

Leading with Tradition

Native American Community
in the
Portland Metropolitan Area



Tilikum Crossing - Bridge of the People
Tilikum is Chinuk Wawa (word) for "people" or "family"

Leading with Tradition

Portland's Native community is diverse, vibrant and growing; it has grown by nearly 16% in the last 10 years and outpaced the Portland regional population growth and is nearly 70,000 strong (MSA, US Census 2010). We live here and we thrive here. We are numerous. The Portland urban Native community is descended from over 380 tribes and many of us are multi-tribal and multi-ethnic. We represent varying degrees of tribal affiliation: some of us are tribally enrolled and some of us are not, but we all have ancestral ties to our tribes. Some of us are enrolled citizens of local tribes with reserved treaty rights to fish and gather in the Columbia and Willamette Rivers, but many of us are citizens or descendants of more geographically distant tribes. We come to this city for as many reasons as there are clans and people, and our stories are powerful.

The Portland Metro area rests on traditional village sites of the Multnomah, Wasco, Cowlitz, Kathlamet, Clackamas, Bands of Chinook, Tualatin Kalapuya, Molalla and many other tribes who made their homes along the Columbia River, creating communities and summer encampments to harvest and use the plentiful natural resources of the area.

After European contact, what followed for the indigenous people of the Portland area was a series of territorial and then federal policy decisions designed to eliminate and later assimilate Native people. The 18th and early 19th centuries brought diseases that decimated populations, often killing 9 out of every 10 people (Boyd: 1999). The federal Boarding School Era policies, which lasted from the mid-1800s

through the 1960s, marked the beginning of a long campaign to integrate indigenous people into the Western culture. "Kill the Indian and save the man" summarized the philosophy that underlay most government policies of the era (Pratt: 1879). Federal Relocation Policy, which began in the 1950s, forced over a third of the Native population to relocate to seven major cities, including Portland (Fixico: 2002).



Termination of federal recognition of many tribes began in 1954. Under the Western Oregon Termination Act (1954) and the Klamath Termination Act (1954) a large number of Oregon tribes had their governments abolished, lands taken and social services revoked. In 1977, the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians would be the first Oregon tribe to regain its federally recognized tribal status; the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde and Klamath Tribes have subsequently had their Termination repealed by an act of Congress, and other tribal communities have been federally recognized after decades of struggle. There are still tribes in Oregon for whom termination remains a bitter reality, and even for

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tribes who have been reinstated, its effects are still felt. In response, thousands of our Native families came to Portland to seek jobs, a place to live and community. In the 2010 US Census, the Portland MSA - a census bureau defined metropolitan region that includes Multnomah County and parts of three other counties - reported that there were 20,857 Native Americans of one race and additional 48,107 multiracial Native Americans living in the Portland Metro area.

Currently, Native people count disproportionately among the urban poor. We experience the highest rates of homelessness, poverty and unemployment of all ethnic groups; depression, addiction and diabetes impact us in numbers far exceeding the norm. We constitute 24% of all children in foster care in Multnomah County, and only 37% of our high school students living in Portland graduate on time (Portland Schools Foundation: 2006).

Even with our large population and the strong evidence of need, resources have not been equitably distributed to our community. There are false perceptions that we no longer exist and chronic undercounts, inaccurate data and stereotypes about what we look like perpetuate this misconception. It is commonly believed that our education, health care and other social support systems are fully paid for by government funding or gaming/casino revenues. These misunderstandings lead to policies and decisions that limit our access to social services and other community resources in the city where we live.

Despite the barriers, we continue to foster our culture and celebrate our heritage. We are successful, contributing members of the city of Portland. We pay taxes, we volunteer, we vote, we share our heritage

and we care about the collective future of our children and of this community. There are well over 20 Native organizations in the area, run by and staffed with Native people, and our combined resources represent over 200 million dollars in revenue that go to local taxes, businesses and services. Our population is young and growing; over 40% of our community is under the age of 25 (US Census 2000). Some of our most important work revolves around preparing our youth to become the future leaders of this city, their tribes and our community.



We are passing on our many strengths and assets. We serve the community and we help each other. As distinct and urban tribal peoples may be, we have a collective vision of what we want for our children and families. We work to connect with other urban Native people; to create a common place to meet and reconnect to each other, our ceremonies and cultures. We want to be recognized and treated with respect. We want our cultures and religions to be valued. We want safe, affordable housing, access to employment options and equal opportunities to build community. We have important and diverse indigenous values and worldviews that contribute to the livability and uniqueness of Portland, and we see ourselves as part of its future



Contributing Organizations

For more information and to support Portland's Native American Community, Please see the list of contributing organizations

Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians
www.atntribes.org ☐ 503.249.5770

Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians Economic Development Corporation
www.atntribes.org/edc ☐ 503.249.5770

Alaska Native Brotherhood – Camp 49 Columbia River
https://www.anbangsc.org/local-camps/camp-49
503-481-7533 and 503-775-9400

Bonneville Power Administration Tribal Affairs (BPA)
www.bpa.gov/corporate/About_BPA/tribes

Bow and Arrow Culture Club
503.984.7303

Center for Healthy Communities – Oregon Prevention Research Center at OHSU
www.oregonprc.org ☐ 503-494-1126

Concerned Indian Citizens
503.285.4474

Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde*
www.grandronde.org ☐ 800.422.0232

Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians*
www.ctsi.nsn.us ☐ 503.238.1512

Cowlitz Indian Tribe*
www.cowlitz.org ☐ 360.577.8140

Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (CRITFC)
www.critfc.org ☐ 503. 238.0667

Good Spirit
chuckhunt@yahoo.com ☐ 503.515.2053

National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA)
www.nicwa.org ☐ 503.222.4044

Northwest Native American Center of Excellence at OHSU
www.ohsu.edu/nativehealth ☐ 503.494.9905

Native American Program, Legal Aid Services of Oregon (NAPOLS)
503.223.9483

Native American Youth and Family Center (NAYA Family Center)
www.nayapdx.org ☐ 503.288.8177

Northwest Indian Veterans Association
http://www.nivavets.org ☐ 360.696.4061 Ext 33413

Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board (NPAIHB)
www.npaihb.org ☐ 503.228.4185

One Sky Center
www.oneskycenter.org ☐ 503.970.7895

Our Native American Business and Entrepreneurial Network (ONABEN)
www.onaben.org ☐ 503.968.1500

Oregon Native American Chamber
www.onacc.org ☐ 503.894.4525

Portland Indian Elders Association
ravart@pacifier.com • mizzbuckie@comcast.net • 503.349.5187

Portland Indian Leaders Roundtable
www.portlandindianleadersroundtable.org

Portland State University Indigenous Nations Studies Program
www.pdx.edu/nas ☐ 503.725-9098

Portland State University Institute for Tribal Government
www.tribalgov.pdx.edu ☐ 503.725-9000

Portland Public Schools Title VI Indian Education
www.indianed.pps.k12.or.us ☐ 503.916.6499

Portland Two Spirit Society
www.portlandtwospiritsociety.org ☐ 971-231-4999

Tribal Leadership Forum
www.tribalgov.pdx.edu/forum.php ☐ 503.647.7734

Wisdom of the Elders
www.wisdomoftheelders.org ☐ 503.775.4014

*A Tribal Nation with Offices in the Portland Area

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