shirt symbolized the unified support from staff and parents for the basic tenet of the Indian Child Welfare Act – to keep Native children connected to their culture.

A big meal was prepared with parents contributing by helping with food preparation and grilling for a potluck style meal with healthy Indigenous recipes. As the food was prepared, the youth participated in cultural arts, including a dreamcatcher workshop where they learned of its Anishinaabe origin, listening to origin stories, answering related trivia questions, and making dreamcatchers. The parents were led through a workshop on Healing through Culture by the center's social services and counseling staff. The focus of the conversation was to learn how cultural knowledge can help in healing from trauma, and how to implement cultural knowledge as a preventative measure in family crisis.

AMERICAN INDIAN EDUCATION ASSOCIATION



- July 15-19, 2019
- Phoenix, Arizona
- 35 youth attended
- Ages 13-18
- Tribes represented: Hopi, Apache, Quechan, Tewa, Pascua, Yaqui, Santa Domingo, Navajo

The American Indian Education Association holds a camp every year for Tribal youth in Phoenix, Arizona. This year the theme of the camp was *Protecting Our Land 2019: Becoming Roots of Knowledge*. Tribal elders, Native Community members, and college students from University of Arizona and Pima Community College volunteered as camp counselors for the youth.

The youth participated in many activities such as group wellness, morning prayers, runs, large group knowledge sharing, small group breakouts with college mentors, elder feedback, poetry, art, talking circles, and storytelling with elders. The theme of this year's camp was at the center of all activities. Camp counselors discussed important topics relating to environmental social justice, and the impact that people have on Mother Earth. Talking circles and prayer provided a welcoming space to hear youth experiences with respect and understanding, supporting youth development and strengthening confidence. On the final day parents and Tribal communities were invited to the student showcase of Poetry and Art created by camp participants.

HERBAL GARDEN WELLNESS NATIVE IMMERSION CAMPS



- June 6-10, 2019
- Hartsel, Colorado
- 20-25 youth attended
- Ages 6-18
- Tribes represented: Shoshone-Bannock, Eastern Shoshone, Navajo (Dineh & Nabaju), Ojibwe, Lakota, Nakota, Dakota, Pawnee, Choctaw, Carlanas Apache, Mescalero Apache, Si'can'gu, Ponca, Santee, Machica, Ni' Hon' Jin (Japanese)

Herbal Garden Wellness Native Immersion Camps is a unique camping experience where youth visit several Native Youth Summer camps. The activities at the Camps include inter-Tribal experiences through food, storytelling, and creativity. The diverse community members are descendants of families from the 1956 Relocation Act that are now living in Denver, Colorado. Elders and community members from these families volunteered as camp counselors.

Camp counselors demonstrated harvesting crops with a balance of spiritual tradition to provide an understanding of how food practices of Native and Indigenous peoples incorporate both science and healing. Plant-based menus were incorporated into the meals. Camp Counselors taught ethnobotany (plant medicine and food sources), while discussing how the anatomy and physiology of bodies work when healthy choices are made, the importance of traditionally gathered foods, and medicines that heal the body from chronic inflammation. Additionally, camp counselors assisted with mural painting and led four herbal walks. During herbal walks camp counselors discussed their individual Nation's knowledge on the use of plants for healing.

Elders and community members led teaching circles where gratitude was given to each camp counselor and shared many different prayers from Tribal Nations. The youth were encouraged to speak and direct the teaching, building healthy relationship skills and respect for their own health and wellness.

LIVING WELL TRADITIONALLY DIABETES PREVENTION YOUTH CAMP



- June 3-7, 2019
- Camp Colley in Happy Jack, Arizona
- 66 youth attended
- Ages 9-13
- Tribes Represented: Beaver-Alaska, Big Sandy Rancheria, Cherokee, Choctaw, Fort McDermitt Paiute, Gila River, Ho-Chunk, Hopi, Hualapai, Menominee, Navajo, Oneida, Pascua Yaqui, Pawnee, Shoshone, Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community, White Mountain Apache

The Living Well Traditionally Diabetes Prevention Youth (LWT) Camp provided 24 adults and 66 American Indian/Alaska Native youth the opportunity to adopt a healthier lifestyle and embrace their culture among their peers. All activities provided education about diabetes prevention and encompassed Indigenous health and wellness. This year the camp was held at Camp Colley in Happy Jack, Arizona.

Camp participants were organized into six activity groups with no more than ten in a group and three adult camp leaders to guide them through each activity during the week. Half of each day was dedicated to campers participating in physical activities led by certified Camp Colley staff. The physical activities included, horseback riding, archery, orienteering, low ropes course, forest scavenger hunting, and other team building activities. Each group rotated through all activities during the week to ensure every youth was able to participate in each activity offered. Education and other activities accounted for the other half of the day. Topics included, diabetes awareness, nutrition, sugar awareness, learning proper hydration, foods to avoid, and education on oral hygiene. Each education discussion was able to build on the previous session to provide greater knowledge to camp participants. Additionally, suicide prevention discussions and a traditional Pawnee/Lakota prayer song was offered during the evening sessions.

