



NATIONAL UNITY COUNCIL

MIDYEAR REPORT

2025

PREPARED BY
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

TABLE OF CONTENT

- 01 UNITY Network
- 02 Executive Summary
- 04 Co-President's Message
- 05 Demographic Information
- 06 Our Team
- 08 Great Plains Region
- 09 Midwest Region
- 10 Northeast Region
- 11 Northwest Region
- 12 Pacific Region
- 13 Rocky Mountain Region
- 14 Southeast Region
- 15 Southern Plains Region
- 16 Southwest Region
- 17 Western Region

UNITY NETWORK



UNITY's Mission is to foster the spiritual, mental, physical, and social development of American Indian and Alaska Native youth, and to help build a strong, unified, and self-reliant Native America through greater youth involvement.

UNITY Defined: UNITY is a national network organization promoting personal development, citizenship, and leadership among Native American youth.

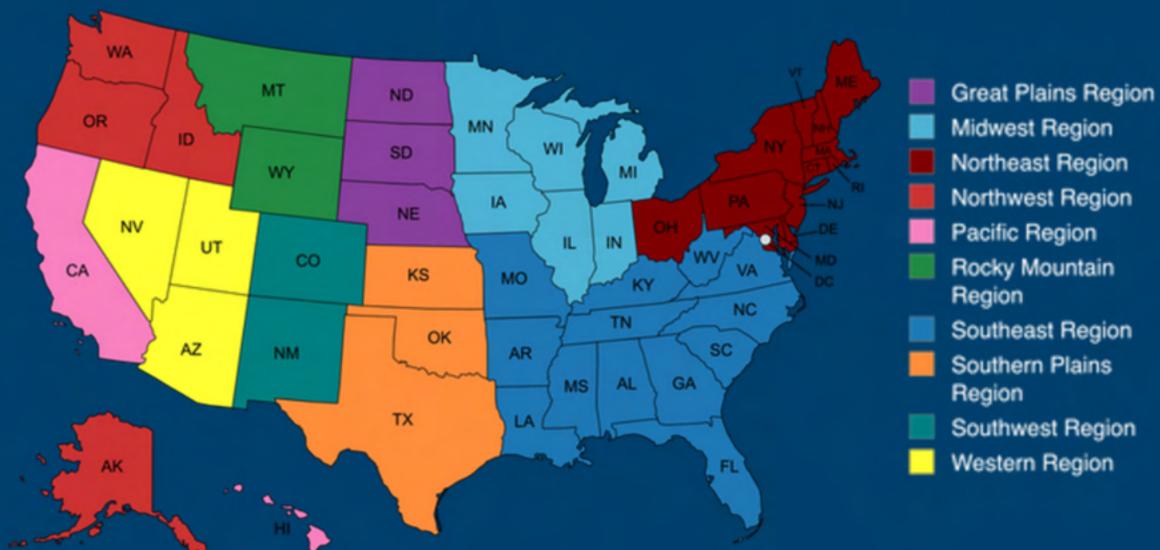
UNITY has a long (40+ years) and impressive track record of empowering and serving American Indian and Alaska Native youth. UNITY is well regarded among the nation's Native American organizations, tribal leaders, and government officials.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Pursuant to Article IV, Section 8 of the National UNITY Council Constitution & Bylaws, The Executive Committee derives its authority from the National UNITY Council and shall provide a minimum of four written reports on its activities to the Council each year. One report will be presented at the annual National UNITY Conference and another at the National UNITY Council Mid-year Meeting. The other two will be delivered in accordance with a schedule decided upon and announced by the Council during its annual business meeting at the National UNITY Conference.

The Midyear Report serves to showcase the efforts and accomplishments of the National UNITY Council Executive Committee as they act on behalf of the National UNITY Council between its yearly business meetings. The report will encompass demographic information regarding meetings and meet-ups, and it will also feature highlights from each region. In these highlights, Representatives will reflect on their past accomplishments and outline their plans for the remainder of their term on the Executive Committee.







“ CO-PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

To UNITY Youth,

Greetings from your Co-Presidents and UNITY Executive Committee! We hope this message finds you well and in good spirits. The UNITY National Council Executive Committee has had an incredible year thus far. We have all been working very hard but also working together to create safe spaces for native youth and for UNITY! We are so excited to bring you along and share what we’ve been working on and show you some of our highlights from this year so far.

