

Elevating Native Youth Voices: Lessons in Leadership from the NCUIH Youth Advisory Council



Welcome and Introductions

Reflection "Why this Work Matters to ME and to NCUIH"



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Temperature Check: How Are You Arriving Today?

Whatever emoji you choose is welcome here

Drop an emoji in the chat 🙌

☀️ = Feeling energized

🌱 = Ready to learn and grow

💙 = Calm or reflective

🔥 = Motivated and passionate

☁️ = Feeling tired or overwhelmed

Session Objectives

- ❖ Explore why Native youth leadership matters
- ❖ Learn how youth advisory groups build connection and belonging
- ❖ Reflect on ways to uplift youth voice in community spaces
- ❖ Leave with one action to support youth leadership

ABOUT



NATIONAL COUNCIL *of* URBAN INDIAN HEALTH

NCUIH is a national representative advocating for the 41 Urban Indian Organizations (UIOs) contracting with the Indian Health Service (IHS) under the Indian Health Care Improvement Act (IHCIA). NCUIH strives to improve the health of the over 70% of the AI/AN population that lives in urban areas, supported by quality health care centers.



**Native Health
Research &
Development**



**Technical
Assistance &
Capacity
Building
for Providers**



**Policy &
Advocacy**



**Developing
Future
Generations
of Native
Leaders**



**Central
Resource
Distribution
& Funding**

Indian Health System

**Indian
Health
Service**

Federally Run Facilities

Tribal

Contract or Compact Facilities

**Urban
Indian
Organizations**

IHS Funded Native Health Nonprofits



Primary Care

- General medical care
- Diabetes care and prevention
- Health and wellness check-ups
- Vision and hearing screenings
- Immunizations
- Chronic disease care
- Women's health
- Urgent care



Behavioral Health Services

- Mental health counseling
- Psychiatry
- Substance abuse counseling
- Education and prevention services
- Domestic violence counseling



Traditional Medicine

- Sweat lodge ceremonies
- Mena's, women's, and elder's talking circles
- Traditional medicine from traditional healers
- Prayer ceremonies
- Relationship gatherings

