

To view information on the North Sound Indigenous Futurity Alliance on North Sound ACH's website, [click here](#).

*The Futurity Alliance's History, continued:*

With the leadership and guidance from Eliza as the chair of the Indigenous Youth Conference planning committee, the committee set a goal to have 25 Indigenous youth and/or young leaders from the North Sound region in attendance at the inaugural conference; this goal was met when 27 Indigenous youth leaders attended the two-day conference.

The first day of the conference was focused on sharing community resources about mental and physical health services, and suicide, drug, and bullying prevention programs. Eliza opened the time together with her vision for the conference: to get youth active and involved in their communities. Kyla Polasky and Michelle Polasky co-hosted the conference with Eliza and led us through a Land Acknowledgement and icebreakers. The attendees then heard from Liz Baxter, as the first keynote speaker. Liz shared some of her experiences growing up in New York and some of her knowledge attained while on her path as a professional and leader in the work relating to health, access, and equity. Liz also shared her personal and professional "why" or the motivation behind the work that she does. Next, the youth leaders connected with organizations that are working across the region to support the health and well-being of young people and specifically Indigenous people:

- Colleen Echohawk, Executive Director of Chief Seattle Club reminded attendees that they are brilliant and are not alone in the work they do and seek to do. Colleen expressed that Indigenous young people have the power to pursue their dreams and to make the world a better place.
- Jacque Julian, Executive Director of the Communities of Color Coalition, grounded the conversation in the systems that shape experiences. Jacque also discussed that leaders must advocate for equitable change from classrooms to neighborhoods and that leaders can create spaces that are welcoming and inclusive to everyone.
- Erin Montgomery, Community Health Educator from Mt. Baker Planned Parenthood, shared an overview of the youth programs and health resources available at Planned Parenthood. The Roo app makes it easy to ask questions about sexual health, relationships, and growing up. It's free and private.
- Page, Manager of the Queer Youth Project at Northwest Youth Services, described all the ways that Northwest Youth Services make teens feel safe and welcome, especially LGBTQ+ youth. Resources like emergency housing, resume help, and free counseling are all available at Northwest Youth Services.

- Michaela Vendiola, Project Manager at North Sound ACH, shared how her personal and professional journey came together for this conference--and the inspiration she draws from youth leaders in her community. North Sound ACH curates resources from partners across the region, including this list for Indigenous youth.

To conclude the first day, Eliza, Kyla, and Michelle closed the conference with a raffle and closing remarks and reflections on the day.

The second day of the conference centered discussions on cultural resources that support Indigenous youth and young people in the North Sound region. The youth leaders reconnected by listening to Bob Marley (with a little Zoom dancing and raffle prize drawings) before diving into the afternoon together. The first session of the second conference day featured two speakers sharing their experiences and cultural resources:

- Darrell Hillaire, Lummi Nation elder and founder of CSSP, shared how he takes care of his family and community every day. As a leader, mentor, and visionary, Darrell intentionally holds love and possibility in his heart.
- Thomas Ghost Dog, Project Coordinator from We R Native, described how We R Native meets the needs of Indigenous youth: the team asks Indigenous youth what they want and need first and foremost. We R Native has resources on health, relationships, culture, and much more. Ask Auntie is a popular resource for seeking advice and guidance; the text line is free and private with We R Native staff who are available to answer any questions that Indigenous youth and young people might have about any and all topics.

The final session of the conference featured Dr. Evan Adams, Chief Medical Officer of the First Nations Health Authority. Dr. Adams is commonly known as being an actor for many years and his role as Thomas Builds-the-Fire in the film *Smoke Signals* (1998) before becoming a medical doctor. Dr. Adams discussed some of his experiences growing up as a First Nations person, facing racism, and the importance of believing in yourself to achieve your dreams. Currently, Dr. Adams is the Chief Medical Officer with the First Nations Health Authority, responsible for the health and well-being of more than a million Native people across Canada. "Your job and my job is to keep our balance. Remember all the good things."

Throughout the planning and during the duration of the two-day conference, Eliza successfully emphasized that the hope and intention was for youth to leave the conference full of knowledge to help them in their everyday lives and inspire them to become more active in their communities. The planning committee has continued to meet and has gained additional youth and young leaders from the success of the inaugural conference."