



City of Seattle

Tribal Nations Summit

2025 Progress Report

SEPTEMBER 16TH, 2025



OFFICE OF INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS, CITY OF SEATTLE

Overview of 2023 Summit

In 2023, the City of Seattle convened the inaugural **Tribal Nations Summit**, marking a historic moment in the City's 154-year history to more authentically honor and respect Tribal sovereignty.

The **Tribal Nations Summit** discussions created an opportunity to shape a new future for City-Tribal government-to-government relationships and further define the role of local government in fulfilling trust obligations.

At the 2023 Summit, Mayor Harrell and the Office of Intergovernmental Relations (OIR) was humbled to host members of the City's executive team, leaders and representatives from 11 Tribal Nations, six urban Indian organizations, 16 City departments, as well as the legislative and judicial branches of City government.

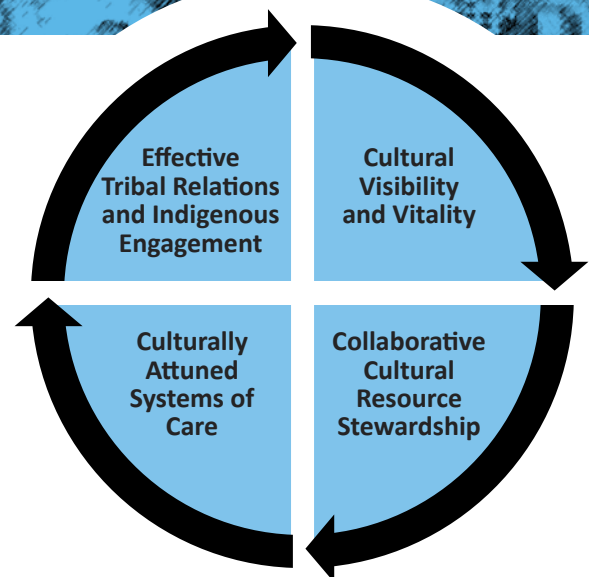




Urban Native leaders sharing remarks at the 2023 City of Seattle | Tribal Nations Summit. Photo credit: Tim Durkan.

The Summit resulted in 23 commitments across four key areas:

- 1) Effective Tribal relations and Indigenous engagement
- 2) Cultural visibility and vitality
- 3) Collaborative cultural resource stewardship
- 4) Culturally attuned systems of care



“It has taken 168 years for this historical meeting to take place...The Treaty of Point Elliott was signed in January 1855...in exchange for hundreds of thousands of acres of land...we were promised a reservation, healthcare, and even vaccinations...These treaties are the supreme law of the land. That is why we are here today.”

—Jay Mills, Councilmember,
Suquamish Tribe and member of the City’s Indigenous Advisory Council

Progress Updates

Since 2023, the City of Seattle has taken important actions to grow trusted partnerships, foster greater collaboration, and follow up on commitments made at the Summit. In 2024, the City released a progress [report](#) outlining key efforts we have taken since the first Tribal Nations Summit. All reports related to Tribal Nations Summit and subsequent work can be found on the Office of Intergovernmental Relations webpage.

Through this work, the City has reviewed our efforts as a whole, in service of the four identified areas of focus and 23 commitments and found:

- The City demonstrates a **foundational commitment** to continue City-Tribal relations in work across all departments.
- Improvements have been made in **internal capacity and coordination** that should be expanded and prioritized.
- There is **emerging progress** for the City to continue and build upon.

Collectively, the City of Seattle has taken action in all of the initial commitments that were made in 2023, and continues to invest in the four commitment areas. Significant work remains to drive sustained and impactful progress.





Foundational Commitment

- The City is increasingly reflecting Indigenous values, cultures, and priorities in City projects and policies.
- There is an increased understanding that Tribal engagement and consultation must utilize a government-to-government framework.
- Work is underway to develop a systemized and standardized protocol for Tribal engagement that supports City and Tribal priorities.

Internal Capacity Building and Coordination

- A new workgroup and tracking tool are helping coordinate Tribal engagement across departments to be more effective partners.
- More City staff now have access to education and training on Tribal histories, governments, and priorities.
- There is broader awareness that effective Tribal relations require dedicated planning, funding, and resources.

Emerging Progress

- The City has increased frequency and consistency of Tribal engagement and consultation requests with at least 5 Tribal Nations and actively engages at 10 Tribal Nations in issues impacting Tribal interests.
- A newly formed City-Tribal workgroup is exploring ways to formalize the City's commitment to Tribal Relations and urban Native engagement.
- Collaborative and proactive efforts are growing in cultural resource stewardship.
- The City has invested in culturally responsive services that support Tribal citizens and urban Native communities.