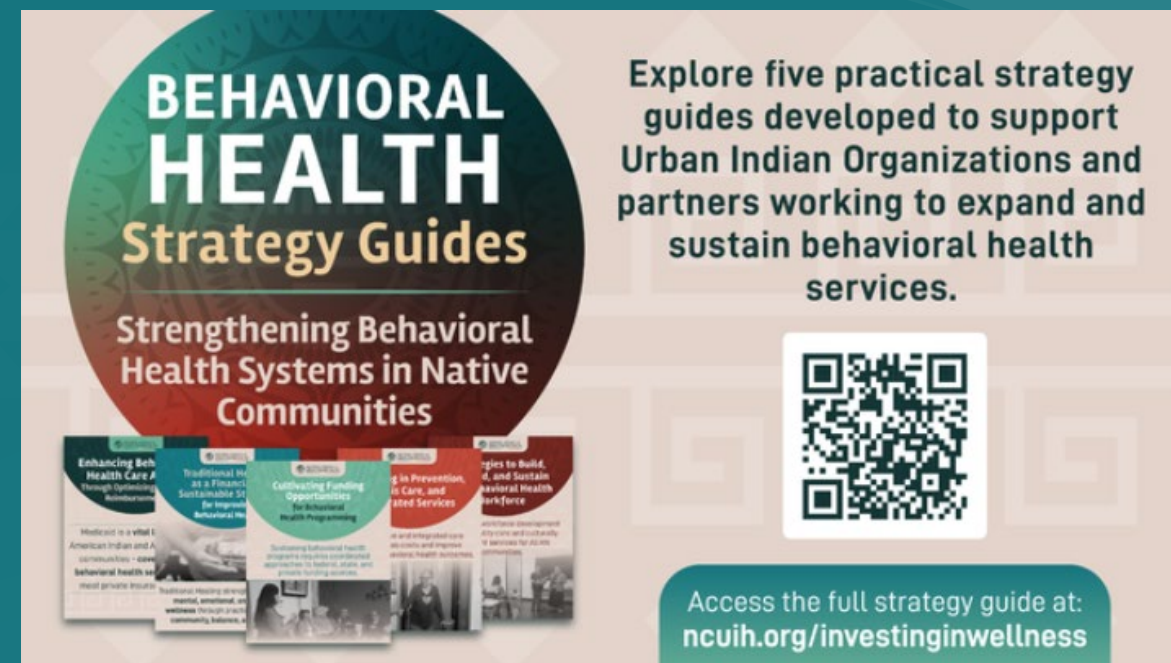


Social & Community Services

- Prevention and education services
- Youth camps and programs
- Elder services
- Domestic violence services and classes
- Job placement
- Nutrition services and classes
- Arts and crafts
- Food assistance

Services provided by Urban Indian Organizations

Investing in Wellness Financing Strategies for Behavioral Health



Why Native Youth VOICE Matters

BELONGING

WELLNESS

LEADERSHIP

When youth are
heard,
communities grow
stronger

*"Youth are Not Just Future Leaders
They are Leaders Right Now"*



About the National Council of Urban Indian Health Youth Advisory Council

Established to strengthen urban Native communities and support the health and wellness of AI/AN youth through culture, connection, leadership, and community support

- Youth led initiative for Native youth 24 and under
- Addressed mental health, cultural connection, suicide prevention, and wellness

About the National Council of Urban Indian Health Youth Advisory Council

The Youth Advisory Council Focused on:

- Youth Led Leadership
 - Mentorship
 - Peer connection
- Behavioral Health Advocacy
 - Storytelling
- Behavioral health awareness
- Safe spaces for Native Youth Voices


NATIONAL COUNCIL OF URBAN INDIAN HEALTH
YOUTH COUNCIL

NATIONAL URBAN INDIAN YOUTH ADVISORY COUNCIL

About The National Urban Indian Youth Advisory Council

- A 12-month program sponsored by the National Council of Urban Indian Health
- A council made up of five American Indian/Alaska Native youth, ages 18-24, who live in urban communities and off-reservation areas
- Inaugural cohort organized in July 2018; four additional cohorts since then
- Each cohort chosen, after a competitive application process

Importance of the Youth Council

- Suicide is the second leading cause of death among Native Youth. [WISQARS Data Visualization \(cdc.gov\)](#)
- According to a recent survey, 23% of American Indian/Alaska Native suicides occurred among youth, 24 years of age and younger. [WISQARS Data Visualization \(cdc.gov\)](#)
- In a recent survey, 41 percent of American Indian/Alaska Native Youth feel sad or hopeless almost every day for two or more weeks in a row, so that they stopped doing usual activities.
- CDC Youth Risk Behavior Survey – Youth Online: [High School YRBS – United States 2021 Results | DASH | CDC](#)



Ways the Youth Council Addresses Risk Factors

- Builds capacity of urban communities to assist urban youth in living healthy lives through community support
- Promotes peer-level awareness and support for youth and young adult American Indians/Alaska Natives living in urban areas.
- Promotes among peers, on a local and national level, awareness of topics including:
 - Substance misuse
 - Trauma
 - Suicide Prevention
 - Mental Health
- Develops a community-driven and comprehensive urban youth suicide and substance abuse response plan for urban Indian communities to provide prevention and recovery support to American Indians/Alaska Native youth aged 24 years and younger.
- To learn more:
 - [Development of CULTURE FORWARD: A strengths and culture-based tool to protect our native youth from suicide \(nih.gov\)](#)
 - [Cultural Connection and Well-being for American Indian Adolescents \(nih.gov\)](#)
 - [Identifying as American Indian/Alaska Native in Urban Areas: Implications for Adolescent Behavioral Health and Well-Being -PMC \(nih.gov\)](#)

Youth Advisory Council Activities

- Temperature checks and wellness discussions
- Youth-led conversations
- Behavioral health campaign work
- Peer support and mentorship
- Leadership opportunities
- Creative and cultural activities
- Group reflections
- Presentation at NCUIH Conference
- Mental Health First Aid Certification



Creating Youth-Centered Space

What makes a space youth centered?

