



FIRST NATIONS
DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE

FUTURE LEADERS SUMMIT

FROM OUR ANCESTORS FORWARD

June 15 to 17, 2026

Palm Springs, California

Hilton Palm Springs and Agua Caliente Culture Center

WELCOME TO THE FIRST-EVER FUTURE LEADERS SUMMIT



The Board of Directors and staff of First Nations Development Institute are honored to welcome you, our friends, allies, and valued community partners, to the homelands of the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians.

We planned this convening with the belief that Native youth represent the future of Native communities, and that their health and well-being determine the future health and well-being of communities overall. From there, we collaborated across our organization, exploring the best practices and Native-led solutions of community partners who are actively engaging youth in advancing Native food systems, sustaining Native lifeways, and stewarding Native lands, in California and throughout Indian Country. We then curated this tremendous knowledge pool into a series of workshops, panel discussions, and experiential learning sessions designed to uplift our collective work.

Over the next three days, we look forward to connecting, sharing, and growing together as we engage our youth, celebrate our cultures and lifeways, and share strategies for passing down traditional knowledge. We seek to build on our stories and expand our traditions beyond generational lines.

It is our hope that we all will leave our time together inspired, informed, and ready to further carry forth our identity, strength, and honor, from our ancestors forward.

Gunalchéesh (thank you),



MICHAEL E. ROBERTS (téix sháach tsín)

Tlingit

President & CEO

First Nations Development Institute

CONNECT, LEARN, UPLIFT

Native youth are a bridge – a pathway for cultural stories, traditions, and values. Stewarding land and water; passing down arts, language, and stories; and celebrating traditional foods and Native nourishment: these practices carry the knowledge that has sustained Native communities for centuries. This knowledge – **a source of strength and identity** – will carry us long into the future.

This inaugural convening brings us together in service to our **future culture bearers**, decision makers, and leaders to move traditions and knowledge across generational lines.

Over the next few days, we invite you to:



Identify and share resources to advance and uplift youth-centered programs and initiatives



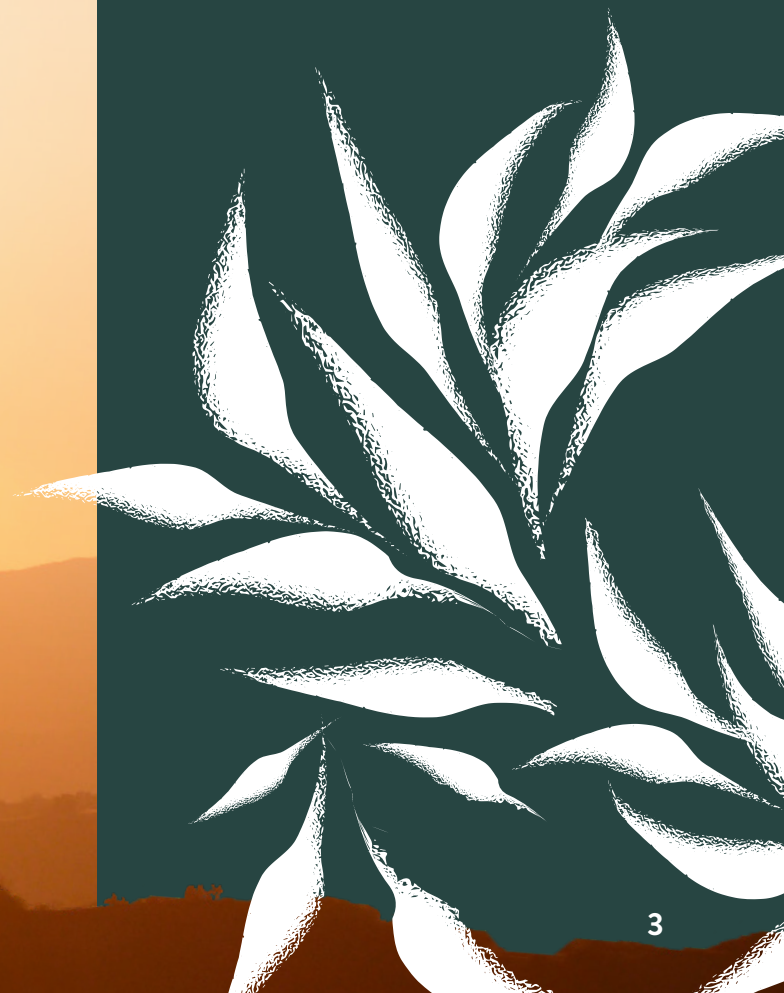
Share stories and learn about strategies to engage youth in land, language, and cultural programming



