

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

“Indigenous Youth Leaders Arrive to Launch Groundbreaking Leadership Cohort”



Phoenix, Arizona – United National Indian Tribal Youth, Inc. (UNITY) proudly welcomes the **International Indigenous Youth Leadership Cohort (IYLC)** to the UNITY Midyear Conference, taking place **February 6-9, 2025**. This innovative initiative, created by the U.S. Department of State, is designed to amplify Indigenous youth voices in global civic and political participation.

The IYLC brings together six Indigenous youth leaders from Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, and the U.S. to join forces with UNITY’s four Native youth leaders from Hawaii, Idaho, Montana and New Mexico. These exceptional young leaders will share strategies on pressing issues such as preserving Indigenous knowledge and languages, climate resilience, and health equity.

Participants will engage in dynamic discussions during the conference, attend meetings with Arizona tribal leaders and UNITY representatives, and participate in an off-site visit to the Gila River Indian Community. These activities will set the foundation for follow-up virtual programs, extending through September 2025.

The ten IYLC participants include:

- Maricelma Francelino Fialho Cândido (Brazil): An Indigenous Terena woman and biomedical professional focused on infectious diseases in rural Indigenous communities. She also serves as treasurer for the Intercultural Terena Education Institute and is pursuing a master's degree.
- Daisy Lahache (Canada): A Mohawk artist and founder of the Healing Arts Project, Daisy champions Indigenous arts and youth governance, actively advocating for representation and cultural preservation.
- Noamby Lucas-Castillo (Colombia): The first Zenú graduate of the University of Los Andes, Noamby works as a legal advisor for Indigenous women and serves as a Judicial Assistant at the Tribunal for Peace.
- Edna Marly Figueroa Cuc (Guatemala): A Q'eqchi' sociolinguist and educator who founded the "Let's Learn Q'eqchi'" project and empowers Indigenous women through digital literacy and technology.
- Silvia Alejandra Miranda Loredo (Honduras): A law student and founder of the Women with Power Foundation, Silvia empowers women and promotes education, peacebuilding, and cultural preservation.
- Josefina Bautista Peña (Mexico): An Indigenous Náhuatl and Totonac speaker who strengthens educational programs and empowers women through teaching and community leadership.

- Watson Whitford (USA - Montana): A Chippewa Cree and Navajo student of Environmental Horticulture at Montana State University, Watson advocates for cultural preservation and environmental stewardship as UNITY's Male Co-President.
- Mazie Countryman (USA - Idaho): A pharmacy student and President of the Fort Hall Youth Council, Mazie is dedicated to mentoring and uplifting Native youth as the Northwest Area Representative for UNITY.
- Derek Capitan (USA - New Mexico): A civil engineer tackling environmental challenges in Indigenous communities, Derek has been recognized as a UNITY Earth Ambassador and 25 Under 25 honoree.
- Bronson Azama (USA - Hawaii): A political science student specializing in Indigenous politics, Bronson is a dedicated advocate for Native Hawaiian sovereignty and environmental justice, with experience at the United Nations.

This diverse cohort exemplifies leadership, cultural preservation, and advocacy, embodying the mission of UNITY to empower Native and Indigenous youth globally.