Youth voices are heard and valued

- Safe and judgment free environment
- Opportunities for Leadership
- Respect for what everyone brings to the table
- Wellness prioritized
- Adults listened, supported, and shared space with youth leaders

Reflection: What is one thing adults can do better when working with youth?

Connection and Community in Virtual Spaces

- Begin meetings with check-ins and being present during shared time
- Youth created community norms together
- Create space for youth-only conversations and peer leadership
- Keep meetings interactive through chat, polls, and activities
- Foster safe, respectful, and judgment-free virtual spaces



Creativity Builds Connection



Creative activities helped youth build trust, connection, and conversation

Behavioral Health Campaign

“Culture can be a source of healing, identity, and resilience.”

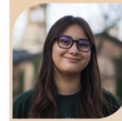
- Raising awareness around mental health and youth
- Culture supports wellness
- Reducing stigma
- Sharing stories and experiences
- Creating peer support systems
- Using social media platforms

Reflection: What cultural practice, value or tradition helps you feel grounded and connected?

NCUIH Youth Advisory Committee Cohorts

NCUIH YOUTH ADVISORY COMMITTEE COHORTS

Current YC5: Keepers of Resilience – 2022 Cohort



Ella Weber
Three Affiliated Tribes
Crookston, MN



Jada Allen
Lumbee Tribe of North
Carolina
Lumberton, NC



Lauren W. Yowelunh
McLester-Davis
Oneida Nation of
Wisconsin
New Orleans, LA



Elinor Ascher
Muscogee Nation
St. Paul, MN



Gianna Lacey-Howard
Occaneechi Band of
the Saponi Nation
Durham, NC

To learn more about YC 2022-23: <https://ncuih.org/yc-cohort-22-23/>

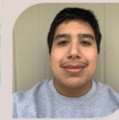
YC4: Rivers of Rejuvenation – 2021 Cohort



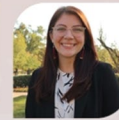
Elena Yellow Bird
Arikara from the Three
Affiliated Tribes
Sioux Falls, SD



McKalee Steen
Cherokee Nation in
Oklahoma
Berkeley, CA



Jayson Fisher
Northern Cheyenne
Billings, MT



Kamryn Yanchick
Seminole Nation
of Oklahoma &
descendant of the
Muscogee Nation



Mariynn Cloud
Member of the Crow
Tribe
Billings, MT



Elizabeth Alexander
Seminole Nation of
Oklahoma
Shawnee, OK



Taejonon Danetclaw
Navajo Nation
Albuquerque, NM



Lauren Etclitty
Navajo Nation
Flagstaff, AZ



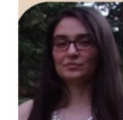
Samuel Stollenwerck
Cherokee Nation
Golden, CO



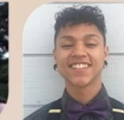
Tia Yazzie
Navajo Nation
West Valley City, UT

To learn more about YC 2020-21: <https://ncuih.org/yc-cohort-20-21/>

YC2: Indigi-Wellness Healer Campaigns #NativeHealing and #IndigiLove – 2019 Cohort



Megan McDermott
Descendant Piegán
Blackfeet & Plains



Quentin Paulsen
Nima Corporation
Anchorage, AK



Czarina Campos
Choctaw Nation of
Oklahoma



Benjamin Sandecki
Cherokee
Claremore, OK



Taylor Francisco
Navajo Nation
New York, NY

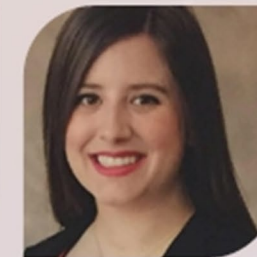
YC1: Indigi-Wellness Champion Campaign – 2018 Cohort



