



## Rocky Mountain 2023 Mid-Year Regional Report

Members of the Nation UNITY Council,

I have nothing but appreciation for this opportunity that has been granted to me. This is an enormous role to accept as a young Indigenous person attending high school in this modern world. My first experiences with the UNITY organization were as an Earth Ambassador (2021-2022 Cohort). I wanted to continue my advocacy and leadership with UNITY and decided to apply for Rocky Mountain Representative candidacy. This has been one of my best decisions made. As Rocky Mountain Representative I have created a report that will share my advocacy, leadership, conversations, and connections with the Rocky Mountain region youth councils and other leaders.



July 2022

### 2022 National UNITY Conference (Minneapolis, MN)

As always, the Annual National UNITY Conference was an amazing event. Many young Indigenous people traveled to the event from across the country to learn and share about each other. I met with many other tribes and made many new friendships. I met with the Gila River tribal youth that hosted the 2022 Gila River Youth Conference, which I was a keynote speaker for. Making new connections and friendships was a highlight of my time at the UNITY Conference.

During the UNITY Conference Caucus meetings were held for youth to meet each other. A total of 7 youth from the Chippewa Cree and Salish Kootenai tribes attended the Rocky Mountain Caucus meeting. As a candidate for the Rocky Mountain Representative position, it disappointed me to see the low attendance from the Rocky Mountain Region. When I was voted into this position as Rocky Mountain Representative, revitalizing and creating youth councils in my region was my motivating factor. One of my first actions was starting talks about a Chippewa Cree Tribal Youth Council for the Rocky Boy Reservation in Montana. This was a new start of leadership and connecting with youth in my region.

August-October 2022

For my first full 3 months as Rocky Mountain Representative I navigated and learned what it meant to be on the Executive Committee and my responsibilities as a representative. I also started my senior year at the Navajo Preparatory School in Farmington, New Mexico. Attending school in New Mexico and holding the position as Rocky Mountain Representative was a difficult task, but I continued. I was a part of the Navajo Preparatory School Naat'aanii Youth Council and continued to share information with them about UNITY. As a representative I also continued to search for contact information for different youth councils in the Rocky Mountain Region. It was difficult to find youth council contacts as many of the councils dissolved during

the Covid-19 pandemic. Many tribes did not have youth councils either. Many of the Indigenous populations in the Urban settings rarely have youth councils to support their Indigeneity, which I wanted to try and change.

As a new member of the Executive Committee, I used these first 3 months as learning experiences. I attended the monthly meetings for the executive committee and learned my roles and responsibilities. I was amazed by the hard work and dedication of the past executive committees, which makes me want to work even harder to help my region.



November-December 2022

Connections, Healing Circle, Chippewa Cree Tribal Youth Council

As I continued holding the position of Rocky Mountain Representative, I started making progress in connecting with youth councils. I contacted 4 out of 7 tribal offices in the state of Montana in November. When contacting these tribal offices, they explained that they either did not have a youth council or did not recognize their youth council as a tribe. This made my duty as representative a little more difficult. I was able to connect with a Wolf Point youth council that was not recognized by their Fort Peck tribe. Then progress was being made for the Chippewa Cree Tribal Youth Council in Rocky Boy Montana. One of the council members Loni Taylor to charge in the tribal support of the youth council. I continued to share my knowledge



on the process of forming a youth council and how they may become affiliated with UNITY. This was a very big step for the youth of the Rocky Boy Reservation.

In the month of December, I attended the Southwest healing circle hosted by UNITY. As a representative I attended the 2-day event of healing. This was a very awesome event to see youth take charge. During the healing circle I facilitated discussions in my group as a peer guide. I facilitated these discussions alongside the admirable Kaiya Brown, a member of the New Mexico Indigenous Youth Council. Working as co-facilitators we helped our peers understand problems facing their communities that can be difficult to talk about. We made sure to have support and healing within our little circle. Then our peers then created well thought-out solutions to these issues. Lastly our peers came together to present to a mock tribal council about an issue facing their tribe and a solution. These presentations allowed for youth to gain skills in presenting in front of tribal leaders, which can be intimidating. Overall, this was a great experience for myself as a peer guide but also for the youth to continue problem solving for their tribes and communities.



January 2023

### Chippewa Cree Tribal Youth Council and UNITY leadership development training

In the month of January there was great progress for the Chippewa Cree Tribal Youth Council. The youth council became officiated by the tribe and started their duty as young leaders without hesitation. This was very amazing for myself to experience as it was always my dream to see a youth council on the Rocky Boy Reservation. They held their first official on January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2023. I attended the meeting to share information about UNITY and to share encouragement with the new youth council. This youth council will be very beneficial to the Rocky Boy Reservation with dedicated Indigenous youth.



In the month of January, I also attended the executive committee leadership development training. The training was a great way for the executive committee to strengthen connections with each other. As an executive committee we also reviewed the roles of each UNITY cohort. These work sessions were very rigorous but rewarding when seeing that executive committee making decisions that will benefit many Indigenous youth across the nation. My favorite part of the training was when the executive committee came together unanimously to solidify the new UNITY resolution. The decision to continue with the “Restoring the Spirit of Native Youth” resolution but make revisions and make it our own was very rewarding. The new resolution “Healing the Spirit of Native Youth” embodies the state that many Indigenous youth councils across the country are in. As an executive committee we also did many activities

that strengthened our bonds. This cohort of UNITY Executive Committee Members is a beautiful one. Each of the members of the executive committee creates beneficial input and allows us to lead the many youth councils across Turtle Island.





Future February-July 2023

I plan to continue reaching out to youth councils in the Rocky Mountain region. I plan for larger numbers of Rocky Mountain Region youth councils to attend the National UNITY Conference. We have many inspirational, problem-solving youth in Montana and Wyoming. I am excited to meet with more tribal youth councils such as the Crow, Fort Peck, and Blackfoot. I am also very excited to watch the Chippewa Cree Tribal Youth Council grow. I will continue to do my best as a leader for these youth councils in the Rocky Mountain Region. Please feel free to reach out and connect with me, I will be glad to speak with you.

Ahé'hee/Thank you,

Watson Whitford  
Rocky Mountain Representative  
National UNITY Council Executive Committee