

# SUMMARY REPORT

## MAY 2024



**Seattle**  
Parks & Recreation

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# Tribal Nations Gathering



# Message from Superintendent Diaz

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It is with gratitude that I present this summary report from our first Tribal Nations Gathering. This event marked the first concerted effort of this department to proactively listen and learn from Tribal partners. I would like to thank the Tribal representatives that dedicated time to planning and engaging with Seattle Parks and Recreation. It is our goal that this gathering results in meaningful action and contributes to our shared future where everyone and every ecosystem thrives. This is just the beginning of what we hope will be regular and ongoing discussions and collaborations on parks and open space topics.

This gathering has reminded me that the history of Seattle's parks is a history of settler colonization. In the past 200 years, the land and waters of Seattle have been drastically altered to meet the needs of settler communities. From the regrading of land masses, to the rechanneling and elimination of entire river systems, the ecosystem that has sustained Tribal communities since time immemorial has been violently altered for industrial use and urbanization. The impacts of these changes continue to have a disproportionately negative effect on the many Tribal Nations who steward and protect cultural and natural resources for us all and exercise treaty reserved rights in and around the City of Seattle. Tribal Nations have a vested interest in how Seattle Parks and Recreation manages, protects, and restores the land, shorelines, and waterways of Seattle.

The identity of Seattle's most iconic parks and greenspaces is often attributed to the Olmstead park legacy that sought to preserve and develop park lands throughout the early years of the City's formation. Today, these parks are critical infrastructure to all Seattle residents and guests. Seattle Parks and Recreation manages 489 parks with 99 percent of Seattle residents living within a ten-minute walk to a park. Our park system includes a vast network of outdoor spaces, quality recreation facilities, community centers, and citywide programming. This proud legacy has come at a great cost to the cultural landscape of Seattle that was once shaped by the communities that have long cultivated the land and waters that we all cherish today. It is clear that we have a responsibility to support Tribal Nations in the revitalization of cultural landscapes and education of our park users.

As Seattle Parks and Recreation navigates our journey to address legacies of settler colonization and environmental degradation, we will invest in actions that strengthen Tribal sovereignty and self-determination. We look forward to working with our Tribal partners to support healthy people, a thriving environment, and a vibrant community.

*AP Diaz*





Tribal Nations Gathering participants at Daybreak Star Indian Cultural Center

# Acknowledgements

We thank the elected leaders and staff from Tribal Nations who shared their wisdom, lived experiences, and insights with City leadership and staff.

We thank the representatives from United Indians of All Tribes Foundation, Na'ah Illahee Fund, and Futures Rising who presented on their work to steward the land around Daybreak Star Indian Cultural Center and provide essential land access and educational programming for Native community members.

We thank City of Seattle leadership, departments, and staff who attended, listened, and helped organize this gathering and will act as stewards of Tribal engagement in the days and years to come.

We thank the members of the Indigenous Advisory Council at the City of Seattle, whose ongoing counsel helps shape public policy informed by Indigenous knowledge, values, and priorities.

We thank Port Madison Enterprises and Kiana Lodge for the nourishment of traditional foods sourced and prepared with care and intention.

Lastly, we would like to express our sincerest gratitude and appreciation to the representatives from the following Tribal Nations and City commission who participated in the Seattle Parks and Recreation | Tribal Nations Gathering:

- Muckleshoot Indian Tribe
- Snoqualmie Indian Tribe
- Suquamish Tribe
- Tulalip Tribes
- City of Seattle Indigenous Advisory Council



Elderberry

# Overview

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On January 23 - 24, 2024, Seattle Parks and Recreation was the first City department to convene a Tribal Gathering. Attendees sought to continue the dialogue from the May 2023 [City of Seattle | Tribal Nation Summit](#) by focusing specifically on a subset of parks and recreation topics. The gathering engaged Tribal leaders and staff in relationship building and dialogue with City leaders and staff on issues of cultural resources, habitat restoration and management, park development, and programming, and identified concrete actions that will strengthen relationships and improve Tribal engagement.

This gathering is a milestone in the recognition that Tribal interests in local government extend well beyond the geographic boundaries of local jurisdictions. City policy, services, and utility infrastructure have far-reaching impacts for Tribal Nations and Tribal citizens that live, work, play, and exercise Tribal sovereignty and treaty rights in and around our City and across our region. The gathering created a unique opportunity for City and Tribal representatives to honor our respective authorities to serve our people and protect the lands and waters we share and dialogue about our shared responsibilities and mutual interests.

The first day of the gathering included a panel discussion and presentation by Seattle Parks and Recreation leadership to orient attendees to the responsibilities, physical assets, and financial structure of the department. Tribal leaders then engaged Seattle Parks and Recreation leadership in a listening session to learn about Tribal priorities. Attendees were encouraged to network over a meal featuring traditional foods sourced and prepared by Suquamish Tribal Councilmember Jay Mills and Port Madison Enterprises.

The afternoon session featured land and pond restoration work currently underway at Daybreak Star Indian Cultural Center in partnership with [Na'ah Illahee Fund](#), [Futures Rising](#), and the [Green Seattle Partnership](#).