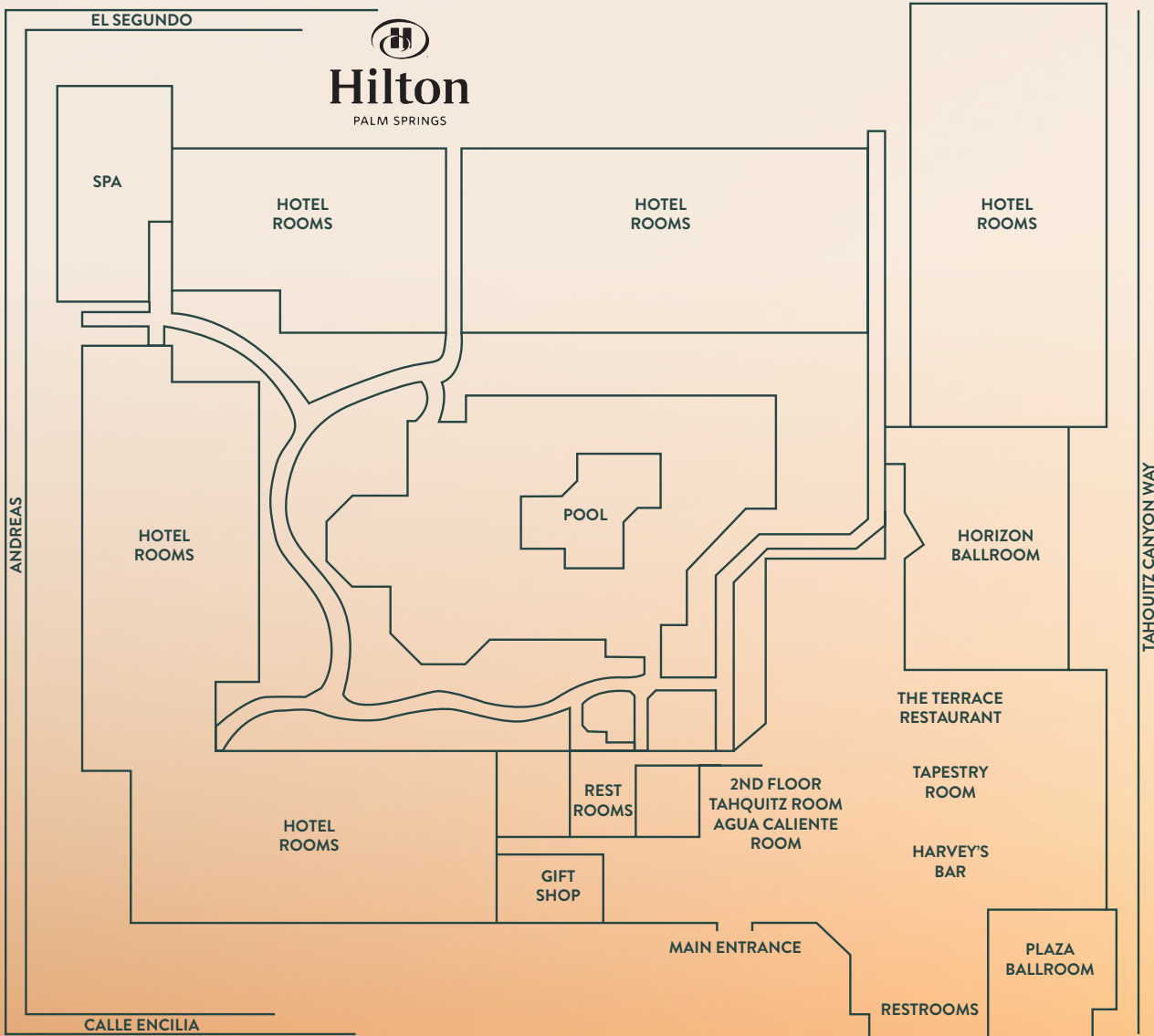
Discuss barriers that inhibit tribal youth programming development and sustainability and identify opportunities, resources, and strategies that can lead to increased participation across Native communities.

