

100



**ASSOCIATION ON
AMERICAN INDIAN AFFAIRS**

1922

YEARS

2022

**2025 Native Youth Summer Camp
Report**

ASSOCIATION ON AMERICAN INDIAN AFFAIRS

Protecting Sovereignty • Preserving Culture

Educating Youth • Building Capacity

SINCE 1922

2025 Native Youth Summer Camps

The Association on American Indian Affairs is the oldest national Native non-profit 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 our over 100-year history, the Association has provided national advocacy on watershed issues that support sovereignty and culture, while working at a grassroots level with Native Nations to support the implementation of programs that affect lives on the ground.

In 1963, the Association began providing grants to Native Youth Summer Camps. These grants serve as a way for Native youth to connect to their diverse cultures. **Between 2003 and 2025, the Association has granted \$252,050 to 203 Native Youth Summer Camps!** This year the Association provided funding for 12 camps that offered educational opportunities regarding health and wellness, cultural practices, and languages.

The Association's 2025 Summer Camp Program supported at least **560 youth** from many Indigenous Peoples, Native Nations, and Communities including Absentee Shawnee, Arapaho, Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Apache, Citizen Potawatomi, Comanche, Creek, Dot Lake, Healy Lake, Hopi, Kickapoo, Koasati, Minto, Muscogee Creek, Nambe, Navajo, Ohkay Owingeh, Pawnee, Pit River, Rosebud Sioux, Sac and Fox, Santa Clara, Seminole, Shinnecock, Sicangu Lakota, Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate, Sitka Tribe of Alaska, Tanana, Tetlin, Tohono O'odham Nation, and Tunica-Biloxi Nations, Pueblos, and Peoples.

This report provides information on each Native Youth Summer Camp we provided funding for this year. This work deserves increased investment and funding to truly serve Native youth. There are more than 400 Native youth summer camps across Native Country that deserve our support. We hope you will continue to share your commitment to Native youth by donating to the Association!

Partner with us to support Native youth!

For more than 60 years, the Association has supported Native youth summer camps that promote cultural knowledge, intergenerational learning, health, wellness and healing through our Next Generations program.

Currently, most of our grant funding comes from a single generous donor, the Ben Plucknett Charitable Trust, along with the Association's unrestricted operating funds supported by general giving. To sustain and expand this vital program, we are seeking additional donors and partners who share our commitment to investing in Native youth.

Together, we can ensure that Native youth continue to have access to these life-changing opportunities.

Thank you for your commitment to Native youth!

Camp A'Gin

Camp A'Gin, held June 16-20, 2025, at the Tewa Women United Campus in Española, New Mexico, welcomed 14 youth ages 10-17 from the Ohkay Owingeh, Santa Clara, and Nambe Pueblos. The purpose of the camp was to explore Indigenous perspectives of plants and the cosmos. It blended traditional Tewa stories about the stars, moon, and planets with experiential learning, including a visit to a planetarium, astronomy workshops, and hands-on activities related to outer space.

Each morning began with a circle for check-ins and grounding in shared values. Campers received guidance from elders and engaged in outdoor activities such as hiking, fishing, and time at the park. Workshops combined Pueblo farming techniques, storytelling, and ecological stewardship, blending traditional knowledge with modern science.

The camp integrated Tewa Women United's Body Sovereignty Curriculum, including a unit on LGBTQ and 2-Spirit identities. Participants explored identity, gained mental health tools, and worked on youth advocacy and violence prevention initiatives.

The T'syain Circle of Grandmothers shared meals and cultural stories, passing down lessons on healthy relationships, ecological knowledge, and Pueblo lifeways.



Camp Nikoti

Camp Nikoti, held June 16-July 18, 2025, at the Brendle Corner Community Center in Little Axe, Oklahoma, welcomed 30 participants ages 10-14 representing the Absentee Shawnee and Seminole Nations. Camp Nikoti Summer Camp is built on teaching youth to become great young leaders for their communities, families, and Nations. Their camp is designed to work with 10-14-year-olds as campers, and to create a pipeline of future mentors as the youth age out of camp. The camp is open and welcoming to all youth, creating a safe space for identity expression and inclusion.

