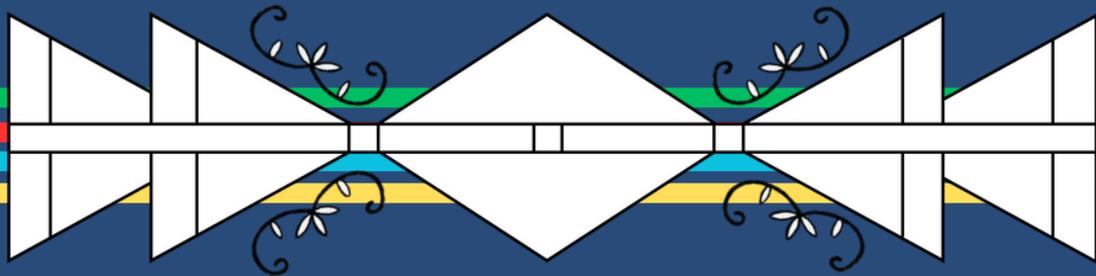


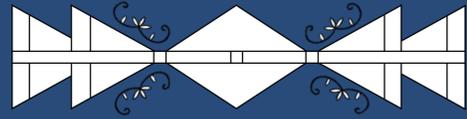
Ilíiaitchik: Indigenous Correspondents Program 2022-2023



Annual Report



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WELCOME

A Note From Our Program Coordinators

The Ilíiaitchik: Indigenous Correspondents Program (ICP) is a 10-month community and skill-building program designed to support 10-12 Indigenous university students in environmental storytelling and communication.

Jointly supported by Planet Forward, a project of The George Washington University School of Media and Public Affairs, the Native FEWS Alliance, UArizona's AIRES Education Initiatives and the Indigenous Resilience Center (IRes), the program's ultimate aim is to create a space for Indigenous storytellers to sharpen their communication skills, showcase their stories to a national audience, and build a supportive community of fellow Indigenous writers, filmmakers, audio producers, and artists in the process. The program name - "Ilíiaitchik" (Phonetic spelling: "Ih-lia-it-chick") derives from Biiluuke/Crow, meaning "to speak good words." Selected with JoRee's guidance, this name reflects our program's goal of amplifying Indigenous voices and fostering community-building through effective storytelling.

We hope to accomplish these objectives through each participant publishing and editing a storytelling piece on Planet Forward's platform after working with our Indigenous Editor, in addition to having participants learn about diverse storytelling techniques during monthly skill-building workshops led by Indigenous communication experts.

What started out as a challenge to Planet Forward in fall 2021 - to support a vision of creating a space for Indigenous-centered stories to be told - has since grown into a successful program involving participants across Turtle Island.

As testament to the impact of this year's program, we had three participants' stories selected from over 140 entries across 30 states to be among a handful of finalists in Planet Forward's 2023 Storyfest competition.

But what impacted us the most this year, even more than these accolades, was the overwhelming generosity of everyone who shared their knowledge and time with us. Thank you to our workshop leaders, mentors, UofA and GW staff - as well as Tohono O'odham Nation community members who hosted us at this year's Native FEWS Gathering. Thank you for supporting us on this journey as we learn and grow together.



JoRee (left) and Alexander at the 2022 Planet Forward Summit.

Kchi wliwni,

Alexander Cotnoir
GW Program Manager

Ahookashiile,

JoRee LaFrance
UA Program Manager

OUR MISSION & PILLARS

Our mission: To support greater participation by Indigenous students in multimedia environmental communication spaces, via a program that centers their voices, builds community, and brings their unique perspectives to the successful Planet Forward platform and beyond.