ACKNOWLEDGING THE AGUA CALIENTE PEOPLE AND THE LAND THAT WELCOMES US

We acknowledge the Agua Caliente People as the original stewards of the land on which we now gather. We are grateful to have the opportunity to work with the Indigenous people in this place. We pay our respect to the Agua Caliente People, past, present, and emerging, who have been here since time immemorial.



FINDING YOUR WAY DURING YOUR STAY

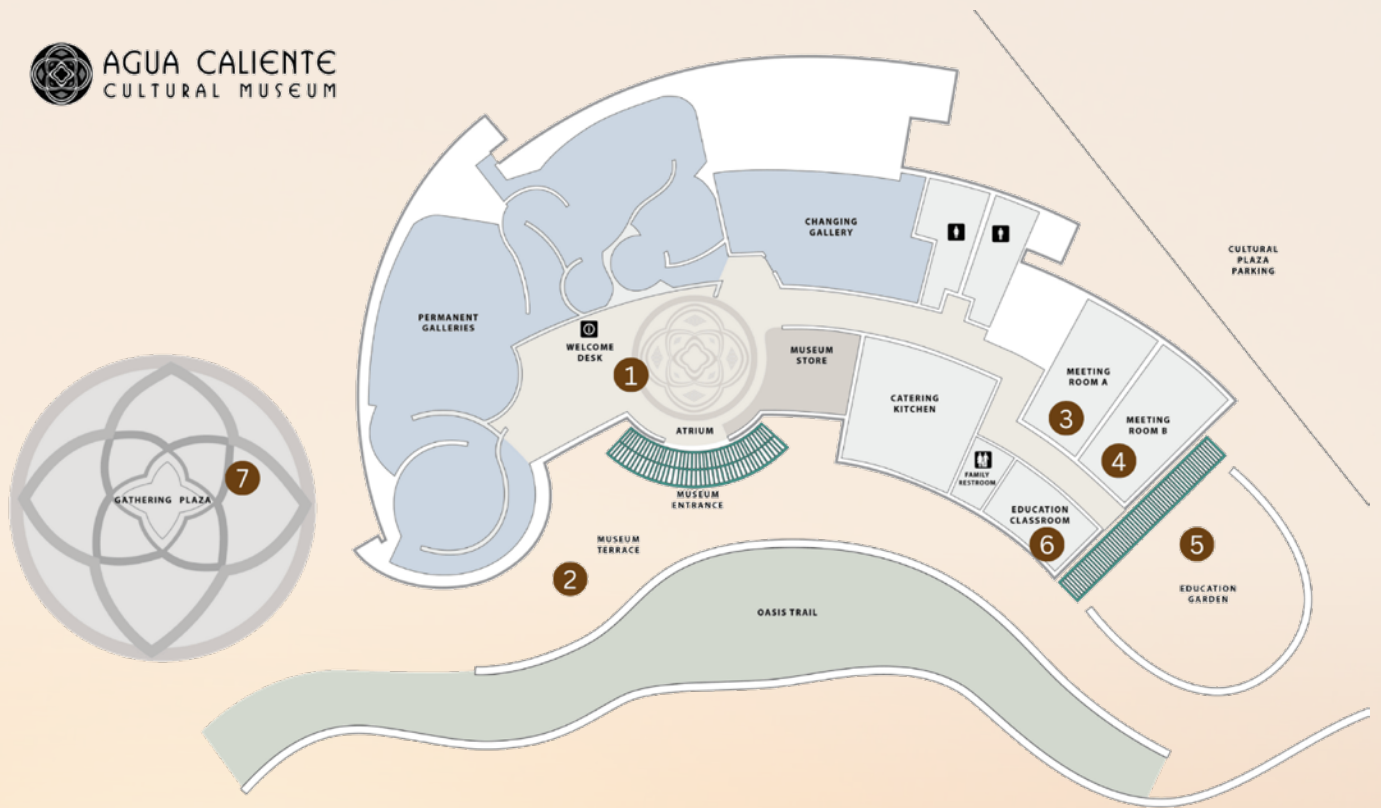


Most sessions and activities will take place at the Hilton in the highlighted ballrooms. Tuesday's Evening Networking Reception will be held at the Agua Caliente Cultural Museum. See maps!

