

Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians (ATNI) Youth Committee Report

Presented by Johnny Buck, Youth Committee Chair

ATNI Youth Committee Report – November 2024

The ATNI Youth Committee convened to discuss strategic initiatives that prioritize Indigenous youth empowerment, access to educational and professional development opportunities, and the integration of cultural and policy frameworks to support long-term youth engagement. This report outlines key discussion points, proposed solutions, and strategic next steps.

1. Centering Youth in Tribal Programs

- Addressing the challenge of sustainability by removing financial barriers to youth participation in tribal programs.
- Encouraging tribal leaders to advocate for systemic changes that ensure youth programming is embedded in long-term organizational planning and funding structures.
- Reimagining program accessibility to make youth initiatives more inclusive, sustainable, and impactful.

2. Salmon Curriculum Development

- Recognition that existing Salmon curriculum is outdated and does not fully convey the current realities of environmental threats to Salmon populations.
- Proposal to develop an Indigenous-centered curriculum that integrates traditional ecological knowledge, storytelling, and place-based education to strengthen student connections to Salmon and environmental stewardship.
- Ensuring that tribal perspectives and priorities are embedded in the curriculum and aligned with the cultural heritage of individual tribes.

3. Children's Funding Project

- Overview of a report from the previous year that analyzed federal funding complexities and proposed strategies for increasing tribal capacity.
- Development of a fiscal mapping and cost modeling framework to assist tribes in leveraging funding streams and securing sustainable financial support for youth programs.
- Establishment of funding coordinator positions to support tribes in securing and managing financial resources for youth development initiatives.

4. Expanding Youth Access to Professional Development & Leadership Opportunities

- Creating pathways for Native youth to gain industry experience, access scholarships, and develop leadership skills.
- Strengthening partnerships with national and regional organizations to provide structured professional development opportunities.
- Identifying "boots-on-the-ground" leaders who can mentor and guide youth in navigating leadership pathways.
- Exploring the creation of a **Northwest Regional Breakout Session** at national youth summits to focus on tribal priorities.

5. ATNI Youth Forum Implementation (May 2025)

- Addressing barriers to participation for student-athletes due to conflicts with sports schedules.
- Exploring solutions such as integrating sports into the Youth Forum agenda, working with the host tribe to facilitate participation, and valuing sports as a tool for leadership development.
- Strengthening support for local youth councils, increasing engagement and meeting frequency, and ensuring that youth voices are amplified in decision-making processes.
- Enhancing capacity-building efforts to empower youth councils within their respective communities.

6. Strategic Partnerships & Funding Opportunities

- Investigating potential partnerships with **N7 (Nike's Native American initiative)** to support youth development programs, particularly those involving sports and leadership training.
- Exploring funding streams to support a **regional basketball tournament or other sporting events** as an avenue to engage student leaders who may otherwise be unable to participate in ATNI youth programming.
- Leveraging partnerships with national organizations to enhance the scope and reach of the ATNI Youth Committee's initiatives.

Next Steps

1. **Youth Forum & Leadership Development:**
 - Formalize **solutions for student-athlete participation** in the ATNI Youth Forum by coordinating with the host tribe and exploring sports-integration models.
 - Develop **capacity-building toolkits** for local youth councils to strengthen engagement and leadership opportunities.

- Expand **regional breakout sessions at national convenings** to focus on youth-specific issues in the Northwest.
- 2. **Partnerships & Funding Initiatives:**
 - Pursue potential funding and sponsorship from **N7 and other Native youth-focused organizations** to support sporting events and leadership programming.
 - Explore **cross-sector partnerships** to enhance youth access to industry experiences, scholarships, and leadership development opportunities.

The ATNI Youth Committee remains committed to prioritizing our youth by ensuring that their voices, leadership, and cultural knowledge are integral to tribal policies and initiatives. Through innovative curriculum development, capacity building, and strategic partnerships, we aim to remove barriers to youth participation and create lasting, systemic change.

We look forward to the continued collaboration and support of ATNI leadership and member Tribes in advancing these critical youth initiatives.

Respectfully submitted,

Johnny Buck
Youth Committee Co-Chair, Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians (ATNI)