Muckleshoot Indian Tribe and Suquamish Tribe representatives at honorary naming of Alaskan Way and Elliott Way to Dzidzilalich. Photo credit: Department of Neighborhoods.



Seattle Parks and Recreation, Tribal Nations Gathering Tribal Leaders listening session at Daybreak Star Indian Cultural Center. Photo credit: Department of Neighborhoods.

Indigenous Advisory Council

The City of Seattle | Tribal Nations Summit is coordinated in partnership with the Indigenous Advisory Council (IAC). The IAC is a culturally grounded public commission that serves as a trusted advocate, advisor, and connector among City partners on issues impacting Tribal and urban Native communities. The Department of Neighborhoods provides staffing and program resources to support the IAC, which is composed of nine representatives from Tribal and urban Native communities. The 2025 Indigenous Advisory Council members are:

- Donny Stevenson (Muckleshoot), Councilmember, Muckleshoot Indian Tribe
- Jay Mills (Suquamish), Councilmember, Suquamish Tribe
- Jeremy Takala (Yakama), Councilmember, Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation
- Tia Yazzie (Diné/Navajo)
- Suzanne Sailto (Snoqualmie)
- Esther Lucero (Diné), Seattle Indian Health Board
- Derrick Belgarde (Siletz & Chippewa-Cree), Chief Seattle Club
- Jaci McCormack (Nez Perce), Rise Above

Since 2023, the IAC completed six briefings to Seattle City Council committees to share the vision and work of a culturally grounded public commission, and advised eight departments on 16 City plans, programs, and services to ensure Tribal and urban Native priorities are elevated in local government.



Indigenous Advisory Council members at an annual retreat. Photo credit: Department of Neighborhoods.

FOCUS AREA 1:

Effective Tribal Relations and Indigenous Engagement

Since 2023, the City has acted to improve City-Tribal government-to-government relationships and fulfill our trust obligations.

- The Mayor's Office and Seattle City Council have met with Tribal leadership of at least six Tribal Nations, including 14 visits to Tribal communities or areas of significance to Tribal partners to learn about Tribal priorities.
- The Seattle Police Department's Chief of Police has met with the Indigenous Advisory Council and the Chief of Police of a Tribal law enforcement agency in an effort to better understand the priorities and interests of Tribal Nations and urban Native communities.
- The Office of Intergovernmental Relations (OIR) coordinated a Government-to-Government training from the Washington State Governor's Office of Indian Affairs for City staff and secured a grant to develop eLearnings on Tribal and urban Native engagement.



Seattle Police Department meeting with Suquamish Police Department.
Photo credit: Office of Intergovernmental Relations.



Seattle Public Utilities meeting with Muckleshoot Fish Commission at Cedar River Sockeye Hatchery. Photo credit: Seattle Public Utilities.

FOCUS AREA 2:

Cultural Visibility and Vitality

- The Office of Planning and Community Development (OPCD) increased engagement with Tribal Nations and urban Native communities in the development of the One Seattle Comprehensive Plan resulting in new provisions featuring Tribal and urban Native priorities.
- OPCD contracted with a Native women-owned consulting firm to support the inclusion of Indigenous values, treaty rights, and culture in the planning of urban centers.
- The Office of Arts and Culture (ARTS) supports interdepartmental coordination on 18 public art opportunities featuring Tribal and urban Native artists.
- The Information Technology department (IT) and the Seattle Channel added nine new videos that feature stories from Tribal and urban Native communities.
- Completion of the Seattle Waterfront marks several new public realm projects in partnership with Tribal governments and Native artists.



Honoring Our Muckleshoot Warriors, 2025 Tyson Simmons, Keith Stevenson, Oscar Tuazon. Seattle Department of Transportation Central Waterfront 1% for Art funds Administered by the Office of the Waterfront and Civic Projects and the Office of Arts & Culture.

FOCUS AREA 3:

Collaborative Cultural Resource Stewardship

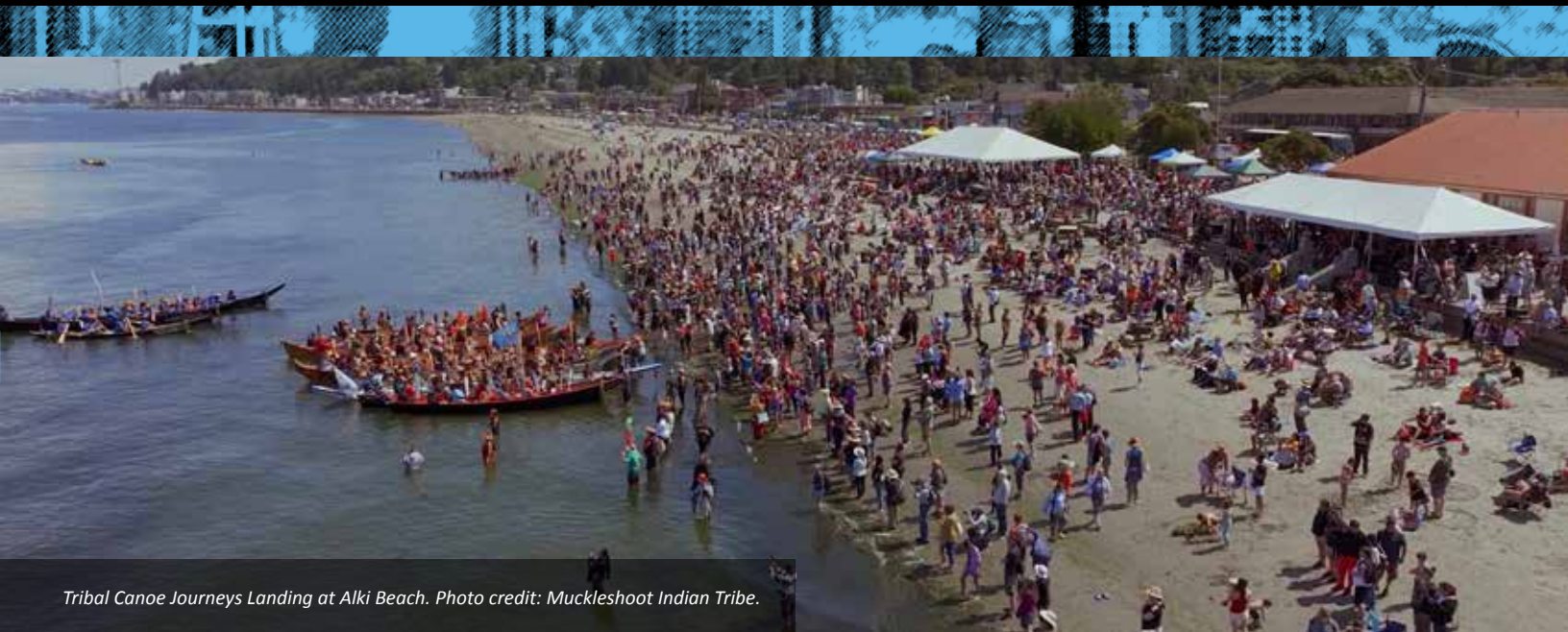
- Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) administers an urban forestry grant to work with a Tribal Nation on land and habitat restoration in the Longfellow Creek basin.
- Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) is proactively seeking engagement with Tribal governments to address fish passage barriers in urban watersheds.
- SPU hosts standing meetings with Tribal fishery departments to discuss the sockeye salmon hatchery and salmon recovery.
- SPU supports ongoing implementation of the Muckleshoot – Settlement Agreement, which includes hunting and gathering in the Cedar River Watershed.
- Seattle City Light (SCL), SPU, OIR, and the Mayor's Office consult with Tribal Nations on the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) relicensing process for the Skagit and South Fork Tolt hydroelectric projects.
- Seattle Parks and Recreation (SPR) hosted a Tribal Nations Gathering in 2024 with five Tribal Nations to explore parks and open space issues. The gathering resulted in six commitments to improve Tribal relations within the department that are addressed in coordination with an internal workgroup. A progress report was shared with Tribal partners and the IAC in February 2025.
- SPR coordinates with Tribal Nations to maintain access at City parks for treaty protected fishing rights and cultural events.
- The Office of Sustainability of the Environment (OSE) provides ongoing coordination of a \$5 million investment in an Indigenous-Led Climate Initiatives Fund under the Green New Deal.

Salmon in creek. Photo credit: Seattle Public Utilities.



Native plant processing taught by Futures Rising. Photo credit: Shanoa Pinkham.





Tribal Canoe Journeys Landing at Alki Beach. Photo credit: Muckleshoot Indian Tribe.

- The Office of Emergency Management (OEM) outreached 16 Tribal Nations and is currently contracted with three urban Indian organizations across King and Pierce counties to participate in the development of Puget Sound Resilience Hubs.
- SDOT is incorporating Tribal priorities to increase fish habitat and canopy coverage at a shoreline street end.
- SPR and the Green Seattle Partnership partners with several urban Indian organizations and educators from Tribal communities.
- SPU and SCL partner with King County and Boeing to construct the cleanup of the Lower Duwamish Waterway (LDW) Superfund site. SPU proactively coordinates with two Tribal Nations to develop agreements that reduce and mitigate the construction impacts on Tribal fishing and cultural practices.