In your downtime, be sure to take advantage of the hotel's many amenities, including:

- Outdoor Pool Area | Monday through Sunday, 8 am to 10 pm
- The Terrace Restaurant | Monday through Sunday, 6:30 am to 2 pm





There is also information on local restaurants and amenities at registration.

For any questions about your stay, please contact Donald Salcedo at (714) 624-1350.

Aqua Caliente Cultural Museum is a space of cultural authority, where the story of the **Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians** is shared in their own voice on their land, and on their terms, connecting the past, present, and future of the tribe. Set within the larger Agua Caliente Cultural Plaza, the nearly 48,000-square-foot museum anchors a 5.8-acre campus that blends storytelling, landscape, and living tradition.

FIRST NATIONS CODE OF CONDUCT AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

At First Nations, our values guide the way we work with our community partners and supporters. We strive to create respectful, compassionate, and vibrant spaces to strengthen Native American communities and economies. First Nations is committed to the highest ethical standards when conducting events to provide learning environments free from discrimination.

Please refer to First Nations Code of Conduct and Guiding Principles documents, which were provided at registration, for more information.

WHO TO CONTACT

First Nations is committed to creating a positive, enriching experience for our community partners. If you need any assistance during the Future Leaders Summit, please contact:

Program information:



REBECCA TORTES

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(951) 265-7822

Registration and reimbursements:



ARIANA GLORIA-MARTINEZ

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Hotel and transportation:



DONALD SALCEDO

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(714) 624-1350

SUMMIT HIGHLIGHTS

Evening Networking Reception

Join us Tuesday evening at the **Agua Caliente Cultural Museum** for connection and sharing with fellow organizations engaged in serving youth to bring teachings from our ancestors forward. Enjoy complimentary appetizers as you meet others from around the country. Enjoy private access to the museum gallery, where you can explore, browse, and learn more about the history of the area.

Artistry and Knowledge Sharing:

Cultural Workshops

In sessions Wednesday morning, explore your creative side. Choose from workshops on making cattail dolls and basketweaving, or try shell etching and cordage. Both workshops provide all materials, plus hands-on guidance. Learn more about the culture of the Cahuilla and neighboring Indigenous peoples of Southern California through community, knowledge-sharing, and connection.

Hit the Trail or Take it Easy:

Night Hike or Bingo

Gather with us as we hike the beautiful homelands of the Iviatim, Nuwuvi, and Maara'yam (Cahuilla, Chemehuevi and Serrano Peoples), a region with some of the most spectacular desert ecosystems on Earth. Desert ecologist, Elizabeth Paige (Desert Cahuilla), will guide our group and share information on the traditions, stories, languages, and cultures that have been a part of this sacred site since time immemorial.

Or, join us for a night of community fun and friendly competition at our Bingo Night! We will have multiple rounds of classic bingo with exciting prizes.

MONDAY, JUNE 15, 2026: PRESESSION

| TIME | SESSION | LOCATION | DESCRIPTION |
|-------------------|--|----------------------------|---|
| 8 to 9 am | Breakfast | Hilton: Horizon Ballroom 2 | |
| 8 to 9 am | Registration | Hilton: Plaza Foyer 2 | |
| 9:30 to 10 am | Welcoming Prayer Opening Introduction to Agua Caliente Community & Lands | Hilton: Horizon Ballroom | Honored Elder Opening Prayer |
| 10:30 to 11 am | Introduction to Programs | Hilton: Horizon Ballroom | Presenters: Rebecca Tortes, California Tribal Fund Leiloni Begaye, Stewarding Native Lands Abi Whiteing, Native Arts, Language, and Knowledge |
| 11 am to 12:30 pm | Pre-sessions: Please attend your designated session based on the First Nations program | | |
| | We Are the 7th Generation <i>California Tribal Fund</i> | Hilton: Plaza A | This intergenerational day of learning will be a space for grantees to share their programs, nurture their identities as both leaders and learners, and build and share empowering stories of how we are making a difference in our California tribal communities and beyond. |
| | Honoring Voices, Sharing Practices <i>Native Arts, Language, and Knowledge</i> | Hilton: Plaza B | This session will serve as an opportunity for youth-serving organizations whose work is housed within the Native Arts, Language, and Knowledge program to explore their needs, consider learnings and goals, and co-create solutions for current and upcoming challenges in their work. |
| | Strengthening Stewardship through Shared Experiences <i>Stewarding Native Lands</i> | Hilton: Plaza C | Native communities thrive when opportunities exist for youth to learn, carry, and transfer traditional knowledge. To understand the role professional cohorts can play enhancing traditional knowledge and regional networks, this session invites members of the Young Natural Resource Professionals Cohort to share their stories and experiences. |