Our values: To accomplish the above mission, we focus on the following four pillars throughout the Ilíiaitchik: Indigenous Correspondents Program (ICP):

1. **Personal Growth:** Our Personal Growth pillar is focused on empowering individuals to reclaim their narratives and voices, fostering personal growth, increased confidence, and healing through creative expression. Participants are encouraged to tell their personal stories, utilizing various storytelling techniques. Through this process, we hope participants will connect with the Land and their communities, fostering a sense of belonging.
2. **Skill Building:** The Skill Building pillar equips participants with effective science communication strategies and storytelling techniques. They gain essential multimedia technical skills relevant to their areas of interest. This pillar also covers editing, publishing, and pitching content, ensuring participants are well-prepared to effectively communicate their ideas and stories to a wide audience.
3. **Community Building (Networking):** Community building and networking are essential aspects of our program. Participants benefit from one-on-one mentorship opportunities with Indigenous speakers and UofA and Planet Forward staff, enabling them to receive guidance and support from experienced professionals. Informal cohort gatherings and experiential learning trips (e.g., Planet Forward Summit) foster a sense of community among participants, while access to renowned platforms such as the Native American Journalists Association, CNN, NPR, and Native News Online through Planet Forward provides valuable connections and exposure to a broader network of experts.
4. **Publishing:** The Publishing pillar focuses on showcasing the participants' communication skills through a final project. Participants have the opportunity to create a podcast/ oral history, music piece, exhibition, multimedia presentation, photoessay, or written piece that highlights an issue of their choice. This final project serves as a platform for participants to demonstrate their proficiency in effectively communicating their ideas, stories, and perspectives to the public. It allows them to share their work with a broader audience and make a lasting impact in their respective fields.

2023 ICP STORY HIGHLIGHTS



Crow cowboys: A story of responsibility, respect and resilience

 **JoRee LaFrance**
University of Arizona, Ilíiaitchik:
Indigenous Correspondents
Program (ICP)



Exploring the lives of a multi-generational ranching family on the Crow Reservation, JoRee's article weaves together the rich tapestry of history, the resilient spirit of the Crow people, and the experiences of two Crow cowboys as they navigate the challenges and triumphs of adapting to changing lifestyles and a changing environment.



How Indigenous knowledge guides climate justice

 **Darrien Benally**
Northern Arizona University |
Ilíiaitchik: Indigenous
Correspondents Program (ICP)

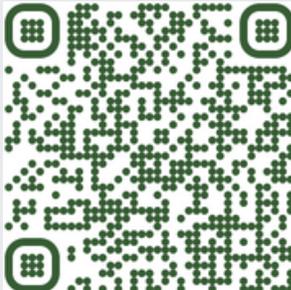


Darrien's article showcases how Indigenous environmental professionals Natalia Shaw and Robyn Jackson integrate their heritage into their work, promoting climate justice for Southwest communities by emphasizing the significance of land reconnection, traditional knowledge, and sustainable solutions to address impacts of climate change on tribal communities.



Indigenous energy and equations

 **Shondiin Mayo**
University of Alaska, Fairbanks |
Ilíiaitchik: Indigenous
Correspondents Program (ICP)



Shondiin's article highlights the work of Bax Bond, a Yupik engineer and photographer from Alaska, who incorporates his Indigenous heritage into work at the Alaska Center for Energy and Power. Bond focuses on developing energy systems for rural communities, considering factors such as renewable energy resources and Indigenous knowledge, with the goal of reducing costs and aligning with cultural values in the face of climate change.



Indigenous plant sovereignty and Cherokee culture

 **Raylen Bark**
Dartmouth College | Ilíiaitchik:
Indigenous Correspondents
Program (ICP)



Raylen's photoessay portrays the passage of intergenerational knowledge from her grandfather during the annual gathering of wild plants for foods and medicine in Cherokee, North Carolina and describes how practicing the same traditions her ancestors did is an integral part of her Cherokee identity.



Essay | Traditional ecological knowledge and modern tools

 **Alisa Smith Woodruff**
Evergreen State College |
Ilíiaitchik: Indigenous
Correspondents Program (ICP)



Alisa, an enrolled citizen of the Skokomish Indian Tribe, shares her personal journey of reconnecting with traditional ecological knowledge and her efforts to preserve indigenous language and study the endangered Cascade red fox. She highlights the importance of incorporating indigenous perspectives and collaborating with local indigenous communities for a more holistic understanding of the natural world.



Weaving Diné teachings and science

 **Nadira Mitchell**
University of Arizona, Ilíiaitchik:
Indigenous Correspondents
Program (ICP)



Nadira Mitchell, a Navajo (Diné) student, shares the significance of traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) and Indigenous science practices in science and conservation. Inspired by her Diné upbringing, she discusses the important role of coyotes in Navajo culture and the environment as she pursues a natural resources major with a focus on wildlife conservation and management.

