

2023

# INAUGURAL REPORT

**INDIGENOUS ROOTS AND REPARATION FOUNDATION**

PRESERVING HISTORY, CULTURE, TRADITIONS AND  
LANGUAGE THROUGH EDUCATION AND ADVOCACY



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# IRRF

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INDIGENOUS ROOTS & REPARATION FOUNDATION



# LETTER FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

Dear friends, family, and community,

As we reflect on the journey of the Indigenous Roots and Reparation Foundation through 2023, I am filled with immense pride and gratitude. This year has been one of significant connection and profound learning for our organization.

We have successfully hosted programs and events aimed at preserving Indigenous cultures and languages on the homelands of my ancestors, including our second annual Huckleberry Camp and hosting our first language classes.

This year marks a historic milestone for the Indigenous Roots and Reparation Foundation, as we interviewed many talented candidates and named our first Executive Director. This significant step forward reflects our growth and the increasing impact of our mission. Our new Executive Director brings a wealth of experience and a deep commitment to Indigenous rights and culture, aligning perfectly with the vision and goals of our foundation. This leadership change is not just a new chapter in our history but also a testament to our dedication to our long-term Land Back vision.

Looking ahead to 2024, we are filled with hope and determination. Our resolve to create a community where Indigenous cultures thrive and are honored remains unwavering. We are committed to expanding our reach, enhancing our programs, and strengthening our partnerships.

lámlamt (thank you),

**MARY BIG BULL-LEWIS**

BOARD CHAIR AND FOUNDER

Indigenous Roots and Reparation Foundation

# IRRF WELCOMES FIRST EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, TWA-LE ABRAHAMSON

Twa-le əwət Abrahamson is IRRF's new executive director. Her name given to her by her Navajo grandmother and refers to a place, "a source of crystal-clear water." Twa-le and her children are enrolled Spokane and descendants of the Colville Confederated Tribes, Coeur d'Alene Tribe, and Navajo Nation. She has a passion for Indigenous empowerment.



Twa-le's degree in Environmental Science and Restoration Ecology from the University of Washington focused on understanding the impacts of hydroelectric power and the industrial and toxic pollution sources affecting the lifeways of the Indigenous Peoples of the Columbia River.

Twa-le and her mother formed a grassroots environmental justice organization on the Spokane Reservation called SHAWL (Sovereignty, Health, Air, Water and Land) Society, to educate and advocate about the impacts of uranium mining contamination to the Reservation and people.

Twa-le has the education and experience to prioritize growth areas and strategically work to advance Indigenous Roots and Reparation Foundation's goals. She looks forward to being an effective representative of IRRF in the public as well as in relationship building with Indigenous communities. As a community organizer, she believes that multigenerational leadership and meaningful community involvement centers the work.

"I am honored to join the amazing team behind the Indigenous Roots and Reparation Foundation. I am excited to start the new year connecting with the Board and stakeholders as we develop a plan of action for reconnecting our Peoples, lands and language," says Twa-le.





*2022 Huckleberry Camp*

## ABOUT IRRF

The Indigenous Roots and Reparation Foundation (IRRF), established in 2021, is an Indigenous-led nonprofit organization located in Wenatchee on the homeland of the p'squosa (Wenatchi) People. The foundation's mission is to preserve and promote Indigenous history, culture, traditions, and language through various educational and advocacy initiatives.

One of the main goals of IRRF is to create and maintain a space on ancestral homelands for members of all tribes. This space is envisioned to serve as a hub for practicing cultural traditions, ceremonies, and fostering fellowship among tribal members. Importantly, this initiative also includes providing support to tribal members displaced by wildfires.

A significant aspect of IRRF's work revolves around the concepts of Land Back and Reparations. The foundation defines Land Back as a pathway for Indigenous People to establish sovereign spaces that honor waterways, ecosystems, and cultural traditions in a manner that is respectful and sustainable.

This concept is rooted in the recognition of Indigenous people as the original stewards of the land, highlighting their historic relationship with the land and its resources.

Reparations is also seen as a process of acknowledging and addressing the trauma inflicted by past injustices. Through various intentional acts, whether monetary or otherwise, IRRF invites the community to honor Indigenous People and the lands taken from them, thereby initiating a process of healing.

This endeavor, while not representing all Indigenous Peoples or a single tribe, emphasizes the richness of individual perspectives and the diversity within Indigenous Communities. Operating independently of tribal councils or advisory boards, IRRF upholds a deep respect for those who continue to honor and educate about ancestral legacies and is always open to collaborative efforts.



# BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The leadership of IRRF is a team of grassroots organizers, practitioners, community builders, and media-based strategists from diverse Nations across Turtle Island. Our diverse leadership reflects IRRF's commitment to inclusivity and broad representation in its activities and governance. In addition to monthly virtual meetings, the board meets twice a year in person to build relationships, craft, make decisions, and dream together.

**Mary Big Bull-Lewis, Chair:** Mary (an enrolled member of the Colville Confederated Tribe; Wenatchi, Moses and Entiat bands & a descendant of the Blackfoot Tribe) is an Indigenous Entrepreneur who owns two small businesses.

**Paige Castro-Reyes, Co-Chair:** Paige (a Chamoru/European woman) is the Deputy Director of Community-Campus Partnerships for Health.

**Jordan Lucky, Treasurer:** Jordan (an enrolled member of the Colville Confederated Tribe; Entiat, Moses-Columbia, Okanogan, and Wenatchi bands) is a former member of the Washington State DOT Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Board.

**David LeFever, Secretary:** David is the Executive Director of the Methow Field Institute/Methow Valley Interpretive Center in Twisp, WA.

**Randy Lewis, Elder:** Randy (an enrolled member of the Colville Confederated Tribe; Wenatchi/p'squosa, Methow and Okanogan bands) is a storyteller, teacher, civil rights organizer and historian, whose work draws deeply from traditional knowledge and oral traditions.

**Rob Crandall:** Rob owns Methow Natives, a native plant center focused on propagation, restoration, and education.

**Livia Millard:** Livia (descendant of the Umatilla and Colville; Wenatchi and Entiat bands) is a former faculty member and Wenatchee Valley College at Omak (WVCO) Multicultural Coordinator and Academic Advisor.

**Aaron Nauman:** Aaron (a Mí'kmaq descendant) is dedicated to ethical, Native American conscious, community-based cultural justice and has more than 25 years of experience in the wider field of cultural heritage management.

**Maria Isabel Morales, PhD:** Maria is currently the director of the NCW Educational Opportunity Center (a federal TRIO program) located at the Wenatchee Valley College Campus.



Several IRRF Board Members by the npq'watk<sup>w</sup> (Columbia River).

L-R: Jordan Lucky, Livia Millard, Mary Big Bull-Lewis, Rob Crandall, Paige Reyes (photography by Steven Gnam)

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# 2023 PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

## T-SHIRTS FOR OMAK YOUTH

In 2022, IRRF received a grant from Women's Service League of Wenatchee for \$2,000. IRRF used the funds to print 100 t-shirts for the Omak School District youth who participated in the Native American Heritage Month Art Program. Board members Rob and Mary drove to Omak to deliver the t-shirts and host a presentation with a p'squosa elder.



*Sylvia Peasley (instructor)collecting hemp at Indian Hemp Field Trip*

## THIRD ANNUAL INDIAN HEMP FIELD TRIP

In November, IRRF hosted the third annual Indian Hemp Field Trip. This was an opportunity to gather and learn about Indian Hemp on p'squosa Homelands. Teachers and basketweavers Sylvia Peasley, Julie Edwards, Bernadine Phillips, and Tlanqna Qwnqwinxn led this workshop and shared their knowledge about this important cultural plant. Participants practiced harvesting and processing Indian Hemp and learned about its uses. There were opening and closing speakers and remarks, an opening prayer, and time to eat lunch together in the middle of the day. Tribes represented include Arrow Lake, Blackfoot, Chelan, Chippewa Cree Rocky Boy, Colville, Entiat, Methow, Moses/Columbia, and Wenatchi. Six Indigenous students from Pinnacles Prep joined us.

## BEADED EARRING CLASS

In October, IRRF sponsored a free beaded earring class in honor of Indigenous Peoples' Day, open to anyone interested in learning how to bead earrings. Held on the traditional homelands of the p'squosa People, the three-hour class was led by IRRF Treasurer Jordan Lucky and local artist Amanda Northwind. The 20 participants were provided with everything needed to make a pair of beaded earrings, and light snacks and beverages were served.



*Earrings by Jordan Lucky*





*Language class drumming group, Golden Eaglettes; IRRF Treasurer, Jordan; and IRRF Chair, Mary*

## **LANGUAGE CLASSES & COMMUNITY DINNER**

IRRF partnered with Annette Timentwa, Colville Tribal member, for a series of two online language classes. This 4-week basic introductory class on the nxaʔamxčín language was hosted online via Zoom and covered basic Moses-Columbian language history, phonetics and orthography, vocabulary, and grammar. Each class went over 5-10 words or phrases, along with some simple grammar concepts to try and make simple nxaʔamxčín sentences. Classes also included introductions and pronunciations of letters, colors, numbers, plant words, and phrases in order to accommodate an art-based style of teaching and learning.