MONDAY, JUNE 15, 2026: PRESESSION

(Continued)

| TIME | SESSION | LOCATION | DESCRIPTION |
|--------------------|--|----------------------------|---|
| 12:30 to 1:30 pm | Lunch | Hilton: Horizon Ballroom 2 | |
| 1:30 pm to 3:30 pm | Pre-sessions: Please attend your designated session based on the First Nations program | | |
| | We Are the 7th Generation <i>California Tribal Fund</i> | Hilton: Plaza A | This intergenerational day of learning will be a space for grantees to share their programs, nurture their identities as both leaders and learners, and build and share empowering stories of how we are making a difference in our California tribal communities and beyond. |
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| | Strengthening Stewardship through Shared Experiences <i>Stewarding Native Lands</i> | Hilton: Plaza C | Native communities thrive when opportunities exist for youth to learn, carry, and transfer traditional knowledge. To understand the role professional cohorts can play enhancing traditional knowledge and regional networks, this session invites members of the Young Natural Resource Professionals Cohort to share their stories and experiences. |
| 4 pm | Close | | First Nations staff will close their pre-session workshops and provide instructions for day two. |

TUESDAY, JUNE 16, 2026




| TIME | SESSION | LOCATION | DESCRIPTION |
|-------------------|---|----------------------------|--|
| 8 to 9 am | Breakfast | Hilton: Horizon Ballroom 2 | |
| 8 to 9 am | Registration | Hilton: Horizon Foyer | |
| 9 to 9:45 am | Welcome Introduction to Agua Caliente Community & Lands | Hilton: Horizon I | Honored Guest Agua Caliente Tribal Council Member Kupa Song and Dance Group |
| 9:45 to 11:30 am | Leaders Panel Roots of Resilience: Grounding Ourselves with Culture in a Modern World | Hilton: Horizon I | The next generation of tribal leaders will be required to balance contemporary challenges with cultural tradition as they work to reclaim and steward tribal land and water, traditional foods, and medicines, and ensure that cultural resources, including language, are revitalized and sustained. This panel will highlight tribal leaders and cultural practitioners, who are grounding themselves in culture while building their tribes and tribal organizations. Moderator: Donald Salcedo (First Nations) Speakers: Samantha MJ Yang (Gabrieleno-Tongva Band of Mission Indians) Mercedes Estrada (Santa Rosa Band of Cahuilla Indians), and David Streamer (Los Coyotes Band of Cahuilla & Cupeño Indians) |
| 11:30 am to 12 pm | Activity Sign-Up | Hilton: Horizon Foyer | Sign up for Wednesday's Cultural Workshops and Night Hike or Bingo |




TUESDAY, JUNE 16, 2026

(Continued)

| TIME | SESSION | LOCATION | DESCRIPTION |
|-----------------|--|----------------------------|--|
| 12 to 1 pm | Lunch | Hilton: Horizon Ballroom 2 | |
| 1:15 to 2:30 pm | <p>Breakout Session: Growing Pains: Becoming a Thoughtful Leader and Confronting Challenges in the LANDBACK Movement</p>  <p>The tortoise is viewed as a relative, a teacher, and part of the living archive of the land. It embodies resilience and adaptability. This session highlights community partners and youth working to steward and protect their tribal lands.</p> | Hilton: Plaza A | <p>As Tribal Nations and Native organizations work together to acquire ancestral land back, build advocacy coalitions, and uplift the health of their communities, young Native leaders are stepping up with good hearts to learn how to tackle the toughest challenges facing Indian Country. The work of creating a better and more just world for Indigenous Peoples is not easy. It comes with a lot of growing pains. In this session, Native American Land Conservancy staff and tribal youth will discuss some of the biggest challenges they have faced working with leaders in the fields of conservation, education, land management, and cultural preservation. They will explore how strong leadership skills rooted in tribal values of community, sovereignty, diplomacy, and reciprocity are some of the best tools to bring diverse people together to achieve a goal envisioned and directed by tribes. They will also discuss setbacks and compromises in long-term projects, and how to overcome roadblocks with resilience and collaboration. Panelists will provide an overview of the Coachella Valley and regional tribes to ground participants in the ecological and cultural history of the surrounding desert landscape.</p> <p>Panelists/Speakers: Cassandra Pino (Native American Land Conservancy, Acoma Pueblo), Elizabeth Paige (Native American Land Conservancy, Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians), Rachel Gallardo (Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians), and Elan Medart (Fort Yuma Quechan Tribe)</p> |