2022-23 ICP WORKSHOPS OVERVIEW

September 2022 - Healing Through Storytelling:

Northern Cheyenne artist, filmmaker, and author **Cinnamon Kills First** introduced participants to meditation and mindful reading techniques to process academic stressors, utilizing writing as a form of healing, tips for building confidence in storytelling voice and reclaiming narratives through personal stories.



October 2022 - The Art of the Interview:

Valerie Vande Panne (former Managing Editor of Native News Online) and **Frank Sesno** (author of *Ask More*), taught participants interview techniques including finding interviewees, crafting compelling questions, and recording conversation essence through note-taking. The workshop emphasized having respectful interviews with Indigenous elders and knowledge-holders, understanding different interview types, and accurately portraying interviewees' voices and essence in writing stories.



November 2022 - Pitching & Producing a Publication-Ready Story:

Duncan McCue, an award-winning Anishinaabe journalist, and **Kalen Goodluck**, a Diné, Mandan, Hidatsa, and Tsimshian journalist and photographer taught participants strategies for crafting compelling narratives in journalism and photojournalism, provided tips for contacting media platforms and pitching story ideas to editors, and shared strategies for initial stages of story development including identifying appropriate medium, breadth and depth.



December 2022 - Multimedia Communication:

Lakota and Anishinaabe writer **Chelsey Luger** and Duckwater Shoshone singer-songwriter and poet **Tanaya Winder** focused on exploring diverse Indigenous storytelling methods, including poetry, song, and visual artwork, inspired participants to use new communication mediums, and provided tips for overcoming writer's block by beginning stories through podcasts, poems, or other creative forms using drawing boards to map out narratives.



January 2023: Indigenous Knowledge in Science Communication:

Plant ecologist and author **Dr. Robin Wall Kimmerer** (Citizen Potawatomi Nation), discussed effective science communication techniques, including how to write engaging science stories that combine emotion and imagery while maintaining scientific accuracy, methods for centering Indigenous knowledge and frameworks in science communication, and grounding storytelling in joy rather than climate anxiety.



February 2023: Using Software & Technology to Enhance Storytelling

Kirsten Nagel, Senior Customer Success Manager at Adobe, guided participants in creating dynamic web pages, videos, and infographics using Adobe Express. The workshop allowed participants to practice using new storytelling software.



March 2023: Journalism in Indian Country Today

Luella Brien, an Apsáalooke educator and journalist, and **Laurel Sutherland**, an Indigenous news reporter for Mongabay, discussed contemporary journalism approaches across Indian country, local journalism as a career, and discussed strategies for ethical and community-centered journalism.



2022-2023 BY THE NUMBERS

40



Number of **applicants** to the 2022-23 Ilíaitchik cohort

3



Number of Indigenous Correspondents' **stories nominated as 2023 Storyfest finalists** (out of 140+ entires from 30 schools)

50%



The percentage of 2022-23 ICP participants who anonymously indicated they are **more likely to pursue** a career involving environmental communication or storytelling after participating in the Ilíaitchik program. (None indicated that they were less likely on the survey.)

8



Number of **Tribes** represented within the 2022-23 Ilíaitchik cohort

13



Number of majors and minors - ranging from **Wildlife Conservation** to Community Engagement - represented among the 2022-23 Ilíaitchik cohort.

"The ICP workshops have opened up my mind to different ways we can tell stories. The workshops have also been very inspiring just by hearing indigenous people in the industry, I love hearing and meeting new people. - 2022-23 Indigenous Correspondent

9

Number of **Indigenous communication experts** - from plant ecologist **Dr. Robin Wall Kimmerer** to wellness author Chelsey Luger - who led workshops for the 2022-23 Ilíaitchik cohort.



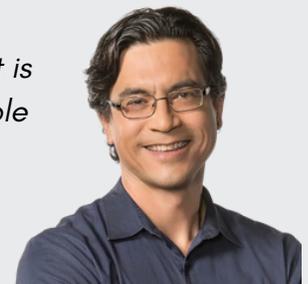
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Number of colleges - from **Dartmouth College** in New Hampshire, to University of Alaska Fairbanks - represented among the 2022-23 Ilíaitchik cohort.

