



Minutes

Indigenous Advisory Council

Thursday, August 14, 2025

10:00 AM PST-4:00 PM PST

In Person Location

Kiana Lodge

14976 Sandy Hook Rd NE, Poulsbo, WA, 98370

Members Present

Councilmember Jay Mills, Tia Yazzie, Suzanne Sailto, Esther Lucero, Derrick Belgarde, and Jaci McCormack

Members Excused

Councilmember Donny Stevenson & Councilmember Jeremy Takala

Retreat Guests

Eddie Sherman, Against the Current Consulting, Francesca Murnan, Office of Intergovernmental Relations, Temryss Lane and Courtney Gooby, Pyramid Communications

Items

Number	Topic	Time
1	Welcome and Opening Blessing	30 min
	Approval of the Agenda (August Special Meeting)	5 min
2	• Approved without changes. Approval of the Minutes (July) • Approved without changes.	
3	Public Comment • No requests for public comment.	Up to 10 min
4	Reflection and Assessment • Consultant facilitated reflections on celebrating accomplishments and advancing the mission, including: Reflections on the progress made in advancing the IAC mission. A central highlight was the success of the Tribal Nations Summit, which created space for meaningful dialogue and created opportunities for collaboration. The event has laid the foundation for stronger, ongoing relationships with City partners, demonstrating the power of intentional engagement and trust-building. • A reoccurring theme throughout the retreat was the need for strong staff support. Members discussed the importance of staff that foster relationships,	90 min

build consensus, and advance the vision of the group within the City institution. Staff support has been instrumental in the IAC's accomplishments.

- Members discussed leveraging their collective knowledge and expertise to make collective recommendations. This collaborative approach has amplified the IAC's influence, ensuring that their proposals carry weight and reflect a broad, unified perspective.
- Members underscored the importance of continuing to strengthen their shared voice when engaging with elected officials. Having IAC spokespeople who bring consistent messages builds credibility, fosters partnerships, and ensures that the concerns and priorities of the IAC are heard at decision-making tables, yet there is a continued need for clarity around elevating spokespeople in a timely and strategic manner.
- The IAC's work is increasingly being recognized as a model of effective collaboration that other cities could emulate. Their ability to combine relationship-building, resource-sharing, and strategic advocacy demonstrates how advisory councils can drive meaningful changes and set a standard for incorporating Indigenous values and priorities in municipal governance.
- Member discussed the activities that are working well, including establishing goals and priorities that are clear and complementary. Members recognize that these priorities can be braided together, creating a cohesive strategy that strengthens the overall mission and ensures alignment across initiatives.
- Members are building a clearer shared vision of how the IAC can influence City policies, practices, and programs. Appreciation was given to members that have represented the IAC to the Mayor's Office and City Council over the course of several engagements.
- The group benefits from a strong diversity of backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives. This diversity enriches discussions, strengthens decision-making, and ensures that a range of voices are represented in shaping the group's direction.
- Members discussed some of the challenges experienced by the commission, including frequent turnover at City Council which creates instability and makes it difficult to maintain continuity in relationships, priorities, and commitments. Each transition requires renewed efforts to educate and engage new members.
- Members discussed capacity challenges to take on additional committee work or intensive advisory support. Members acknowledged the ongoing need to break siloes and deepen commitment to collective advocacy.
- The City must move beyond symbolic gestures and avoid tokenization, particularly around critical issues such as Missing and Murdered Indigenous People (MMIP). A key barrier is the Seattle Police Department's lack of comprehensive data, which makes it difficult to track and address these issues

	effectively. Members expressed hope for building stronger, more transparent relationships with SPD to improve accountability and trust. • Federal-level policies and bureaucratic processes often create additional barriers, slowing down local initiatives and complicating efforts to address urgent community needs. • City staff need a stronger foundation in the legal framework surrounding trust and treaty obligations. Without this knowledge, staff may unintentionally overlook obligations or fail to engage with Tribal Nations appropriately. It would be helpful to develop a curriculum for City staff that would help create opportunities to build the necessary foundation. • Members identified gaps in Native Hawaiian representation and priorities. Increasing relationships and engagement with Native Hawaiian communities is essential to creating a more inclusive and accurate reflection of Indigenous perspectives defined in the authorizing ordinance.	
5	Working Lunch • IAC members worked with staff and consultants coordinating the Tribal Nations Summit, who joined virtually, to provide feedback about planning for the event.	75 min
6	Strategic Focus Areas Discussion • Members divided into small group discussions to identify the progress and opportunities to create a foundation for success. The following themes emerged as areas of overlapping discussion among members. • Strong Relationships Across City Departments: Staff have successfully cultivated meaningful relationships with a wide range of City departments. These connections represent a strategic opportunity to amplify the priorities and needs of American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) communities. Building on these partnerships to additional departments can help the IAC ensure that Indigenous priorities are integrated into Citywide decision-making processes. • Staff Strengths and Leadership Capacity: Staff bring critical skills in relationship-building, influence, conflict resolution, and negotiation, even in complex or challenging circumstances which is important to advancing community-centered initiatives and ensuring that Indigenous priorities remain visible and respected. • Training on Trust and Treaty Obligations: A clear need exists for training among City officials and employees to deepen their understanding of trust and treaty obligations. This knowledge is essential for fostering respectful government-to-government relationships and ensuring that city actions align with legal obligations and historical commitments to Tribal beneficiaries. • Outreach and Engagement Gaps: Despite progress, there remains a lack of consistent outreach and engagement with Tribal governments and	45 min

Native communities across local issues. Strengthening these connections will require intentional strategies that prioritize listening, trust-building, and sustained dialogue.