TUESDAY, JUNE 16, 2026

(Continued)

| TIME | SESSION | LOCATION | DESCRIPTION |
|----------------------------|--|------------------------|---|
| <p>1:15 to 2:30 pm</p> | <p>Breakout Session: Language as Medicine – How Language Deepens Connection and Belonging for Our Youth</p>  <p>It is said that a mother quail calls to her unhatched chicks, who chirp to each other from inside the eggs and hatch in synchronicity. This session highlights community partners and youth working to revitalize and sustain their traditional languages.</p> | <p>Hilton: Plaza B</p> | <p>Language is the heartbeat of a healthy community. This session features representatives from three communities that are working to increase language access for their youth, each using different models and strategies to build participants’ comfort speaking their traditional language. Chammakilawish Pechanga School works with community members as young as 3 months old to educate youth in the Pechanga Band of Indians, weaving Luiseño into interactive play, letter and number recognition, and eventually dual-language math, science, social studies, and culture classes. The Chickahominy Indian Tribe has reclaimed their language, offering a “language passport” for community youth to build confidence speaking their language one word at a time, revitalizing Algonquian in the community after nearly 200 years of suppression. Zuni Youth Enrichment Project integrates language into each of their nine programming areas, encouraging youth to deepen their belonging within their community through culturally enriching activities. Each representative will share their successes, challenges, and hopes for continuing language access into the future.</p> <p>Panelists/Speakers: Chelsea Gonzalez (Chammakiliwash Pechanga School), Lenora Carmen Adkins (Chickahominy Tribe), Tahlia Natachu-Eriacho (Zuni Youth Enrichment Project)</p> |

TUESDAY, JUNE 16, 2026

(Continued)

| TIME | SESSION | LOCATION | DESCRIPTION |
|----------------------------|---|--------------------------|--|
| <p>1:15 to 2:30 pm</p> | <p>Breakout Session: Carrying the Flame: Centering Youth in Stewardship</p>  <p>A roadrunner is known to carry burning branches from wildfires, protecting them from rain under its wings and feathers, to bring heat and warmth to other animals. This session highlights community partners and youth working to use traditional, controlled practices, including fire, to restore their land.</p> | <p>Hilton: Plaza C</p> | <p>As tribes and Native-led organizations steward and manage their cultural resources, there is one fundamental element central to their work – youth. This panel will highlight the ways community members are centering youth in restoring traditional practices like cultural burning, rematriating traditional lands tied to cultural identity, restoring wetland and adjacent ecosystem health through beaver restoration, and reviving soil health by planting Native species. Speakers will discuss how youth are the future of stewardship, and how centering youth in this work ensures cultural practices, values, and traditions are carried forward.</p> <p>Panelists/Speakers: Jada McCovey (FireGeneration Collaborative), Jarrod Crow (Nez Perce Tribe), Brandon Gibson (Learning Center at Euchee Butterfly Farm)</p> |
| <p>2:30 to 3 pm</p> | <p>Snack Break</p> | <p>Hilton: Horizon I</p> | |

TUESDAY, JUNE 16, 2026

(Continued)

| TIME | SESSION | LOCATION | DESCRIPTION |
|--------------|--|-------------------------------|--|
| 3 to 4:30 pm | Activity Four Corners: Learning and Growing Together | Hilton: Horizon I | <p>What do program staff and the next generation of youth leaders need to ensure culturally responsive youth programming continues? This interactive session will encourage participants to share challenges and strengths experienced in creating, modifying, and sustaining their youth programs and initiatives. After breakout group conversations, there will be a roundtable discussion to cultivate strengths, address challenges, and identify opportunities to advance youth-based programming across Indian Country.</p> <p>Facilitators: Leiloni Begaye (First Nations); Toli Tate, Molly Baker, Carson Kallenberger, Sujei Martinez, and Ella Kohler (First Nations' NextGen Leaders)</p> |
| 4:30 to 5 pm | Closing | Hilton: Horizon I | |
| 6 to 6:30 pm | Evening Networking Reception | Agua Caliente Cultural Center | See page 6! |