*"Although we write about **issues**, we need to get back to thinking - but what is the **story**? This is how we can get people to listen and to care..."*

- **Duncan McCue**, Anishinaabe CBC television and radio journalist, on what creates memorable narratives during the third Ilíaitchik workshop.



REFLECTIONS FROM OUR EDITOR

In conversation with Valerie Vande Panne

Valerie Vande Panne is an award-winning reporter. Her work has appeared in Bloomberg, Columbia Journalism Review, Politico, and Reuters, among many other outlets. She is the former Managing Editor of Native News Online. She is the mentor/editor of the Ilíiaitchik Indigenous Correspondents Program at Planet Forward.



Valerie Vande Panne, Photo courtesy: Marcus Two Eagles

What is your role within the Indigenous Correspondents Program, and how have you supported students' storytelling projects?

I serve as the mentor/Editor of the Ilíiaitchik Indigenous Correspondents Program at Planet Forward, where I assist participants in crafting their storytelling projects.

What drives your interest and passion in storytelling/ communication work?

Stories are our birthright and an important part of our humanity. Stories can build bridges of understanding, and teach us all how to live with each other and the world around us.

What are some personal highlights or favorite experiences from participating in this year's Indigenous Correspondents Program?

The correspondents are all incredible storytellers. We grow when we do the work of storytelling, and it is an honor to be a part of that process.



What role do you see a program such as the Indigenous Correspondents Program playing in changing the narratives around Indigenous communities/ issues?

Our stories have the power to transform the world we live in. When these stories touch our hearts, our ways of being are affected--and following that, the narratives and the world around us change, too.

Valerie Vande Panne on assignment for Next City in Chattanooga, Tennessee. Photo courtesy: Valerie Vande Panne.

CORRESPONDENT SPOTLIGHT

Reflections from Shondiin Mayo - part 1/2

Shondiin Mayo is originally from Stevens Village, Alaska, and is both Diné and Koyukon Athabascan. She recently graduated from Northern Arizona University with a bachelor's degree in Creative Media and Film.



Why did you apply to participate in this program, and what drives your interest in storytelling work?

I applied to participate in the Ilíiaitchik: Indigenous Correspondents Program to strengthen my storytelling skills and learn how to incorporate my Indigenous heritage into my work. As an Indigenous person who grew up in a rural community that is now nonexistent due to outmigration, I'm driven to capture our ways of living before they disappear to modern amenities.

What are some personal highlights or favorite experiences from participating in this year's ICP?

My favorite experiences from participating in this year's ICP were learning from Native writer and wellness advocate Chelsey Luger (Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa) and radio and television journalist Duncan McCue (Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation)! I appreciated when Chelsey opened up with the cohort and shared that there were moments when she has felt uncomfortable during times when she was pressured to obtain an interview. We discussed creating multiple ways of approaching storytelling with the importance of recognizing our value systems as Indigenous people. The second highlight was when Duncan inspired me to write my story. I wanted to share the contemporary aspects of our people, and Duncan encouraged me to think about how much of our lives are interconnected as Indigenous people while also representing our communities.



Shondiin Mayo enjoys skiing, making snowshoes, and learning how to skin sew a traditional parka during her freetime. Photo courtesy: Shondiin Mayo

***Note:** Continued on next page. ...

CORRESPONDENT SPOTLIGHT

Reflections from Shondiin Mayo - part 2/2



***Note:** Continued from previous page.

How has your involvement in ICP impacted how you approach communication/ storytelling work?

My involvement in ICP has changed the way I think about my storytelling work in many ways. Within the first workshop - *Healing through Storytelling* - I learned that storytelling has the potential to heal or resurface generational trauma that Indigenous people have experienced. I'm grateful to have taken that in during the first session because it not only reminded me of the complex history and continued events that impact Indigenous peoples' lives, but also to remain grounded in the work that I hope to do in the future.

What lessons will you carry with you from this year's program?



