



## **National UNITY Council Resolution: 1-19-2026**

### **Title: Restoring Balance: Healing Trauma & Ending Violence in Native Communities**

**WHEREAS**, the National UNITY Council (NUC) represents American Indian, Alaska and Native Hawaiian youth from more than 300 affiliated youth councils across 34 states, making it the largest and oldest Native youth leadership network in the United States; and

**WHEREAS**, UNITY's mission is to foster the Spiritual, Mental, Physical, and Social development of American Indian and Alaska Native youth; and

**WHEREAS**, the NUC provides Native youth with a unified platform to identify challenges, develop culturally grounded solutions, and advocate for the health and well-being of their communities; and

**WHEREAS**, on June 30, 2025, during the National UNITY Conference in San Diego, California, more than 130 Native youth leaders from UNITY's 10 geographic regions, representing over 60 affiliated youth councils across 23 states, convened for the annual NUC Business Meeting; and

**WHEREAS**, this gathering included region-based discussions, youth-led deliberations, and analysis of data collected from 836 respondents to the National UNITY Council Survey, reflecting one of the largest youth-driven data sets in UNITY's history; and

**WHEREAS**, national data demonstrates the urgency of addressing Native youth challenges, including:

- **Substance use rates** among Native youth that remain higher than the national average for the same age groups;
- **Suicide rates** for American Indian and Alaska Native youth that are among the highest of all racial and ethnic groups in the U.S.;
- **Violence victimization rates**, including Missing and Murdered Indigenous People (MMIP), that disproportionately affect Native communities, especially Native women, girls, and Two-Spirit youth;
- **Educational inequities**, including lower high school graduation rates and limited access to culturally responsive curricula;
- **Historical and intergenerational trauma**, linked to boarding schools, relocation policies, and systemic inequities, continuing to impact youth mental health, identity, and community well-being; and

**WHEREAS**, these youth voices, combined with national data, confirm that Native youth continue to face urgent challenges requiring coordinated leadership, culturally based approaches, and meaningful youth engagement; and

**WHEREAS**, through a collaborative and consensus-driven process, the National UNITY Council formally identified the most pressing challenges facing Native youth in their home communities today;

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, the National UNITY Council hereby adopts the following as the Top Ten Issues Facing Native Youth for 2025–2026:

1. Substance Abuse
2. Mental Health Disparities
3. Generational Trauma
4. Health Disparities
5. Lack of Native Representation in Educational Curriculum
6. Violence Against Native People
7. Bullying and Lateral Violence Within Native Communities
8. Suicide and Self-Harm Prevention
9. Problems at Home
10. High Dropout Rates

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that in addition to adopting these ten issues, the National UNITY Council Executive Committee selected two issues as national priorities requiring immediate focus:

1. **Generational Trauma**
2. **Violence Against Native People**, including MMIP/MMIW/MMIW2S+

These two issues will guide UNITY’s national advocacy, training curriculum, and leadership initiatives for the upcoming year.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the National UNITY Council Executive Committee encourages all UNITY-affiliated youth councils to implement Community Service Projects addressing these priorities, such as:

#### **Suggested Projects for Generational Trauma**

- Workshops focusing on identifying generational trauma
- Intergenerational Talking Circles: providing safe spaces to discuss history, emotions, and community challenges.
- Healing Through the Land Program: addressing trauma through land-based healing and stewardship, such as
  - Youth gardening focusing on ancestral foods and medicines
  - Land restoration volunteer days.
  - Nature walks incorporate talking circles or mindful practices.
- Art as Healing Initiative: Allowing art to become a culturally relevant therapeutic tool that restores pride, identity and emotional expression, while providing creative outlets to process emotions and trauma, such as
  - Creating murals representing healing, ancestors, or tribal history.
  - Youth-led exhibit on “What Healing Looks Like to Me.”
  - Workshops in beading, drumming, regalia making, or carving
- Cultural Revitalization Workshops: reconnecting youth with traditions lost or interrupted due to colonization or boarding school trauma, such as
  - Language learning circles led by fluent speakers

- o Seasonal culture camps (ex. Plant gathering, fishing, canoe building, land teachings).
- Intergenerational storytelling and oral history- allowing Tribal youth to reclaim cultural narratives, connect with elders, and strengthen identity, such as
  - o Youth interviews with tribal elders about resilience, traditions, and historical experiences
  - o Create a digital archive (ex. audio, written, video)
  - o Host “story nights” for the community
- Workshops on mental health, coping skills, and cultural identity
- Community mural or art projects symbolizing healing and resilience

### **Suggested Projects for Violence Against Native People**

- MMIP awareness: Identifying MMIP/MMIW/MMIP2S by creating posters, videos, or social media campaigns
- Host a community walk or red dress display designed by youth
- Healthy Relationships and Consent Education Awareness
  - o Providing workshops on boundaries, consent, digital safety, and warning signs of abuse.
  - o Youth-led peer support or mentorship groups.
- Self-defense and personal safety workshops.
- Violence Prevention Through Cultural Identity
  - o Language workshops tied to traditional teachings on respect and self-worth.
  - o Youth Presentations such as “What My Culture Teaches About Safety.”
- Partnerships with tribal victim services or advocacy programs
- Youth-led campaigns promoting respect, safety, and healthy relationships

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that all UNITY youth leaders are encouraged to issue a Call to Action within their home communities by:

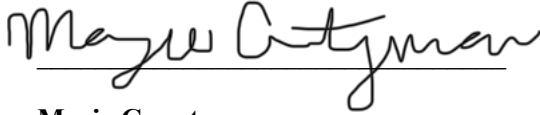
- Raising awareness about these issues through presentations, social media campaigns, and local forums
- Engaging tribal leaders, elders, and organizations in culturally grounded solutions
- Developing youth-led initiatives promoting healing, safety, cultural strength, and community unity
- Reporting successes and lessons learned to the National UNITY Council, inspiring youth across Indian Country

**BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED**, that these youth-identified priorities and action steps shall guide UNITY’s national programming, advocacy strategy, and collaborative partnerships for the coming year, ensuring that Native youth voices remain at the forefront of community-driven change.

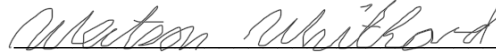
**CERTIFICATION**

This resolution was adopted on January 19, 2026, during the National UNITY Council Business Meeting held during the UNITY Midyear Conference at the Sheraton Downtown Phoenix in Phoenix, Arizona, with a quorum present and concurring.

**APPROVAL:**


  
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**Mazie Countryman**  
Co-President, National UNITY Council

  
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**Watson Whitford**  
Co-President, National UNITY Council

**ATTEST:**

  
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**Liliana Mars**  
Secretary, National UNITY Council