IRRF hosted a community dinner for class participants in June. This was a time for being in community and practicing speaking the nxaʔamxčín language with each other.



*Golden Eaglettes Drumming Group, the luke sisters, drumming during Language Class dinner*



# HUCKLEBERRY CAMP

*Connecting tribal descendants on p'squosa homelands*



Huckleberry Camp is an annual weekend camp designed to bring tribal descendants together for sharing stories, traditional crafts and music, and simply to be together. Tribes represented include Blackfoot, Chelan, Cree, Colville, Entiat, Methow, Moses Columbia, Palus, San Poil, Sinixt, Sioux, Suquamish, Wenatchi, and Yakima.

The first camp took place in 2022 at Basecamp Cascadia and had about 35 participants with time to share stories, outings for huckleberry picking, space to use materials like sweet grass and Indian hemp, and a traditional salmon bake, with the salmon provided through donations from the Colville Tribe. In 2023, camp grew to 75 participants and was hosted at the Lake Wenatchee YMCA Camp. Participants got to stay in cabins, and tent and RV space was also available. The list of activities grew significantly, with classes on the traditional p'squosa language, painting on rawhide materials, basket weaving with cattails, Indian hemp, jam making, canning huckleberries, beaded earring class, beaded lanyard class, smoking and canning salmon, and archery. "We wanted to open it up for our participants to have the opportunity to teach, to share their knowledge," says board president Mary Big Bull-Lewis.

On Saturday evening of the second annual camp, participants taught each other traditional games, like stick game. "A lot of people there hadn't played stick game probably at all," says board member Rob Crandall. "People who did know how to play were teaching and sharing."

I was told our ancestors are happy.  
The gathering brought family from  
the west side and it was amazing to  
be in community with them as we  
haven't been for years. The  
gathering brought healing to all.  
—Huckleberry Camp participant

*A young Huckleberry Camp participant*



*Intergenerational photo at Huckleberry Camp*

Huckleberry Camp has become IRRF's central event because of how it brings tribal descendants together on the traditional homelands, which is much needed in this region. "I've never heard of anything like it before," says Mary. "There's never been any culturally significant events happening here in the Wenatchee Valley my entire life. It's a very disconnected space from our culture. We're creating space where there wasn't space for us."

One of IRRF's aims with Huckleberry Camp is to eliminate barriers that prevent tribal descendants from being able to join in, such as providing gas cards to reduce expenses and making sure accommodations and good, hearty food are taken care of. At camp, stories, singing, and sharing are just some of the ways people connect. "We try to find knowledge keepers who hold the stories [so that] they are sharing those stories to make sure they stay with us and get stronger over time, instead of getting further and further out of consciousness," says Rob.

"Coming together as a community again to heal is such a cool thing," says Mary. Doing so on p'squosa homelands is an important part of IRRF's mission of Land Back. "We're doing it, and it's a really beautiful thing to be a part of." Participants have found camp so meaningful that reservations filled up in 5 hours the second year, when camp grew to 75 participants. IRRF hopes to expand to accommodate an even larger group in 2024.

Being on the traditional homelands of the p'squosa left everyone's hearts feeling full, says Mary. "There was singing and drumming and our language being spoken on the homelands, where it hadn't been heard for I don't know how many years."



*Huckleberry Camp participant braiding sweetgrass*

I always feel a huge sense of connection when I do visit areas like Icicle. I try to envision what it was like here, where our ancestors traded and built relationships. It's also very surreal after learning what had happened to the p'squosa, being violently dispossessed, dislocated and lost, having to rebuild in another place. It hurts to empathize with that, but it's beautiful to bring my children and be here because they are connected to this land, the foods, the atmosphere.

—Huckleberry Camp participant



# 2023 COMMUNITY EVENTS

- **Elder Gifts through Colville Convalescent Center:** IRRF has done this for 3 consecutive years. In 2023, with assistance from a \$1000 donation from Confluence Rotary of Wenatchee, IRRF purchased Christmas gifts for 29 elders.
- **Big Red Barn Presentation:** In March, Randy, Paige, Rob, and Mary presented at the Wenatchee River Institute.
- **Clothing Collection:** IRRF collected clothing from My Girlfriend's Closet and Operation Sky Valley for FYRE in Omak.
- **Harvesting Cedar Bark:** In May, IRRF joined the Snoqualmie Tribe Cultural Department on their homelands to learn how to harvest cedar bark.
- **Earth Day:** IRRF participated in this Waste Loop event at Enchantment Park in April.
- **Indigenous Enterprise Nature Walk:** IRRF participated in this May event with Wenatchee River Institute and Icicle Creek Center for the Arts.
- **NCW TREAD Film Series:** IRRF was one of the nonprofits highlighted in the film series *Belonging in the Outdoors*.