As an Executive Committee, we have all had to go through many life experiences since taking on our leadership positions, yet, we have been learning new skills and techniques to better navigate through life as native youth leaders. As we look back on the opportunities the Creator has given us during the year 2025 going into 2026, we are reminded how grateful we are to be your UNITY Representatives. We as your representatives accumulate the information from your youth councils, you and the events we get to attend. We are the voices for those who cannot share.

We recognize all that Native Youth do within their communities and we see your strength, power, heart, and your willingness to always help others. You all inspire hope within us and that is why we are so inspired to do more to help our communities and encourage others to do more for theirs.

It is with the most pride and joy that we share with you all the astonishing progress of your UNITY Regional Representatives. Each of these individuals comes from different areas of the Turtle Island and travels together to create and bring positive changes in communities all over Indian Country. We hope you enjoy the National Conference. Now may we present to you the 2025 UNITY Mid-Year Report.

In UNITY,

MAZIE COUNTRYMAN
FEMALE CO-PRESIDENT

WATSON WHITFORD
MALE CO-PRESIDENT

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

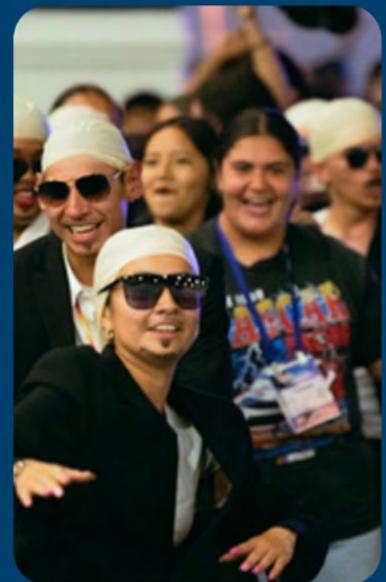
This demographic overview highlights the activities undertaken by the Executive Committee from July 2025 to January 2026. The report provides a breakdown of the number and types of meetings held, details on Native Youth Meet-Ups, and a comprehensive list of outreach opportunities attended by Executive Committee members.

6	Regular Meetings
1	Special Meetings
5	Native Youth Meet-Ups



EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE EVENTS PROMOTING UNITY AND TRAINING NATIVE YOUTH

- **American Indian Science and Engineering Society (AISES) National Conference** - Minneapolis, Minnesota
- **National Indian Education Association (NIEA) Convention** - Spokane, Washington
- **National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) Convention** - Seattle, Washington
- **Healing Circle** - Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
- **Earth Ambassadors Midwest Regional Gathering** - Grand Traverse City, Michigan
- **Earth Ambassadors Southeast Regional Gathering** - Fort Lauderdale, Florida
- **Earth Ambassadors Western Regional Gathering** - Scottsdale, Arizona
- **Earth Ambassadors Pacific Regional Gathering** - Hilo, Hawaii



OUR EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE



Watson Whitford

Male Co-President
Chippewa Cree/ Navajo



Mazie Countryman

Female Co-President
Arapaho/ Shoshone/
Shoshone Bannock/Navajo



Jamie Crowe

Vice-President/
Southwest
Pueblo of Tesuque



Liliana Mars

Secretary/Northeast
Narragansett Tribe/ Navajo



Weston Bird

Great Plains
Mandan, Hidatsa, Arikara
Nations (MHA)



Gabriel Loonsfoot

Midwest
Pokagon Band of
Potawatomi Indians



Tia Butler

Northwest
Confederated Tribes of
Siletz Indians



Alina Sanchez

Pacific
Wilton Rancheria Tribe



Rhiannon Eaglespeaker

Rocky Mountain
Blackfoot/ Kiowa/
Southern Cheyenne



Ethan Hedgepeth

Southeast
Cherokee/ Tuscarora



Victor Organista

Southern Plains
Prairie Band Potawatomi



Amaya Escalante

Western
Pascua Yaqui Tribe



GREAT PLAINS REGION

Representative: Weston Bird

greatplains@unityinc.org



TERM HIGHLIGHT

The highlight of my term would have to be attending the 82nd Annual NCAI Conference. This was especially meaningful because I was able to represent my region and my tribe on stage in front of hundreds of people, including many tribal leaders. I also had the opportunity to run a workshop, educating youth on the importance of advocacy. During the workshop, youth formed groups to present a problem to a tribal leader along with a proposed solution, encouraging critical thinking and active participation. Seeing their creativity, confidence, and dedication to their communities was incredibly inspiring and reminded me of the power of youth voices in shaping the future.