One lesson that I will carry with me is that most of my work will reflect what I know. During the program, I wanted to expand my horizons and write about a topic that I had no familiarity with at the beginning of the program. Eventually, I was drawn to telling a story about my home state and more importantly how the shift in weather is changing the landscape of rural Alaska. Even though the story was based in Western Alaska, the people, and their experiences are what I could connect to, which made it easier to write from the heart with good intentions.

Shondiin Mayo. Photo by: Mary Webb via www.marywebbphoto.com

What do you hope to do next?

I hope to continue my work in storytelling! In the fall of 2023, I'll be joining Northern Arizona University's Master of Arts program with an emphasis on documentary studies.

A YEAR IN REVIEW

By: Alexander Cotnoir - Page 1/2



Over the course of ten months, the inaugural Ilíiaitchik: Indigenous Correspondent Program cohort focused on crafting and publishing stories that highlighted sustainable solutions and issues affecting their communities. They also participated in a series of seven monthly workshops led by Indigenous communication experts, exploring various subjects from podcast production to photojournalism.



Left: ICP team members pose for a group photo with Dr. Robin Wall Kimmerer during the "Indigenous Knowledge and Science Communication" workshop. Photo courtesy: JoRee LaFrance

In March, the cohort went on an experiential learning trip to Tucson, Arizona to attend the 2023 Native FEWS Alliance gathering. While there, several correspondents spoke at the AIR Student Showcase and others visited Tohono O'odham Nation and Tohono O'odham Community College, where they learned about the food, water, and energy challenges faced by Native Nations in the southwest and across Turtle Island. They also learned from community members about Tohono O'odham cultural stewardship efforts, including seed sharing programs and food sovereignty courses at the college.



Left: Alisa Smith Woodruff, an Indigenous Correspondent and Skokomish – tuwaduq citizen pursuing her master's in Environmental Studies at Evergreen State College, describes her journey conducting field research at the 2023 AIR Student Showcase at the University of Arizona. Photo courtesy: Alexander Cotnoir.

A YEAR IN REVIEW

By: Alexander Cotnoir - Page 2/2



As a culmination of their experiences, the cohort traveled to Washington, DC, to attend the 2023 Planet Forward Summit in April. The Summit, hosted by Planet Forward, brought together over 200 attendees and engaged 400 online participants through panel discussions, workshops, and networking opportunities. The theme of the summit, "All In: Diverse Voices, Compelling Narratives, and Sustainable Solutions," resonated with the cohort, who aimed to highlight solutions and stories from their communities.



***Above:** The ICP team reflects on their year together during a panel discussion at the Planet Forward Summit. Photo courtesy: Maria Johnson.*

During the summit, Kaly Arvizu, a Diné Indigenous Correspondent, emphasized the need for Indigenous inclusion in environmental spaces. National Geographic Contributing Photographer Katie Orlinsky also stressed the importance of centering Indigenous voices in conservation and land stewardship decisions. She shared her experience working on a story about vanishing caribou in the Arctic and highlighted the significant decline of caribou populations and its impact on Indigenous communities.

The cohort's participation in the summit was followed by visits to CNN's DC headquarters for a behind-the-scenes tour and the RiverRun Festival at the Kennedy Center. The cohort also attended the 2023 Living Earth Festival, where they spoke with Kanaka Maoli, Xelaltxw, and Choctaw community members about Indigenous-led efforts to address environmental challenges, such as water pollution and food insecurity.

Interested in reading more about the 2023 Summit? Check out the full-length article on our website by scanning the QR code below.



PROGRAM THOUGHTS

By: JoRee LaFrance



This past year was everything and more! I am incredibly proud of how our inaugural year turned out and am grateful to our first cohort for sticking it out with us. This program was merely an idea and a challenge to Planet Forward. I was ecstatic to know that Planet Forward and the University of Arizona’s Indigenous Resilience Center were in full support. Our program is an example of how institutions can take a step back and uplift efforts of Indigenous students in creating Indigenous-based programming for other Indigenous students. Although there is still work to be done, I am proud to be a part of a team that has nourished the Ilíiaitchik: Indigenous Correspondents Program into something bigger than I have ever imagined.

Each of our workshops were led or co-led by an Indigenous expert who had a specialized skill related to storytelling or journalism. It meant the world to me that this program is designed by Indigenous students for Indigenous students taught by Indigenous experts. I am extremely proud to say that our cohort told stories from our own communities and with our own voices.