NATIVE YOUTH SUMMER PROGRAM: CAMP TAMIT



- June 18 – August 8, Monday, Wednesday, Thursday
- San Fernando, California
- 13 Native youth attended
- Ages 8-16
- Tribes represented: Tataviam Band of Mission Indians, Ho-Chunk Nation, Mazahua-Racamuri, Huichol, Quechan

Camp TAMIT provided activities to Native Youth including, swimming, field trips, athletics, and the viewing of popular films with the emphasis of incorporating Native culture. The youth participated in cultural activities such as harvesting yucca and cactus, cooking with Native plants, and creating gourd rattles and leather medicine bags. Other culturally influenced activities included Native storytelling, hiking and learning about local Indigenous plants and animals, sage harvesting for tea, and the Native field hockey game called Shinny.

Youth interacted with Tribal elders and various Native communities. These individuals and groups provided greater in-depth learning and opportunities to strengthen self- identity.

Youth were invited to be part of a silk screen printing workshop with Mezli Projects, an Indigenous based arts and culture group. During this workshop, they were taught the basics on how to create and transfer their own Tribal inspired logos onto shirts and posters. This workshop embraced each youth's self-identity and unique creativity.

The Camp was given the generous opportunity to attend the San Manuel Band of Mission Indian's event at Universal Studios Hollywood. They were able to enjoy the theme park, and the private social event. This gave students insight to networking with peers and share their experiences of being part of a Native youth program.

DLOÓ' YÁZHÍ DAY CAMP



- July 1-30, 2019
- Thoreau Community Center, Thoreau, NM
- 63 Native youth attended
- Ages 4-16
- Tribes Represented: Navajo/Diné

Dloó' Yázhí Day Camp partnered with Thoreau Community Center to offer a day camp that promotes suicide prevention in and beyond the Thoreau Community. The program is designed to nurture protective factors that prevent youth suicide, with a focus on connectedness, resilience, and self-esteem. This year, 63 Native youth enrolled, 61 of whom are Diné. Three of the oldest campers took on their first leadership role at camp, working as counselors-in-training.

The youth participated in games, songs, art projects, sports, exploring nature, cooking, nutrition, teambuilding, photography, gardening, and reflection circles. This year the youth also participated in activities outside of the community center including, a day hike to Hogback Canyon in Gallup, fishing, bowling, and the movie theater. Older youth went to Ford Canyon Park and explored the caves at El Malpais. All age groups participated in movie week where they selected a movie, made costumes and sets, and filmed their movie. A family picnic was held on the 4th of July. The summer camp ended with a carnival planned by older youth for the younger youth and family.



INDIGENOUS YOUTH EMPOWERMENT PROGRAM

- June 17-20, 2019
- East Lansing, MI
- 30 Native youth attended
- Ages 6-18
- Odawa, Potawatomi, Ojibwe

The Indigenous Youth Empowerment Program (IYEP) Culture Summer Camp is focused on enriching the lives of Lansing area urban Indigenous students through developing their sense of community, culture, health (mental and physical), and leadership skills. Elders, community members, Michigan State University students, and University faculty served as teachers and mentors for the camp. The summer camp curriculum provided culturally specific activities that promoted student success and leadership. The theme of this year's summer camp, *Enji mjigimman kendaasowin*, focused on nurturing inter-generational community knowledge.

The IYEP summer camp offered a curriculum constructed into four major components: language, health education, community development and academic aspirations, which was all taught by Indigenous instructors. The camp's objective was to create a nurturing learning environment for urban Indigenous youth, through the development of a positive and healthy attitude toward school.



KAMIAH NIMIIPUU HEALTH YOUTH WELLNESS & CULTURE CAMP

- July 23-25, 2019
- Nimiipuu (Nez Perce) Reservation
- 25-30 Native youth attended
- Ages 7-16 yrs.
- Tribes represented: Nimiipuu (Nez Perce), Yakama, Spokane, Umatilla, Sho-ban

The *Titoquan si'kip tuan* is a Kamiah Nimiipuu Health Youth Wellness & Culture camp that gathered for three days in the Heartland of the Nimiipuu (Nez Perce) Reservation to provide wellness, physical fitness activities and cultural activities for Native youth. A variety of experienced staff, including Nimiipuu Health staff, Nez Perce Tribal staff, community members and respected Elders, guided the youth through the three-day camp.

Diabetes educators spoke to the youth about the risks and complications of diabetes. A family nurse practitioner played *Diabetes Pictionary* with the youth. They were very creative in drawing their diabetes word or phrase. The youth took part in physical activities such as stretching, warmups and competitive games throughout their days at camp. A language instructor provided language instruction for the youth in the Nimiipuu language. Elders shared their wisdom and traditional stories, including information on healthy food choices, traditional foods, harvest times, the history of the sweat lodge and proper etiquette during sweat ceremonies.