EVENT HIGHLIGHT

The MHA Youth Council hosted a Handgames tournament with other schools in the area. This event was a highlight because Native youth had the chance to socialize, play traditional games, and enjoy traditional foods. Held during Native American Heritage Month, these tournaments are a meaningful way to celebrate culture, strengthen community connections, and bring people together in a fun and engaging way.



REGIONAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The MHA Youth Council hosted a small powwow in White Shield, ND, where students and staff had the opportunity to showcase their traditional styles to the youth. Shaylynn Bird, a renowned fancy dancer, spoke about her experiences with dancing and shared her personal story, inspiring the next generation. The Arikara Chief also addressed the importance of preserving and revitalizing our culture, emphasizing the role of youth in keeping traditions alive. It was a meaningful event that celebrated heritage, fostered learning, and strengthened community connections.



LOOKING AHEAD TO THE FUTURE

Looking ahead, I hope to continue expanding our work to other youth councils across the Great Plains region. I aim to create more opportunities for youth to connect, share ideas, and collaborate on projects that make a difference. My goal is to inspire others to get involved and make a lasting impact, building on the momentum we've started within my local youth council and spreading that energy to communities across the region.

MIDWEST REGION

Representative: Gabriel Loonsfoot

midwest@unityinc.org

TERM HIGHLIGHT

A highlight of my term so far has been receiving the title of Wshkabéwes, also known as Mr. Potawatomi, during the 2025 Potawatomi Gathering hosted by the Match-E-Be-Nash-She-Wish (Gun Lake) Tribe in Michigan. It was a true honor to be given this title and to compete alongside the other contestants. Since then, I have traveled across Turtle Island, attending powwows and events while proudly representing the entire Potawatomi Confederacy.

EVENT HIGHLIGHT

An event highlight of my term was attending the 82nd Annual Conference of the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI). The breadth of knowledge gained and the connections made during this conference were truly invaluable. I had the opportunity to engage with numerous influential leaders and respected figures from across the nation, which greatly expanded my perspective on national tribal advocacy. I am deeply grateful for this experience, as it strengthened my leadership skills and reinforced my commitment to serving our communities.

REGIONAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS

One of my regional accomplishments during my term as Midwest Representative has been actively supporting and connecting with youth councils across the Midwest. This included advising youth programs, building relationships between tribes, and representing the region at gatherings and events to ensure youth voices were heard and supported at a broader level.

LOOKING AHEAD TO THE FUTURE

I am looking forward to developing a Midwest Regional Conference modeled after UNITY's National Conference, with the long-term goal of expanding this initiative to all regions nationwide.



NORTHEAST REGION

Representative: Liliana Mars

northeast@unityinc.org



TERM HIGHLIGHT

One highlight that truly impacted my second term as the Northeast Representative was the National Conference in San Diego. I chose this as my first highlight because I was re-elected and had the opportunity to spend meaningful time with my region during our caucus meeting. Although the time was short, we made the most of it by playing games, getting to know one another, and working through regional business together. My second highlight was the fall regional meetup with the Rocky Mountain Region. I chose this because so many youth councils joined the call and shared incredible suggestions and ideas. During this meetup, my region expressed a strong desire for an in-person regional gathering, which inspired me to begin logistical planning. Overall, the future of the Northeast Region looks bright, and I am excited for what's to come.



EVENT HIGHLIGHT

The monthly food distributions I have had the honor of helping organize have truly become my biggest highlight. While food distributions were mentioned in my previous reports, this experience allowed me to further solidify my leadership role and contribute more meaningfully to my community. As a result, the monthly food distributions have been the defining event highlight of my second term.

REGIONAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS

A regional accomplishment I am especially proud of is seeing increased participation within our region. While I've mentioned this before, it continues to be meaningful to witness youth engagement grow. I love seeing returning members, youth sharing updates on social media, and, most recently, having someone ask me how they could join Unity in the same role I hold as Northeast Representative. That moment truly warmed my heart. I will support them every step of the way, because it's my region that inspires me to go above and beyond and to be the best representative I can be.

LOOKING AHEAD TO THE FUTURE

There are so many things I'm looking forward to in my region's future. I'm excited to cheer on the new representative and see what all the youth have planned for themselves. Most importantly, I am looking forward to organizing an in-person Northeast regional gathering—a space for singing, dancing, sharing accomplishments, networking, and supporting one another. And if I don't accomplish this goal myself, I am more than willing to help the next representative make it happen!