*Tribal Nations Gathering land restoration tour with Na'ah Illahee Fund and Futures Rising*

The second day of the event was largely attended by City staff and offered an opportunity for intradepartmental conversations that encouraged staff to reflect upon and strategize around priorities and guidance shared by Tribal representatives.

The following sections summarize the themes and shared expectations that we heard from Tribal representatives and identify a set of near- and long-term priorities for Seattle Parks and Recreation.

# Gathering Themes

Tribal leaders and representatives participated in a listening session and engaged in small group discussions to speak to their experiences leading and collaborating on a variety of parks and open space issues. From the City's perspective, the following themes emerged from the Tribal Nations Gathering discussions between the City and Tribal leaders and representatives.

## Intergovernmental Communication and Consultation

Tribal Nations are sovereign governments. Too often, Tribal engagement is integrated into a public community engagement process that fails to honor and recognize Tribal sovereignty. Tribal representatives expressed the need for clear communication from City leaders and staff. Tribal leaders stressed the importance of early and often consultation on anything affecting Tribal Nations and Tribal interests. Some examples shared during the summit included:



*Tribal Nations Gathering at Golden Gardens Bathhouse*

- **Develop a systemized and standardized protocol for Tribal engagement.** Tribal representatives expressed a desire to engage with the City, but acknowledged there are a vast number and scale of requests for engagement that each Tribe receives from federal to local partners in the public and private sector. The City of Seattle has an opportunity to co-develop a more systemized and standardized protocol for Tribal engagement that meets the needs of Tribal and City partners. Participants shared a range of ideas, including:
  - Better defining and creating process around government-to-government Consultation and staff-to-staff consultation,
  - Engage tribal partners in departmental strategic planning to support Tribal priorities,
  - Coordinating Tribal outreach and communication for project level work through a set of primary contact(s),
  - Sharing periodic project lists for early identification of projects of Tribal interest, and
  - Integrating Tribal engagement standards into design guidelines, property agreements, and departmental plans and policies.

- **Engage with Tribal Nations through a government-to-government framework.** In the example of historic preservation efforts, the City of Seattle has several historic preservation districts that are governed by public advisory bodies with varying levels of regulatory powers. These advisory bodies are designed to preserve place-based histories. Tribal historic preservation efforts cannot be adequately addressed through increased representation and/or consultation of these public advisory spaces because this structure inherently obfuscates the government-to-government relationship that the City of Seattle holds with Tribal Nations. The City of Seattle must ensure that Tribal Nations have a clear avenue to engage in a government-to-government relationship to better protect and uplift Tribal historic preservation efforts.
- **Engage early and often in consultation** on any policy, plan, project, program, or action that impacts, or may impact, Tribal interests. Even with the development of systemized and standardized protocol for Tribal engagement, there will be an ongoing need for consistent communication and relationship building with Tribal partners. Meaningful consultation is founded in mutual decision-making, cooperation, and negotiation between governments. Reactionary outreach should be replaced with proactive relationship building that helps us identify issues of mutual interest and concern.

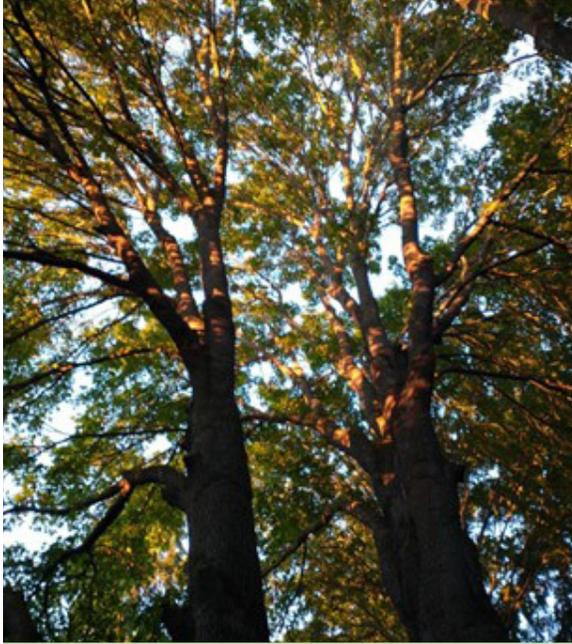


Golden Gardens Park

## Equitable Partnerships

For many Native communities, equitable partnerships are sustained through resourced efforts that honor political relationships and advance racial equity. Some examples shared during the summit included:

- **Invest in and nurture authentic Tribal partnerships.** Authenticity comes through intentional, sustained, and bi-directional partnerships. Resource constraints are a significant barrier for Tribal and City partners in achieving more authentic partnerships. Participants discussed opportunities to better leverage existing resources to advance Tribal partnerships. Examples included:
  - Building into department and project budgets and work plans resources and staff time for Tribal partnerships.
  - Utilizing contracting resources to contract directly with Tribal Nations for language translations, art and design of public spaces, and cultural resource management services, and
  - Partnering to apply for federal, state, and private grants.