"The plant world represents to us, as our oldest traditional teacher, the lessons of patience, diversity, strength and generosity. Trees and salmon are iconic to the Pacific Northwest, and it is not a coincidence that the two species depend upon each other to thrive. Trees naturally filter the water that the salmon depend on, and the salmon become nutrients for the trees. With this funding opportunity we will provide a visible and viable investment into our Natural Resources which will benefit our personal values and promote safe and healthy neighborhoods."

—Donny Stevenson, Councilmember, Muckleshoot Indian Tribe & member of the City's Indigenous Advisory Council

FOCUS AREA 4:

Culturally Attuned Systems of Care

- The Office of Housing (OH) and the Human Services Department (HSD) have numerous active partnerships, contracts and grants to support culturally responsive housing and emergency shelter partnerships with urban Native community partners.
 - » Since 2023, HSD worked with the King County Regional Homelessness Authority and two urban Indian organizations to support 93 units of culturally attuned shelter.
 - » OH supported an urban Indian organization to create 120 units of culturally attuned permanent supportive housing.
 - » HSD partnered with Seattle City Light and Sound Transit to make two vacant properties owned by the government agencies available to an urban Indian organization for the construction of tiny house villages.
 - » HSD resumed administration of homelessness prevention programs administered by four urban Indian organizations to support households at risk of experiencing homelessness through emergency rental assistance, utility assistance and housing case management.
 - » The City of Seattle sponsored approximately \$6.9 million in 2025 investments to urban Indian organizations for downstream homeless services.



Permanent Supportive Housing unit. Photo credit: Chief Seattle Club.



Dandelion harvest lesson taught by FEED Seven Generations. Photo credit RomaJean Thomas.

- Between 2022-2024, HSD funded four urban Indian organizations to lead community safety initiatives including re-entry support services.
- Mayor's Office on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Unit (MODVSA) provides funding to three urban Indian organizations to provide culturally attuned gender-based violence services.
- HSD contracts with three urban Indian organizations to provide culturally attuned youth and family services. The number of American Indian or Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander people served jumped from less than 1% (11 participants) in 2023 to 19% (414 participants) in 2024.
- HSD oversees a range of aging and disability services in coordination with Tribal governments and urban Indian organizations in King County.
- Seattle Police Department (SPD) is pursuing new technology to better identify race, ethnicity, and Tribal affiliation, improving analysis of American Indian and Alaska Native public safety interactions.
- HSD increased staff awareness on culturally appropriate data collection by meeting with leaders from an urban Indian organization and Native-owned consulting firms.
- The Department of Neighborhoods (DON) and OSE provided funding and support for culturally relevant food programs to five urban Indian organizations in 2024 and seven urban Indian organizations in 2025.
- OSE facilitated the purchase of over 3,000 pounds of wild-caught coho salmon from a Tribal enterprise for the Seattle Public Schools hunger relief program.
- The Department of Education and Early Learning (DEEL) reconnected with the Seattle Public Schools Native Education Program to rebuild relationships with Native youth and families.



Raven Village Tiny Home Village. Artwork: Trilateral Luminescence, 2023, Devin Finley. Funded by the Seattle City Light 1% for Art Fund. Photo credit: Chief Seattle Club.



yahw Indigenous Creatives Collective land rematriation project

Closing



2023 City of Seattle | Tribal Nations Summit group photo. Photo credit: Tim Durkan.

"We are intentional about developing government-to-government relationships. It's going to be based on meaningful and consistent engagement and constructive dialogue centered on the priorities that you are telling us need to be made. We want to provide opportunities for our city officials, our staff, and our residents to learn from the Native people of this land. We want to amplify the voices, experiences, priorities, and histories of the Indigenous peoples of this land."

—Bruce Harrell, Mayor, City of Seattle

The inaugural Tribal Nation Summit was a turning point for the City of Seattle - reaffirming and re-energizing our commitment to meaningful, government-to-government relationships with federally recognized Tribes. Since 2023, the City has deepened its engagement with Tribal Nations and urban Native communities, moving from intention to action. Through consistent collaboration, cultural stewardship, and capacity building, we are working to become more accountable, responsive partners. The Summit continues to serve as both a milestone and a motivator—driving forward our shared vision for equity, respect, and lasting partnership.

Acknowledgments

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

We thank the representatives from urban Indian organizations who provide essential services for Native community members, and whose expertise informed conversations on top issues impacting Native peoples.

We thank City of Seattle leadership, departments, and staff who continuously engage Tribal Nations, urban Indian organizations, and Native community in the issues across local government.

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.



Coyote and the Monsters Yet to Stay I-v1 2022 RYAN! Feddersen Seattle City Light 1% for Art Portable Works Collection administered by Seattle Office of Arts and Culture. Photo credit: RYAN! Feddersen.



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