Faith Bowman
Stockbridge-Munsee
Band of Mohican
Nation



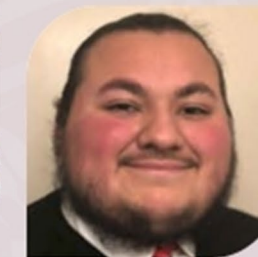
Lala Forrest
Pit River
Shasta Lake, CA



Abby Jessell
Cherokee Nation of
Oklahoma
Stillwater, OK



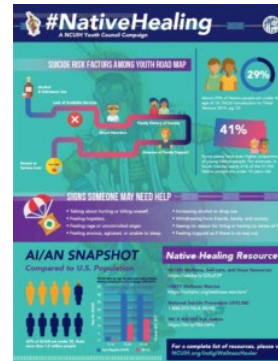
Shoshanna Johnson
Absentee-Shawnee
Tribe of Oklahoma
Norman, OK



Adon Vazquez
Eastern Band of
Cherokee Indians
Dearborn Heights, MI



What Youth Created Together

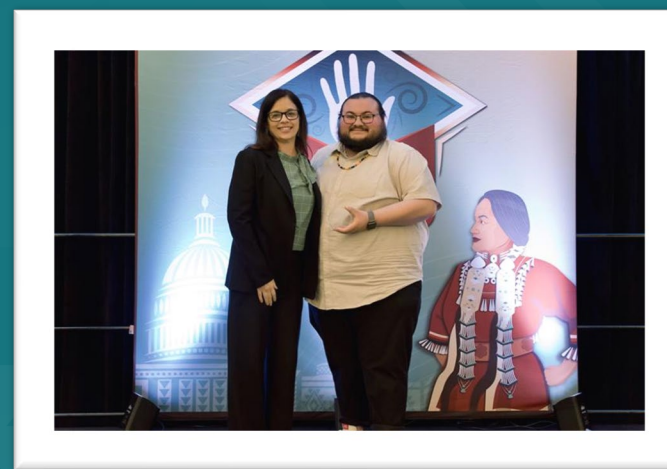
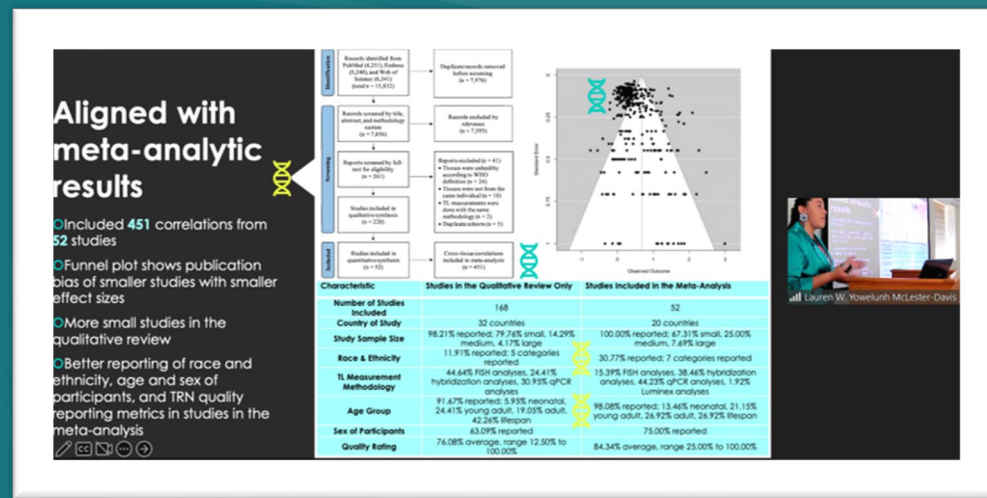


Youth Advisory Council Alumni

Currently, the group consists of 25 members and was created and directed by alumni of past Youth Council Cohorts, independent of NCUIH funding and direction.