WEDNESDAY, JUNE 17, 2026

| TIME | SESSION | LOCATION | DESCRIPTION |
|------------------|--|----------------------------|---|
| 8 to 9 am | Breakfast | Hilton: Horizon Ballroom 2 | Please note that after breakfast, morning sessions will take place at the Agua Caliente Cultural Center |
| 9:15 am to 12 pm | Cattail Dolls and Basketweaving | Agua: Education Classroom | <p>Traditional cattail dolls are simple, handcrafted figures made from the broad leaves and stalks of the cattail plant (<i>Typha latifolia</i>). Rooted in the culture of the Cahuilla and neighboring Indigenous peoples of Southern California, these dolls serve as toys, educational tools, and creative expressions for children. In this interactive session, participants will learn about cattail doll artistry and then engage in an additional small basketweaving project.</p> <p>Presenters: Carrie Garcia (Soboba Band of Luiseno Indians) and Rosie Salinas (Soboba Band of Luiseno Indians)</p> |
| | Threads of Connection: Shell & Cordage Necklace Making | Agua: Meeting Room A | <p>This hands-on workshop invites participants to connect with traditional materials, creativity, and cultural knowledge through the art of shell etching and cordage making. Participants will begin by selecting a shell and carefully etching their own meaningful designs — symbols that reflect identity, story, or connection to land and community.</p> <p>From there, participants will learn the foundational skill of cordage making, using natural fibers to twist and form strong, functional strands. This practice, rooted in generations of Indigenous knowledge, teaches patience, intention, and the value of working with materials from the earth.</p> <p>Presenter: Sienna Thomas (The Cahuilla Landscape)</p> |
| | Safety Training | Agua: Meeting Room B | <p>Youth-serving projects can involve unique challenges, including ensuring safety and protection from hazards such as water, fire, and basic injury. This training will offer tangible skills for staff to bring back to their programming, including tips and best practices from experts on how to provide youth with safe opportunities to learn, play, and embrace their culture.</p> |
| 12 to 1:30 pm | Lunch | Hilton: Horizon Ballroom 2 | |

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 17, 2026

(Continued)

| TIME | SESSION | LOCATION | DESCRIPTION |
|--------------|---|-------------------|---|
| 1:30 to 3 pm | Closing Panel & Remarks What We Weaved: Programs That Strengthen Our Communities and Our Youth | Hilton: Horizon I | Building the strength and capacity of tribal communities and youth requires honesty, trust, and generosity. This panel highlights tribal leaders who have made both practical and strategic decisions woven with traditional knowledge, community values, and cultural practice to make positive changes in their communities. Moderator: Rebecca Tortes (First Nations) Presenters: Michael Jack (Quechan Tribe), Marlene Dusek (Yurok Tribal Environmental), and Darlene Franco (Wukchumni Tribe) |
| 5:30 pm | Depart for Hike | | Travel time is 45 mins |
| 6:30 to 8 pm | Evening Hike with Native American Land Conservancy Coyote Hole Joshua Tree, CA | Coyote Hole | Gather with us as we hike the beautiful homelands of the Iviatim, Nuwuvi, and Maara'yam (Cahuilla, Chemehuevi, and Serrano Peoples), a region with some of the most spectacular desert ecosystems on Earth. The walk will be less than 1.5 miles. Headlamps and water will be provided. Hike leader: Desert ecologist, Elizabeth Paige (Desert Cahuilla) |
| 6:30 to 8 pm | Bingo | Hilton: Plaza A | Join us for a fun night of community fun and friendly competition at our Bingo Night! We will have multiple rounds of classic bingo with exciting prizes. |

SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

To learn more about our speakers and panelists, visit www.firstnations.org/future-leaders-summit or scan this code:



FAREWELL, UNTIL WE MEET AGAIN.

Thank you for joining and learning with us.

We are honored to spend time with you. Safe travels home.

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DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE

FROM OUR ANCESTORS FORWARD

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