Tree canopy

- **Support restitution through co-management, long-term leasing, and disposition of surplus City land.** Tribal representatives reminded the City of the growing national movement to restore Tribal ownership and management of ancestral lands and waters. Examples included:
  - Supporting Tribal co-management of land and water eco-systems. Many Tribal Nations have spent the past 50 years as co-managers of the fisheries in Washington state. At the federal level, Department of the Interior is engaging in unprecedented efforts to increase co-management of federal public lands with Tribal Nations. Local governments have new opportunities to explore co-management of public lands and waterways with Tribal governments.

- Prioritizing Tribal Nations for surplus land disposition and long-term leasing of public land. The City of Seattle currently prioritizes surplus City land for affordable housing developments. Surplus land that is determined to be unsuitable for housing development should be prioritized for acquisition by Tribal Nations. Long-term leasing is another strategy for land management and/or Tribal stewardship that has proven to be an effective tool to increase cultural facilities and land stewardship by urban Native organizations in Seattle.
- **Protect Tribal gathering rights.** Tribal representatives at the gathering reiterated to participants that Tribal Nations must be consulted in the development of policies relating to public foraging on parks and open space lands. Many Tribal Nations reserve treaty rights and engage in traditional gathering and harvesting practices of plants in the region and carry the traditional ecological knowledge needed for sustainable foraging practices.

## Cultural Vitality and Visibility

Since time immemorial, Coast Salish Tribal communities have stewarded the land and water of this region, including today's federally recognized Tribes who continue to protect cultural resources in and around the City of Seattle. In recognition of these inherent relationships and unbreakable connections to this place, Tribal Nations must be included in the development of thriving ecological and cultural ecosystems within their homelands. Some examples shared during the summit included:

- **Support Indigenous placemaking and placekeeping** to create and restore places of cultural significance to Tribal Nations. From traditional and historical place names to more contemporary representations of Tribal Nations in the built environment, there are countless opportunities for Tribal Nations to tell their own stories, histories, cultures, and languages in public spaces. Examples:

- Renaming sites with traditional placenames in traditional languages,
  - Developing a Tribal artist registry for public art,
  - Expansion and improvements to interpretative signage, and
  - Integration of storytelling and Tribal histories into park landscape and building design.
- **Create culturally matched park amenities.** Examples included cleaning, preparation, and cooking areas for traditional food practices that are essential to preserving and revitalizing Coast Salish traditional food systems and increasing the accessibility and utilization of park amenities by Tribal partners.
  - **Invest in culturally matched park programming** such as workshops and access to spaces for education on traditional foods and cultural practices. Tribal representatives expressed interest in workshops on a range of topics including gathering and processing of plant medicines to culturally relevant water safety training, such as open water swim training for Tribal Canoe Journey participants. Park programming was discussed as both contracting with Tribal partners to provide programming for the general public and increasing accessibility for Tribal partners to host events and programming for their Tribal communities in Seattle Parks and Recreation facilities and spaces. Tribal representatives noted that some topics will require measures to protect Tribal traditional knowledge and practices, and others can be appropriately tailored for the general public.



*Traditional food preparation at Camp Long hosted by the City of Seattle Environmental Justice Committee and Muckleshoot Indian Tribe*



## Next Steps

The goal of the Seattle Parks and Recreation | Tribal Nations Gathering was to identify concrete action items that respond to the guidance shared by Tribal representatives. This follow up to the City of Seattle | Tribal Nations Summit has been a critical step in our efforts to better understand Tribal priorities and to commit to improving our relationships and process for engaging Tribal Nations in the work of Seattle Parks and Recreation. We understand that the Tribal Nations Gathering is only the beginning of our work together and we will continue to evolve as we advance in our efforts. To support the next phase of our work, Seattle Parks and Recreation will focus on six core activities that will move us towards longer-term policy and systems changes:

- By May 2024, Seattle Parks and Recreation staff will attend an annual Cultural Resources Summit to build relationships, network, and learn about Tribal cultural resource priorities and best practices in Washington state.
- By August 2024, Seattle Parks and Recreation will convene a departmental workgroup, in coordination with Office of Intergovernmental Relations and the Indigenous Advisory Council, with the mandate to identify policies and protocols that systemize and institutionalize Tribal Relations within the department.
- By December 2024, Seattle Parks and Recreation will outreach to Tribal Nations for existing grant opportunities, assess current resourcing and staffing capacity to identify opportunities to integrate Tribal engagement into existing work, such as through contracting and grant opportunities, integration of Tribal Relations activities into departmental and staff workplans of existing projects, and planning for Tribal engagement in the next Park District funding cycle.
- By December 2024, Seattle Parks and Recreation will visit at least three Tribal Nations to continue relationship building and to orient more department staff to Tribal priorities and projects in our region.
- By January 2025, Seattle Parks and Recreation will report back to Tribal Nations to share the work underway since the Tribal Nations Gathering, including additional actions to be taken.
- On an ongoing basis, Seattle Parks and Recreation will continue to coordinate Tribal engagement for Indigenous placekeeping and placemaking through language integration, native plantings, public art and landscape design, natural resource management, public education, and program and project development.