NORTHWEST REGION

Representative: Tia Butler

northwest@unityinc.org

TERM HIGHLIGHT

My term highlight was attending the National Congress of American Indians National Conference in Seattle, Washington. Hearing the UNITY Co-Presidents address the general assembly on the top 10 issues facing Native youth was powerful, and it was inspiring to see Tribal leaders motivated to take action. UNITY also hosted a workshop with the NCAI Youth Commission, where I had the opportunity to speak on environmental issues in our communities and lead discussions on plant teachings, exploring how they reconnect us to our culture and support overall health and well-being.

EVENT HIGHLIGHT

My favorite event this year was setting up a booth at the first Siletz Every Child Matters Powwow in September. Youth learned about our Youth Council, UNITY programs, and created prayer ties and banners to honor loved ones affected by boarding schools. The entire Powwow was youth-led, with the drum, emcees, whip man and woman, and head dancers all Siletz Tribal youth. It was inspiring to see youth from my community actively participate, address important issues, and come together to uplift our communities.

REGIONAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS

A regional accomplishment was participating in the NCAI workshop held in the Northwest region. I led discussions on plant teachings using cards that included teachings and reflection questions, helping youth explore the depth of traditional plants and medicines. These discussions highlighted Indigenous resilience, persistence, and traditional lifeways in the face of environmental challenges. Many attendees were Northwest youth, and it was meaningful to share and learn from the diverse cultural teachings of different communities in the region.

LOOKING AHEAD TO THE FUTURE

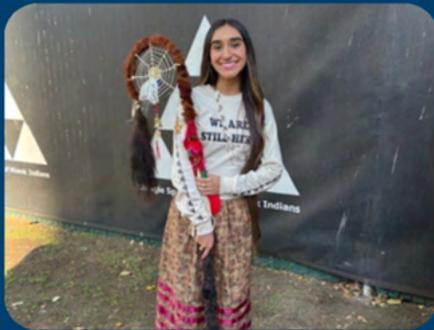
After attending events so far, I look forward to participating in more across the Northwest Region and visiting youth council events in each state. I hope to strengthen connections, address important issues, and share cultural teachings with one another.



PACIFIC REGION

Representative: Alina Sanchez

pacific@unityinc.org



TERM HIGHLIGHT

Michuksus, oya set. I'm Alina Sanchez, Miwok from the Wilton Rancheria Tribe in Sacramento, California, and I serve as the Pacific Region Representative for the National UNITY Council (NUC) Executive Committee. A highlight of my term was attending the National UNITY Conference in San Diego with the Native Sisters Circle and my sister, Alyssa. Inspired by NSC founder Leticia Aguilar, I embraced this role to develop my leadership and advocacy skills. Serving as Pacific Region Representative has allowed me to connect with Indigenous youth, learn about community-specific issues, and work alongside passionate representatives and co-presidents. Holding this position has been personally rewarding, and I hope it has been valuable for others as well.



EVENT HIGHLIGHT

A significant event I attended during my term was the Earth Ambassador's Pacific Region Gathering in Hawai'i. The gathering featured hands-on conservation, community projects, and daily practices, fostering sacred connections and lasting memories. It was powerful to connect with both Hawaiian and California Indigenous communities, sharing culture, knowledge, and strengths while building a sense of belonging and pride. My favorite moment was spending time at the water, reflecting and grounding myself with Mother Earth—a reminder that I was at home while feeling welcomed and respected. This experience reaffirmed the importance of unity, reciprocity, and responsibility to our people and the land, inspiring me to carry these lessons forward in my leadership and advocacy.



REGIONAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS

A regional accomplishment for the Pacific Region was the 2nd Annual Native American Heritage Month Parade on November 8, 2025, in Downtown Sacramento. The parade featured over 100 participants, including cultural dancers, floats, singers, horses, marching bands, and more, celebrating Indigenous culture and resilience. I attended with my organization, Native Sisters Circle, and helped create an acorn tree float highlighting the word "acorn" in local Native languages, along with UNITY, elders, and the California Native Leadership Council. The parade honored active Native communities, raised awareness, and fostered cultural identity. It was a milestone for our region, breaking cycles of underrepresentation, honoring ancestors and future generations, and establishing a tradition for years to come.