Daily activities emphasized movement, health, and teamwork, with swimming, fitness sessions, and sports ensuring participants stayed active. Cultural learning was a core component. Campers worked with the Nation's Cultural Preservation Department to engage in language learning, arts and crafts, and traditions. Workshops also encouraged youth to consider their roles in protecting cultural knowledge and practicing community advocacy.

Elders and local leaders provided guidance, modeling respect, resilience, and cultural pride while supporting intergenerational knowledge transfer.



Culture Camp

Culture Camp was held July 21-24, 2025 in Sitka, Alaska. They welcomed 17 children ages 5-7, primarily from the Lingít (Tlingit) community of the Sheet'ká Kwáan Tribe. The goal of Culture Camp is to create empowering spaces where youth from different clans come together to ensure culture is being practiced and perpetuated. Investing in Native youth to gather, practice their culture, and speak their language is an investment in a bright future.

The Sitka Native Education Program partnered closely with elders, who guided campers with language, history, and cultural knowledge. This work supported cultural and personal identity and intergenerational connection through whole-body-wellness and healing experiences.

Students learned about traditional harvesting, language, song and dance, and storytelling. These helped youth connect to their heritage while learning teamwork and leadership. Cultural learning was central, with students organized into teams named after Lingít clans. The camp emphasized inclusivity, ensuring that every child felt supported and valued. Activities promoted physical wellness through outdoor play and field trips to local cultural sites.



Dot Lake Village Culture Camp

Dot Lake Village Culture Camp was held July 7-9, 2025 in Dot Lake, Alaska. The Camp brought together 20 participants ages 9-17 from the Native Villages of Dot Lake, Tanacross, Healy Lake, Tetlin, and Minto. The goal of camp was to provide an environment in which youth can visit their traditional lands and receive lessons from knowledgeable culture bearers.

Activities emphasized balance between physical and cultural learning, including lessons on moose hunting, whitefish history, bee pollination, and outdoor exploration. The camp fostered inclusion and wellbeing through support from Dot Lake Village's own Teejuh Behavioral Health staff.

Because the Upper Tanana subregion, in which the Village of Dot Lake is located, has a serious problem with substance abuse in addition to a lack of immediate behavioral health services, the Camp's staff spent time spreading awareness of their Village-managed behavioral health program with participants and educating them that it is okay to reach out and ask for help when needed. The lessons taught at the camp from elders included values on wellness and taking care of yourself and others.

Cultural teachings were woven throughout, giving youth opportunities to practice lifeways and develop leadership. Elders also joined in these sessions, ensuring knowledge transfer and reinforcing community connections.



Great Futures Summer Day Camp

The Boys & Girls Club of the Seminole Nation of Oklahoma Great Futures Summer Day Camp welcomed 60 participants between the ages of 8-18 from June 2-July 25, 2025. Campers represented the Absentee Shawnee, Arapaho, Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Citizen Potawatomi, Creek, Kickapoo, Pawnee, Sac and Fox, Seminole, and Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate Nations.

Health and wellness programming was central to the camp experience. Youth engaged in the Summer Monarch Program, where they grew culturally significant pollinator plants such as milkweed while maintaining a monarch butterfly hatching ground. Additional wellness activities included healthy cooking classes led by Indian Health Service, jump rope fitness, and diabetes-prevention programming facilitated by the Seminole Nation Diabetes Program. Youth and Family Services offered emotional wellness workshops, while community partners provided education in resilience, self-care, and coping strategies.

Cultural programming was equally robust. Campers took part in a pilot Seminole Nation Mvskoke-Creek language program, where they not only learned but also provided feedback on new educational resources. The Seminole Nation Museum and Seminole Nation Older Americans Program partnered to provide storytelling, intergenerational learning, and mentorship opportunities. Campers also contributed to environmental education through the creation of a Medicine Wheel Pollinator Garden, blending cultural traditions with conservation practices.