NCUIH Youth have continued to participate in the following areas:

- Welcomed new cohorts
- Presenting at national AI/AN conferences
- Participated in Indigenous cross knowledge sharing events
- Inspiring youth via virtual GONAS and other events
- Providing national trainings to build UIOs capacity



Why Youth Belong at The Table

Youth Perspectives Matter Because:

- Youth perspectives help create solutions that are relevant, inclusive and effective
- Youth best understand current challenges
- Decisions impact youth directly
- Diverse voices strengthen communities
- Leadership starts with participation



Finding Your Seat

Ways to Get Involved:

- Join youth councils or leadership groups
- Speak up in community spaces
- Share your story
- Volunteer or mentor others
- Support peers and community wellness
- Find adults who will support and uplift your voice

REMEMBER: Leadership can start with one conversation one idea, and one act of support

Key Lessons From NCUIH Youth Advisory Committee

- Youth Voices Matter NOW
- Connection creates BELONGING
- Culture supports healing and connection
- Safe spaces support growth
- Leadership looks different for everyone
- Small Actions Create Change

Closing Reflection



Closing Temperature Check: Drop one word that describes how you are leaving today.

QUESTIONS?



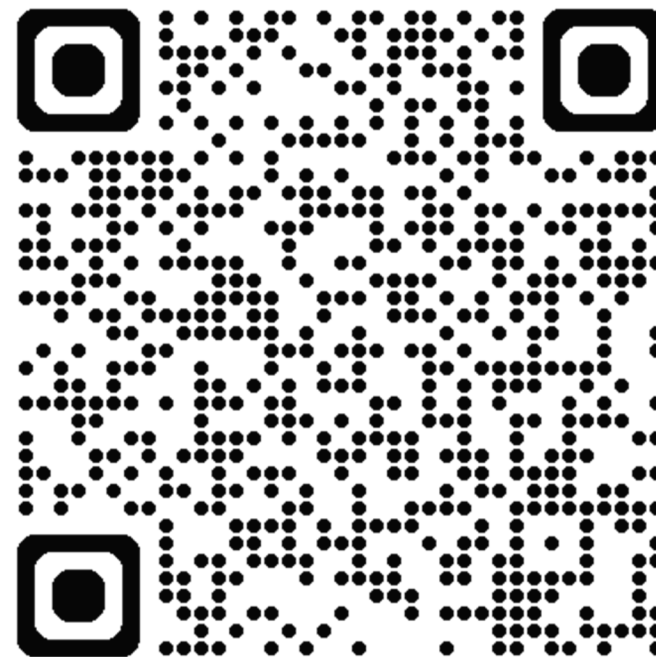
[About](#) [Research](#) [Public Health](#) [Policy](#) [Training](#) [Media and Events](#)

YOUTH ADVISORY COUNCIL

Through the *Native Connections* cooperative agreement with SAMSHA, the National Council of Urban Indian Health's (NCUIH) Supporting Urban Native Youth (SUNY) program proposed to build the capacity of urban communities in order to assist urban youth in living healthy lives through community support. NCUIH's Youth Advisory Council seeks to develop a community-driven and comprehensive urban youth suicide and substance abuse response plan for urban Indian communities to provide prevention and recovery support to AI/AN youth aged 24 years and under. The NCUIH Youth Advisory Council will promote peer-level awareness and support for youth and young adult AI/ANs living in urban areas. Youth Council members will promote among peers, on a local and national level awareness of topics including:

- Substance misuse
- Trauma
- Suicide prevention
- Mental health

[Learn More](#)



NCUIH

NATIONAL COUNCIL *of* URBAN INDIAN HEALTH