LOOKING AHEAD TO THE FUTURE

I'm excited to attend the UNITY 2026 Midyear Conference in Phoenix, Arizona, and connect with youth from the Pacific Region and across the nation. I look forward to learning from workshops, keynote sessions, and Earth Ambassador presentations, as well as seeing the adoption of resolutions that amplify youth voices and guide advocacy efforts nationwide.

ROCKY MOUNTAIN REGION

Representative: Rhiannon Eaglespeaker

rockymountain@unityinc.org

TERM HIGHLIGHT

The first half of my term was truly exciting, marking my very first step into UNITY! I began meeting so many incredible people from my region and connecting with youth aged 5 to 24, which quickly became the highlight of my term. I love having meaningful conversations, especially when others share their ideas and suggestions, making those connections even richer. As I met more people, I noticed patterns in what different tribes need and how they support their communities. It's inspiring to see so many tribes working together, and some of their creative approaches could serve as ideas for other UNITY groups. Everyone I've met so far has been incredibly inspiring, fueling my motivation to keep working hard for the youth of Montana, Wyoming, and even some in Canada!

EVENT HIGHLIGHT

Working with little kids was my favorite part of the Midyear term because of their natural love for learning and listening. Their curiosity and enthusiasm inspire me to keep learning so I can help them grow. It's amazing how eager they are to learn about dancing and about themselves!

REGIONAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS

My regional accomplishments have been a meaningful journey, rooted in my experiences on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation. My partner and I have taught kids social dance, beading, the significance of regalia, and traditional games. Working with students from kindergarten through 12th grade has been joyful, and we've built strong connections. I love working with the future of our people and look forward to supporting even more young learners.

LOOKING AHEAD TO THE FUTURE

As a new representative, I'm eager to reach more kids in Wyoming and Montana and work closely with my people. I believe this is a meaningful way to make a difference and to help youth grow and thrive. While it will be challenging at times, I'm excited to put in the effort needed to make it happen and to create positive experiences for those I work with. This feels like the start of something important, and I'm ready to face the challenges with determination, enthusiasm, and an open heart.



SOUTHEAST REGION

Representative: Ethan Hedgepeth

southeast@unityinc.org



TERM HIGHLIGHT

The main highlight of my term so far was attending the Earth Ambassador Gathering in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. This experience stood out because I learned more about the work of the Earth Ambassadors and the environmental projects each of them leads. I also gained insight into Florida's environment, particularly the Everglades, and how every plant and animal plays a role in the ecosystem. Additionally, I had the opportunity to learn about the history, traditions, and culture of the Miccosukee Tribe. Most importantly, the gathering inspired me with new ways I can contribute to protecting and caring for the environment.

REGIONAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS

I have participated in multiple meetings and events with the ECU Native Organization. At the ECU Open House, I shared what the organization represents, and at the "Beyond Standing Rock" Q&A panel, we discussed Indigenous sovereignty, environmental justice, and tribal control. I have also attended youth council meetings in North Carolina to share information about deadlines and introduce others to UNITY. Additionally, I attended the Earth Ambassador Gathering in Florida, where I learned about various environmental projects, cultural traditions, and the history of local tribes, particularly the Miccosukee Tribe. I also attended the powwow in Raleigh, North Carolina, held in honor of Native American Heritage Month, where I spoke with attendees about UNITY and answered their questions, and helped raise awareness about the importance of cultural preservation and youth involvement.



LOOKING AHEAD TO THE FUTURE

I'm very excited for all the upcoming events with ECU's Native Organization and for the many youth council meetings ahead. I look forward to continuing to encourage more Native youth to attend UNITY conferences, where they can experience the inspiration, learning, and meaningful connections that these events provide. Most of all, I'm eager to see everyone at Midyear and Nationals, where we have the incredible opportunity to come together, grow as leaders, and strengthen our community as one united group. I'm also excited to share experiences, ideas, and traditions with others, fostering collaboration and a deeper sense of connection across our region.



SOUTHERN PLAINS REGION

Representative: Victor Organista

southernplains@unityinc.org

TERM HIGHLIGHT

A highlight of my term was attending the Healing Circle Training at the First Americans Museum in Oklahoma City, OK, where I connected with Native youth and their advisors from Kansas and Oklahoma. The training was an enriching experience that emphasized the importance of community, connection, and shared healing. The skills and insights gained will serve these youth well, both academically and personally, and empower them to bring positive change back to their communities. The Healing Circle not only bridges cultures but also fosters a strong sense of belonging and unity among participants.

REGIONAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS

A key regional accomplishment has been receiving awards for the media work my team produces at Good Morning Indian Country and participating in numerous workshops focused on storytelling and media training. I am proud to see many clubs in the Southern Plains region addressing the top three issues by hosting events that support the spiritual, mental, social, and physical health of our communities.

LOOKING AHEAD TO THE FUTURE

I look forward to serving my community in every way possible and continuing to strengthen connections with tribes and youth across the Southern Plains region, supporting their growth, voices, and initiatives along the way.



SOUTHWEST REGION

Representative: Jamie Crowe

southwest@unityinc.org



TERM HIGHLIGHT

As my 2025–2026 term began back in July, I faced my share of challenges, yet I never lost sight of why I am in this position. Even when things felt difficult, I reminded myself of the incredible work Native youth across each region are doing to spark positive change in their communities. One of the highlights of my term was traveling to the Southern Plains region to participate in a Healing Circle Training, hosted at the First Americans Museum in Oklahoma City. Being surrounded by such inspirational Native youth brought me immense joy. It is always remarkable to witness the change young Native people strive to create in their communities. Each of you has ideas that can go a long way, even when it doesn't seem immediate. Beginning conversations about the significant issues we face as Native people is a powerful first step. Never dim your light in the face of adversity—your resilience and strength will pave the way for a brighter future.

REGIONAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Southwest Region, I am forever grateful for you and for the opportunity to serve in this position. I have witnessed so many great accomplishments, even from the sidelines. As we head into the new year and the final half of my term, I remain committed to providing as much support as I can. Each of you has inspired me with your dedication and resilience. A major accomplishment for our region has been the continuation of a youth council that has faced loss and challenges. My youth council is the reason I am where I am today, and I understand how vital these councils are in supporting Native youth. Even small efforts—encouraging members to stay engaged, reminding them of why they are part of this—can make a meaningful difference in starting or sustaining a youth council.

LOOKING AHEAD TO THE FUTURE

As my final term as Southwest Representative continues, I am excited for the months ahead, especially as our 50th Anniversary National Conference approaches in Oklahoma City. UNITY has given me incredible opportunities for which I am deeply grateful. This organization and this position have helped me grow in countless ways and have shaped me for the better. I look forward to connecting with all of you and witnessing the positive change you are driving in your communities. It starts with you! Thank you! KuudaWoHah

WESTERN REGION

Representative: Amaya Escalante

western@unityinc.org

TERM HIGHLIGHT

The most rewarding part of my term has been learning from my Regional youth—their cultures, traditions, and visions for the future. Visiting their communities and participating in cultural exchanges allowed me to learn their ceremonies, hear their languages, and see how they honor their way of life. These experiences built meaningful connections and deepened my understanding of the resilience and diversity of Native youth. Sharing my own culture in return created moments of mutual learning and respect, strengthening my pride, responsibility, and connection to my heritage.

EVENT HIGHLIGHT

The Western Earth Ambassador Gathering brought together youth from the Western Region in Scottsdale, Arizona, for learning and connection. Participants explored the elements of Mother Earth and environmental stewardship while visiting the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community to learn about cultural practices and environmental initiatives. Through shared dialogue, youth strengthened regional unity and were encouraged to take this knowledge back to their home communities for lasting impact.

REGIONAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS

A key regional accomplishment of my term was amplifying the voices of Western Region youth by creating intentional spaces for them to share their ideas, concerns, and visions. Through collaboration and open dialogue, youth exchanged solutions and supported one another across the region. The Western Fall Meet-Up was especially impactful, allowing youth concerns to be elevated to the Executive Committee and shared at the National Congress of American Indians Conference, ensuring Native youth voices were heard at the national level.

LOOKING AHEAD TO THE FUTURE

As the next part of my term begins, I am excited to continue building relationships and staying accessible for youth across the Western Region. My goal is to foster collaboration, cultural sharing, and leadership development, creating spaces where every youth feels heard, valued, and inspired to make a difference. I remain committed to representing our youth with dedication and intention, helping ensure their voices guide decisions, inspire change, and strengthen the bonds that unite our communities.



THANK YOU

 953 E Juanita Ave. Ste C
Mesa, Arizona 85204

 (480) 718-9793