Together, these experiences reinforced identity, community belonging, and environmental stewardship. The camp's holistic approach empowered youth to build confidence, strengthen cultural pride, and gain the tools needed for physical, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing



Hongvi'mamant Running Camp

Held June 29-July 3, 2025, in Sedona, Arizona, the Hongvi'mamant Running Camp welcomed 4 Hopi youth ages 15-16. The purpose of this camp was to provide a daily running experience outside of the Hopi Reservation, while also promoting the importance of sustaining the cultural practices within their villages. Native runners in this age category often cannot afford running camps now priced from \$600-\$1,200 per child. Hongvi'mamant Running Camp provided an opportunity for them to experience a similar camp at no cost to them.

The camp combined physical activity with cultural learning, emphasizing running as both a practice of health and a traditional value. Sessions included teachings on cultural concepts of body and wellness, alongside fitness activities and outdoor exploration.

Workshops incorporated Hopi language and vocabulary lessons, connecting physical exercise with cultural identity. Elders guided discussions on traditional female roles, responsibilities, and cultural expectations, creating space for intergenerational knowledge-sharing.



Last Tetlin Culture & Wellness Camp

The Last Tetlin Culture and Wellness Camp was held June 16-20, 2025, at the traditional home of the Tetlin Peoples in Last Tetlin, Alaska. The camp welcomed 80 Upper Tanana Athabascan youth ages 7-20. Last Tetlin Wellness and Culture Camp brought the entire community together. The location is remote; participants must take an hour boat ride from their Village to their traditional home referred to as the Old Village Site. There is no internet or cell phone service at the Old Village Site, thus allowing participants to fully engage in camp activities.

Activities ranged from traditional crafts such as beadwork and woodwork, bird and plant identification, traditional song and dance, to traditional subsistence activities, such as catching, cutting and drying white fish. Cultural programming focused on traditional practices, language, and lifeways, helping youth strengthen their cultural identity while learning leadership skills. Elders participated as mentors throughout the week, guiding sessions and sharing intergenerational knowledge.

The camp promoted inclusion and community connection, ensuring all participants felt welcome. Health and wellness activities included swimming, traditional foods, and outdoor sessions that supported physical and emotional wellbeing.



O'odham Camp

O'odham Camp was held July 7-11, 2025 in the GuVo District of the Tohono O'odham Nation. They welcomed 24 youth ages 6-17. The Camp is designed to offer Native youth a fun, culturally immersive summer experience that celebrates and preserves the O'odham Himdag, the O'odham way of life. Its purpose is to provide activities that blend traditional language instruction, storytelling, music, dance, and art with hands-on experiences like popover making, clay crafting, and traditional games.

Each morning began with a community circle, where campers were welcomed by trusted staff, cultural educators, and volunteers. These gatherings grounded participants in the O'odham Himdag and set the tone for a day of learning, laughter, and connection. The Camp was staffed by a dedicated team of educators, volunteers, and cultural practitioners, and supported by a wide network of community stakeholders whose contributions were essential to the Camp's success.

Cultural teachings included O'odham traditions, language, and lifeways, giving campers opportunities to strengthen their identity and sense of community responsibility. Elders and cultural leaders guided sessions, ensuring knowledge transfer across generations.

Activities included cemaït making (traditional flatbread), clay crafting and doll making, saguaro fruit harvesting and sitol syrup making (a special syrup made from the saguaro fruit), archery and traditional games, STEM activities, overnight camping, and an excursion to the Ak-Chin Circle Entertainment Center. Youth participated in activities that supported physical health, self-confidence, and cultural pride.



Pit River Language Camp

The Pit River Language Camp, held August 15-17, 2025, at Lassen Volcano Camp, welcomed 200 participants. Campers ranged in age from infants to 18 years. All were from the Pit River Tribe. Language revitalization was the heart of the program. Campers participated in daily Pit River language lessons, songs, and stories, strengthening their connection to culture and reinforcing the importance of carrying forward their heritage. Traditional ecological knowledge was also included, with lessons on food gathering, plant uses, and the interdependence between people and the environment.