*Salmon Festival 2023*

*L-R: Aaron Naumann, Steve Clem, Ronin, Paige Reyes*

- **Salmon Event:** IRRF was part of this event in Cashmere in June.
- **Promotional Videos:** IRRF worked with War Pony Pictures (Derrick LaMere, Colville Tribal member) & Brave Space Media (Erin Nash) to produce multiple promo films for IRRF, including ads at the movie theater.
- **Q&A with IRRF Board:** In December, IRRF's board welcomed the community to attend a virtual meet & greet
- **Singing Salmon/Peshastin Pinnacles Field Trip:** IRRF was part of the Pinnacles Prep event in May.
- **The Incredible Life and Stories of Arnold Cleveland:** IRRF participated in this event at the Chelan Public Library in August.
- **Environmental Film Series:** IRRF tabled the Wenatchee Valley Museum event, and Randy and Mary were panelists.

*Indian Hemp Field Trip 2021*



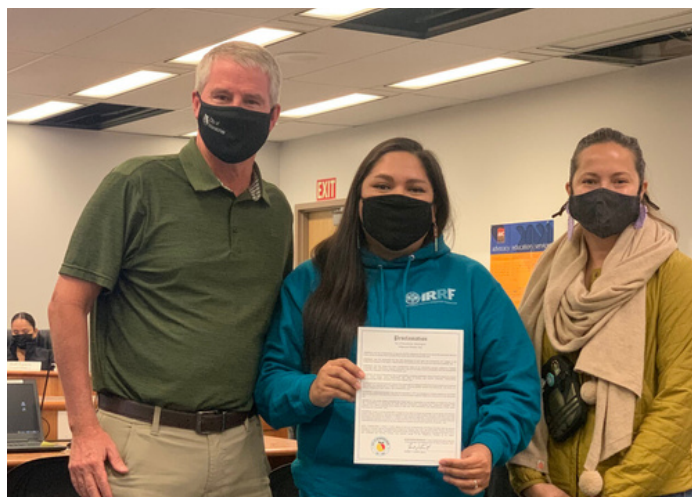




Photos clockwise: (1) Randy Lewis at the Wenatchee Valley Museum Salmon Bake 2022 (2) IRRF Board members at the Women's March 2022 advocating for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW) (3) East Wenatchee Mayor, Jerrilea Crawford, signing Indigenous Peoples' Day Proclamation (4) Partnering Cedar Bark Field Trip with the Snoqualmie Tribe



Photos clockwise: (1) Pinnacles Prep Singing Salmon Field Trip 2022 (2) Wenatchee Mayor, Frank Kuntz, signing Indigenous Peoples' Day Proclamation (3) Language Dinner opening prayer with elder Arnold Cleveland (4) Medicines at events for participants.



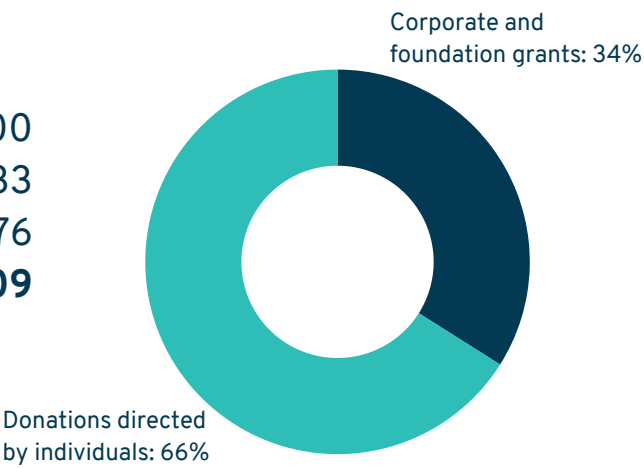


# FINANCIALS

Thank you to our donors and sponsors for your financial support of IRRF’s mission this year.

