



City of Seattle

Indigenous Advisory Council

2024-2025 Annual Report

The Indigenous Advisory Council is a culturally grounded public commission that acts as a trusted advocate, advisor, and connector among City partners on issues impacting Tribal and urban Native communities.

2024-2025 Highlights

- Developed and presented an **annual workplan and annual report** to Seattle City Council and Mayor's Office to share the collective vision of the Indigenous Advisory Council with City and community partners.
- Identified and advocated for **City budget actions** that impact Tribal and urban Native communities.
- Met with Tribal, community, and City partners to discuss **issues of shared interest** including interjurisdictional opioid responses, culturally attuned healthcare systems, Indigenous approaches to climate resilience, and coordination of aging and disability services in Tribal and urban Native communities.
- Advised eight departments on 16 **City plans, programs, and services** to ensure Tribal and urban Native priorities are elevated among City partners, including:
 - Program design of the Seattle Parks and Recreation's Park CommUNITY Fund to ensure accessibility and applicability of the fund to Tribal and urban Native communities;
 - City of Seattle's design guidelines to Sound Transit and One Seattle Comprehensive Plan to integrate Indigenous values and priorities in city planning;
 - Revisions to the Native Plant Policy to promote Tribal and urban Native priorities in City policy;
 - Review and affirm findings from years of Native engagement that informed the Food Action Plan, One Seattle Comprehensive Plan, select Subarea Plans, Digital Equity Study, and Shape Our Water Initiative; and
 - Continued advisement of programs such as the Indigenous Led Climate Initiatives Fund, Community Solar Program and strategic planning for Aging and Disability Services and Green Seattle Partnership.

In addition to monthly meetings with City and community partners, the Indigenous Advisory Council advanced initiatives aligned with the commission's strategic priorities.

National Recognition: City of Seattle was named an All-America City in 2024, featuring the collaborative work of the Indigenous Advisory Council and Tribal Relations. This award was followed by a feature story in the Fall 2024 National Civic Review by Mayor Harrell and Councilmember Strauss showcasing an innovative example of how cities can support and empower Native communities at the local government level and build strong Tribal-City relations, ensuring that Indigenous voices continue to shape the region's future.



- **10th Anniversary of Indigenous Peoples' Day:** Oversaw investment in four inter-tribal community-led celebrations of Indigenous Peoples' Day. The Indigenous Advisory Council commissioned and coordinated a commemorative event poster, shared marketing assets, and articles featuring Native businesses, artists, and ways to celebrate.



- **Native Youth Engagement:** Partnered with urban Indian organizations on a Native youth listening session and Native youth political engagement summit to promote intergenerational learning, leadership development, and foster healthy civic engagement among young people. Members learned about and amplified Native youth priorities among City departments.



- **Educational Webinar:** Hosted an educational webinar on innovative approaches to affordable housing with City, County, and Tribal governments, urban Indian organizations, affordable housing sector, and community members. The webinar was attended by more than 40 policy makers and practitioners from Tribal Nations, city and county governments, and urban Indian organizations and groups across the affordable housing sector.
- **Tribal Nations Gathering:** Co-hosted a gathering of Tribal and City leaders and staff to discuss issues parks and open spaces. Attendees discussed cultural resources, habitat restoration and management, park development, and programming to identify concrete actions that strengthen relationships and improve Tribal engagement. Read the summary report at www.seattle.gov/oir/tribal-relations.

Policy and Budget Priorities

The Indigenous Advisory Council supports policy and system changes that honor political and racial equity obligations to Tribal governments and Native communities.

Honor Political Relationships

- Codify commitment to Tribal and urban Native engagement
- Create funding set asides for Tribal governments and urban Indian organizations
- Maintain legislative focus on Tribal governments and Native communities
- Develop staff trainings

Advance Racial Equity

- Invest in a spectrum of culturally responsive housing and emergency shelter
- Invest in youth and families
- Invest in gender-based violence prevention and response
- Invest in cultural and social service facilities

Culturally Grounded Advisory Support in Action

Indigenous Knowledge Informs Seattle's Native Plant Policy

Native plants are more than resources: they are relatives, teachers, and the foundation of life across Coast Salish communities. Since time immemorial, native plants like camas and Western red cedar have nourished bodies, healed communities, and built homes and canoes. What some may see today as untamed wilderness are, in fact, lands carefully tended and stewarded for thousands of years. Through this deep relationship, Native communities have sustained themselves and cultivated thriving ecosystems.

Today, decades of land development, urbanization, and climate change have contributed to the destruction of habitat. To address this environmental degradation and restore ecological resiliency, Seattle Parks and Recreation looked to Indigenous knowledge systems and to the people whose roots here run as deep as salal.

Seattle Parks and Recreation manages nearly 12 percent of Seattle's property, providing lush landscapes within the urban environment. In 2025, the department finalized updates to their Native Plant Policy for the first time in 15 years. This was the first engagement of the Indigenous Advisory Council and Tribal Nations regarding the City of Seattle's Native Plant Policy. The Indigenous Advisory Council provided feedback on proposed revisions and recommendations on how to make the policy more comprehensive and inclusive of traditional ecological knowledge and Indigenous values. This input resulted in policy additions on sourcing materials from Tribal enterprises and Native-owned businesses and recognizing the cultural value, ethnobotanical use, and stewardship of native plants by Native communities.

"The re-introduction of native plants is an act of reconciliation for the centuries of settler colonization that resulted in pervasive habitat destruction that still impacts Native communities today," says Suzanne Sailto (Snoqualmie), elder delegate. "Acknowledgment of the use and significance of native plants properly recognizes the traditional knowledge systems that have sustained Tribal communities for millennia and combats the erasure of these systems."

The inclusion of the Indigenous Advisory Council in the Native Plant Policy update has resulted in a more well-rounded policy informed by Indigenous knowledge and values. Prioritizing native plants in an urban landscape and providing education on their cultural importance is an essential step toward revitalizing traditional foods and supporting ecosystem restoration.