- **Build Relationships that Implement Community Priorities:** Beyond engagement, the focus must be on building strong, action-oriented relationships that translate directly into the implementation of community-identified priorities. This ensures that partnerships are not symbolic but instead lead to tangible outcomes.
- **Spokespeople and Champions:** Councilmember Donny Stevenson and Suzanne have emerged as strong spokespeople, effectively elevating AI/AN issues and serving as trusted advocates. Their leadership demonstrates the importance of having visible champions within both government and community spaces.
- **Vital Partnerships with the Office of Intergovernmental Relations (OIR):** Collaborations have proven to be important to advancing policy goals and ensuring that AI/AN priorities are represented in broader city, state, and federal conversations.
- **Supportive City Councilmembers:** several City Councilmembers have been notably positive and supportive. Their engagement provides valuable momentum and highlights opportunities for deeper collaboration.
- **Community Resources:** Seattle Parks & Recreation's community centers were identified as vital resources for urban Native communities. These spaces provide opportunities for cultural programming, community gatherings, and youth engagement, making them key partners in advancing community well-being. Finding an organization that could steward development of an inter-tribal Native youth community center would be valuable to the Native community in Seattle.
- **Increasing Community Engagement:** Members discussed opportunities to host community engagement dinners and similar gatherings to cultivate community space, strengthen relationships, and increase understanding of additional community priorities. Capacity and resources challenges have limited ability to convene frequent engagements, but partnerships have proven to be one pathway to increasing engagement.
- Members divided into small groups discussions on priority areas for next steps including youth and family well-being, housing and homelessness, community safety, systemic transformation, and Indigenous placemaking and environmental justice.

Youth and Family Wellbeing

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- Members discussed interest in a range of youth and family wellbeing topics and explored their intersections with local government. Themes included addressing issues around Indigenous birth equity, pregnant and parenting adults, peer supports, youth development, youth mental health, third spaces for young people, education data, college and career readiness, and culturally responsive family supports.

Housing and Homelessness

- Members discussed interest in a range of housing and homelessness topics and explored their intersections with local government. Themes included addressing issues of diversifying the spectrum of shelter and housing, addressing longstanding issues with data methodologies for homelessness population data, strategies for building the capacity of Native organizations with interest in developing housing and other community assets, and discussions on how to address gentrification and displacement of Native households to other parts of King County.

Community Safety

- Members discussed interest in a range of community safety topics and explored their intersections with local government. Themes included advancing priorities around culturally attuned gender-based violence prevention and response, police violence, alternative crisis response, law enforcement data, local government awareness and understanding of Tribal law enforcement and data challenges among AI/AN populations, safety impacts from large sporting events, public health funding structures, and collaborations with state level advocacy spaces.

Systemic Transformation

- Members discussed interest in a range of systemic transformation topics and explored their intersections with local government. Themes included advancing priorities around staff education, Indian law, trust and trust obligations, codified principles of engagement, sustainable resources, and economic development.

Indigenous Placemaking and Environmental Justice

- Members discussed interest in a range of Indigenous placemaking and environmental justice topics and explored their intersections with local government. Themes include arts and cultural planning and placemaking, food sovereignty, land and habitat restoration, protection of greenspaces and waterways, and climate resilience.

	• Group discussion on strategies to advance shared priorities and the potential challenges. • Discussion of the challenges around enhancing the quality of data while protecting Indigenous data sovereignty. Discussion of the role of Tribal Epidemiology Centers and opportunities to collaborate on data repositories. • Discussion on early engagement and continuous monitoring of the city budget for potential impacts to Tribal and urban Native communities. • Discussion of creating opportunities for the Native youth to learn about city government, including the legislative process. • Discussion around opportunities to educate and train City staff on Tribal and urban Native engagement through onboarding processes and accessible learning formats. • Discussion around the importance of all the Tribal governments, urban Indian organizations, and groups that advance direct services, advocacy, and programs daily. Discussion of opportunities to elevate and amplify among local government. • Discussion of identifying City departments that are modeling best practices in working with AI/AN communities. • Discussion around strategies for strengthening communication, disseminating information to community, and developing stronger feedback loops.	
8	Action Planning • Staff and consultant reflected on next steps to develop a draft annual work plan reflective of retreat discussions and past strategic and annual plans and policy priorities.	20 min