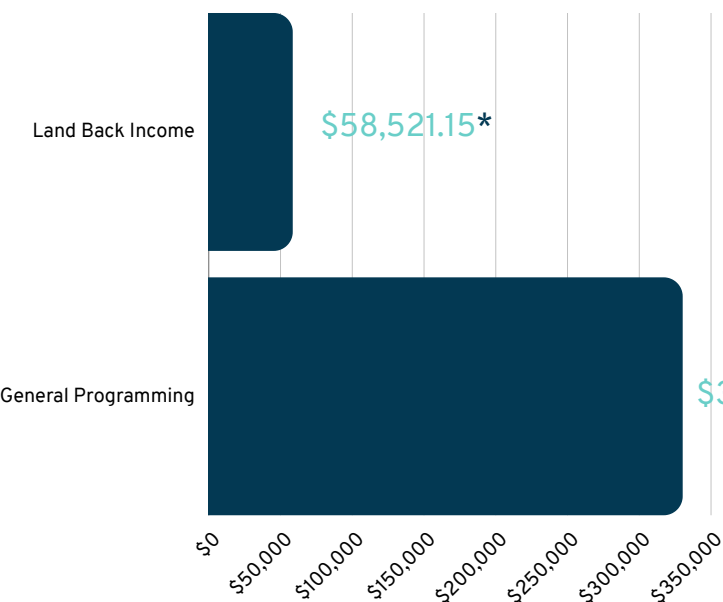
## 2023 REVENUE

|                                    |                     |
|------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Corporate & Foundation Grants:     | \$132,040.00        |
| Donations Directed by Individuals: | \$256,689.33        |
| Investment Income:                 | \$43.76             |
| <b>Total Revenue:</b>              | <b>\$388,773.09</b> |



**Net Income: \$300,568.43**

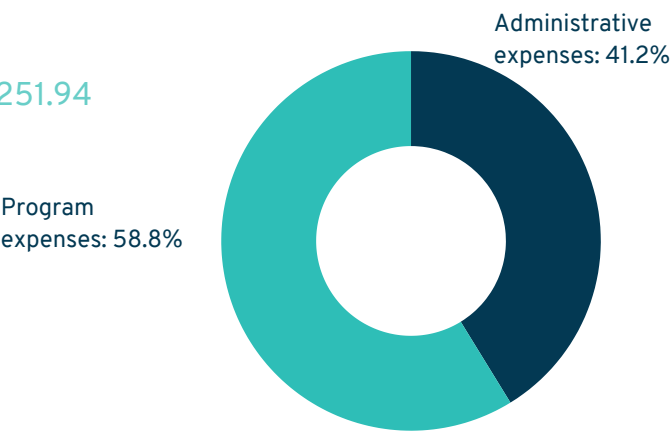
## 2023 INCOME BY PROGRAM



\*includes \$26,765.00 from 2020-2021 GoFundMe Land Back campaign

## 2023 EXPENSES

|                        |                    |
|------------------------|--------------------|
| Administrative:        | \$36,360.23        |
| Programs:              | \$51,844.40        |
| <b>Total Expenses:</b> | <b>\$88,204.63</b> |



|                     |                     |                     |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| <b>Assets:</b>      | <b>Liabilities:</b> | <b>Net Assets:</b>  |
| <b>\$277,122.60</b> | <b>\$0</b>          | <b>\$277,122.60</b> |

As we move into another promising year, IRRF is thrilled to announce the hosting of the 3rd Huckleberry Camp, an initiative that has blossomed into a cornerstone of our community engagement. In 2024, we are also placing a heightened focus on the Land Back movement, underscoring our commitment to ecological stewardship and cultural preservation.

A highlight of next year will be the Roots Ceremony on Whidbey Island. This ceremony is a testament to our dedication to honoring our heritage and deepening our community bonds. Recognizing the importance of traditional crafts, we are allocating more time and resources to these vital cultural expressions, ensuring they remain a vibrant part of our community's fabric. In addition, we are committed to the introduction of seasonal gatherings – a step toward strengthening our communal ties throughout the year.

Our journey is one of collective effort and shared vision. We continue to seek collaboration with like-minded organizations and those who share our goal of nurturing and preserving cultural and environmental legacies. We believe that through collaborative efforts and shared knowledge, we can forge a future that honors our waterways, ecosystems, and cultural traditions in a manner that is respectful and sustainable. We invite all who resonate with our mission to join us as we preserve history, culture, traditions and language through education and advocacy.

lámlamt (thank you)



## LOOKING AHEAD

What to expect from  
IRRF in 2024

*IRRF board member, Paige Reyes, and family*

# THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS

IRRF is grateful to be in collaboration with the following organizations and individuals:

**INATAI**  
**FOUNDATION**



CHELAN COUNTY



**Additional Thanks To:**  
Elders  
Steve Clem, Legal Advisor  
Language Teachers  
Craft Teachers  
Volunteers  
Individual Donors



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