The camp focused on building wellness through cultural identity. Activities supported physical, mental, and emotional health by encouraging peer support, storytelling, and outdoor engagement. Youth gained confidence and resilience while spending time in nature and learning together as a community.

The camp was led by the Pit River Tribe's Cultural Resources Office and supported by elders, who shared teachings and guided youth in language and cultural practice. This intergenerational approach ensured that the youngest participants learned directly from knowledge keepers, creating strong cultural bonds and supporting the future of the Pit River community.



Shinnecock Food Sovereignty Camp

The Shinnecock Food Sovereignty Camp welcomed 15 youth ages 8-14 from the Shinnecock Nation. Camp sessions were held between June 27 through August 10. The goal of this camp was to get youth into the natural environment and teach them about the food sources readily available to them through fishing, clamming, and foraging.

The camp emphasized nutrition, wellness, and community connection through traditional foodways. Youth learned about first foods and their cultural and nutritional significance, building awareness of how food sovereignty supports health and identity. Activities combined gardening, harvesting, and shared meals to reinforce the role of food in cultural preservation and wellness.

Cultural teachings highlighted Shinnecock traditions as a first-contact Nation, strengthening participants' understanding of their heritage and responsibility to carry it forward. Elders guided discussions and activities, ensuring that intergenerational knowledge about healthy living, culture, and resilience was passed down.



Tiwahe Glu Kini Pi Summer Horse Camps

The TGKP Summer Horse Camps were held in June and July 2025 at the Sinte Gleska University Horse Ranch. They welcomed 41 participants ages 8-18 from Rosebud and the Sicangu Lakota Nations. Summer Sunkawakan (Horse Camp) offered at-risk youth the opportunity to enhance their understanding of Lakol Wicoun (the Lakota Way of life). The youth also learned how to engage with cultural practices that emphasized caring for all relatives by learning to care for Sunkawakan Oyate (Horse Nation). Through a range of enjoyable healing activities, participants worked to improve their wicozani (health), both mentally and physically.

Each camp session began with Wocekiye (prayer), grounding participants in Lakota traditions. Youth learned horsemanship skills, equine care, and the cultural importance of horses to the Sicangu Lakota Peoples. Activities supported physical wellness, teamwork, and leadership development.

Girls participating in Wicincala (Younger Girls) Dayamp explored traditional roles and responsibilities while gaining confidence through hands-on learning with horses. The camp also emphasized respect, kindness, and community care, ensuring that every participant felt supported. Elders and families played an active role, sharing meals and cultural teachings, and joining in community celebrations such as cookouts. Their involvement provided intergenerational learning and reinforced cultural continuity.



Tunica-Biloxi Language & Culture Summer Youth Camp

The Tunica-Biloxi Language & Culture Summer Youth Camp was held June 9-12, 2025, on the Tunica-Biloxi Reservation near Marksville, Louisiana. They welcomed 57 participants ages 5-17 from the Tunica-Biloxi, Choctaw, Koasati, and Choctaw-Apache Nations and Peoples. The camp's goal was for youth to receive a primer on the Tunica and Biloxi languages and engage in traditional crafts and lifeways of the Tribe.

Cultural programming centered on language preservation. Campers participated in Tunica and Biloxi language classes, as well as lessons in traditional arts, crafts, and songs, including making corn bundles for a Green Corn Ceremony. These activities reinforced identity while promoting intertribal exchange and learning.

The camp emphasized respect and kindness as guiding values, creating a safe and inclusive space for all youth. Wellness activities included physical fitness sessions, like stickball and fishing, as well as crafts, and peer-building exercises designed to strengthen emotional resilience.

Elders played an important role, leading cultural sessions, sharing knowledge, and mentoring youth. Elders were served dinner and guests of honor at the Family Banquet. Their involvement ensured meaningful intergenerational learning and helped campers deepen their understanding of heritage and community values.





Association on American Indian Affairs
6030 Daybreak Circle, Suite A150-217
Clarksville, MD 21029
(240) 314-7155
general@Indian-Affairs.org

DONATE AT
www.Indian-Affairs.org

The Association is a national Native nonprofit.
We do not accept federal funding.