Above: ICP team members having a fun social hour. Photo courtesy: JoRee LaFrance

Chelsey Luger, who co-hosted our multimedia workshop, gave us profound advice that I continue to carry with me. She said to “tell the story you want to tell. It is going to reach the people who need to hear it. Tell the story!” Chelsey helped me build the confidence to tell a story that is embedded in my community and reminded us that our stories need to be heard.

I think one of the most unique components of the Ilíiaitchik: Indigenous Correspondents Program is the fact that we include intentional healing efforts in our programming. We kicked everything off by grounding ourselves through our Healing Through Storytelling workshop led by Cinnamon Kills First. On top of being a word warrior, Cinnamon has dedicated much of her time and energy into Indigenous ways of healing by developing her own form of Indigenous meditation techniques. She shared wisdom and gave us a tool that I still use to this day. This is one of my favorite workshops and I am happy to say that Cinnamon has gladly offered to lead the initial workshop again.

I am looking forward to what this upcoming year has to offer. We are ready to move forward with our successes and lessons learned to continuously grow into a bigger program!

THANKS TO OUR SUPPORTERS

On behalf of the Indigenous Correspondents Program, we would like to extend our deepest gratitude to Planet Forward, a project of The George Washington University School of Media and Public Affairs, the Native FEWS Alliance, UArizona's AIREs Education Initiatives, and the Indigenous Resilience Center (IRes) at UArizona for their invaluable logistical, administrative, and financial support throughout our inaugural year. Your contributions have been instrumental in our success and growth.

We are thrilled to share our excitement for the future of the Ilíiaitchik: Indigenous Correspondents Program, as we embark on a second year of empowering Indigenous voices and storytelling. With the support of a new FEWS grant and funders, we are delighted to announce that we will be able to provide \$1,000 stipends to each student participating in next year's program. This change ensures that our program is more equitable, and that we can attract and support the brightest Indigenous talents who will contribute to critical environmental narratives. With additional funding, we will also be able to continue providing one-on-one support for students working with our Editor, honorariums for our Indigenous workshop leaders, and stipends for staff members to support the program.

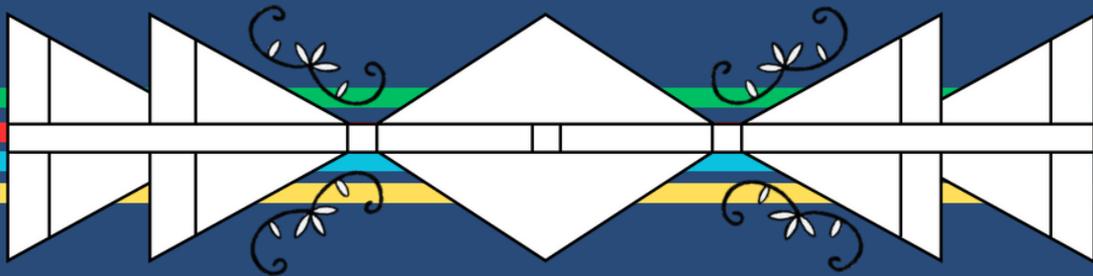
Moreover, we are thrilled that the additional funding will enable us to continue offering all-expense-paid travel opportunities for correspondents. This includes covering airfare, lodging, and per diem travel expenses for students to attend four days at the 2024 Planet Forward in Washington, DC. Such an opportunity will not only expand their horizons but also provide a platform to share their experiences and perspectives on a national stage, further amplifying their voices.

None of these achievements would have been possible without your generous contributions and commitment to the program. Your dedication to fostering Indigenous representation is truly commendable and deeply appreciated. We are honored to have your continued support as we work toward amplifying Indigenous voices and diverse environmental issues and solutions.

Once again, thank you for your unwavering belief in the Indigenous Correspondents Program. Together, we will continue to make a lasting impact and create positive change. We look forward to sharing our progress and success with you in the year ahead.

With profound gratitude,
The ICP Team

Ilííaitchik: Indigenous Correspondents Program



<https://resilience.arizona.edu/indigenous-correspondents>



SCAN ME

