



# 2024 INDIGENOUS LAND CONSERVATION SUMMIT IMPACT REPORT

“The land that is now known as Rhode Island is intertwined with who we are as the first stewards; we sustain the land and the waters in a reciprocal relationship with the plants, wildlife, fish and shellfish. Who we are as People means that we are free to practice our culture and our traditions with the Creator and Mother Earth. Returning lands to Indigenous people helps protect and heal our lands and waters and recognize those who came before us. **The Summit provided an opportunity to engage with other Indigenous people and to speak about our respective nations and how to continue to care for and steward the land and waters.**”

**DINALYN SPEARS**  
**NARRAGANSETT/NIANTIC**

Director of Community Planning and Natural Resources, Narragansett Indian Tribe

**On Sept. 25, 2024,** an Indigenous planning team, the Land Trust Alliance and consulting partner Gerard Rodriguez partnered to host the second ever Indigenous Land Conservation Summit. The gathering took place in Bristol, Rhode Island, and preceded Rally: The National Land Conservation Conference in Providence, Rhode Island. We were honored and grateful to be welcomed onto the homelands of the Wampanoag and Narragansett Peoples, and to have this important time to bring together our spirits for the benefit of many nations and future generations.

The Summit provided space for Indigenous people to gather to build relationships, share knowledge and be together in ceremony. Over 100 leaders and land stewards from tribal nations, Indigenous land trusts and nonprofits traveled from near and far to be in community at the Summit. Many stayed on for the Rally conference that followed and carried forward the lessons and conversations into the broader community through their participation.

The agenda included a mix of structured knowledge sharing about land access, cultural preservation, land return and stewardship, as well as dedicated time for conversation, networking, reflection and connecting to place. The agenda also included a panel with representatives from First Nations Development Institute, Native Americans in Philanthropy and Indigenous East, who shared information about grants, resources and opportunities to support the work of attendees. Other highlights included a welcome from local tribal leadership, a youth call to action, Indigenous vendors selling handcrafted beadwork and jewelry, and catering by Sly Fox Den Restaurant's Chef Sherry Pocknett (Mashpee Wampanoag), the first Indigenous woman to win a James Beard Award.

Thanks to the generous support of sponsors, the Alliance provided over \$90,000 in stipends to cover attendee travel and lodging costs and \$40,000 in sponsorships to cover registration costs for 60 attendees who stayed on for Rally.



“The Indigenous Land Conservation Summit is a unique and necessary forum for tribal nations, Indigenous nonprofits and community leaders to strengthen our relationships with our ancestral lands and waterways. **This is what Indigenizing the field of conservation looks like.** I look forward to future summits that continue to lift up Indigenous-led conservation efforts that protect and restore the lands and waters we all love.”

**JOEL MOFFETT**

**NEZ PERCE**

Vice President of Tribal Nations Engagement,  
Native Americans in Philanthropy

“I am conflicted that others are making decisions over my Ancient Ones and our Lands that are soaked with the blood of my People. I expect that [the Alliance] works to draft policies that uplift Native power and rematriate land back to the federally recognized tribes on an annual basis. It is equally imperative for [the Alliance] to diversify their board, committees and staff leadership that will reflect Native representation and balance. **I thank the Indigenous Summit 2024 for creating space for my voice to be heard.**”

**BELLA NOKA**

**NARRAGANSETT**

Tribal Elder  
Executive Officer, Native Green

“Some of us are so mired in our local struggles that we miss what’s around us. Having the opportunity to hear in detail about the work (both the challenges and victories) invigorates us as we face our own challenges. Land back initiatives locally have been energized due to workshop experiences but also the shared perspectives we gained during our social interaction. We now have new allies across Turtle Island with whom we can share ideas, resources and strategies. The collective land rematriation work benefits immensely. **I look forward to future events of this nature.**”

**CHIEF EARL H. MILLS JR.**

**MASHPEE WAMPANOAG**

## A Conservation Gathering Unlike Any Other

Attendees remarked that the Summit was unlike any other conservation gathering. Many who attended the 2023 Summit compared the second Summit to a family reunion and expressed excitement to see friends, colleagues and relatives again. The gatherings serve as more than a place for learning, sharing and connection, they have become a place for inspiration and shared vision for a more equitable future. Feedback from 2023 Summit attendees shaped the second gathering and influenced the setting, topics and balance of conversation and presentation in the program. 2024 Summit attendees shared valuable feedback in conversation and through a post-Summit survey that will likewise shape the next Indigenous Land Conservation Summit. Among this feedback were suggestions that the Summit should be extended to more than one day to provide more time for being in community, on the land and in cultural grounding through practice. Attendees reflected on the importance of the Indigenous-only space, but also expressed interest in opportunities to be in dialogue with non-Indigenous conservationists to forge new partnerships and work collaboratively toward goals that benefit tribes and Indigenous communities.

Attendees and planning partners alike are eager to maintain the momentum, learning and connections from the 2024 Summit and to see the Alliance continue to expand support for Indigenous land relationships, access and return. Relationships that have grown from the Summit are leading to important dialogue about the role of the Alliance and the land conservation sector in addressing the impacts of colonization and land dispossession. The results of this are taking many forms, such as: Alliance staff getting better connected to tribal leaders from their regions to facilitate mutually beneficial introductions and explore partnership opportunities; Indigenous consultants teaming up with Alliance staff to deliver training and coaching to land trusts; Indigenous-led land trusts becoming Land Trust Alliance members and gaining access to the benefits and resources that the Alliance provides to the conservation sector; and much more.



Photo by DJ Glisson, II/Firefly Imageworks





Photo by DJ Glisson, II/Firefly Imageworks

## Survey Feedback

Summit attendees were invited to share their feedback through a post-event survey. Thirty attendees filled out the survey, which asked them to rank their satisfaction with the event on a scale from 0 (Very Dissatisfied) to 5 (Very Satisfied). Of these responses:

**100%**

indicated that they made connections that will help them advance land stewardship, access and reclamation.

**97%**

were satisfied or very satisfied with their overall experience at the Summit.

**96%**

were satisfied or very satisfied with the relevance of topics covered at the Summit.

**77%**

said the structure of the event was well-balanced to meet both knowledge sharing and relationship building goals; 23% indicated that the gathering needed more time for conversation.

## Looking Forward

The feedback from attendees and the conversations that have grown from these gatherings highlight the work ahead for the Alliance and the land conservation sector to show up more effectively and consistently as culturally competent allies to meet the needs and goals of Indigenous communities. The Alliance is committed to both the internal work and programmatic work necessary to affect the change envisioned by our Indigenous colleagues and partners, and we are actively fundraising to support these efforts.

### In 2025, the Alliance and partners plan to:

- ▶ Launch a virtual Indigenous peer conservation network.
- ▶ Create and release a report on successful approaches to land access and return that have been developed collaboratively by Indigenous communities and land trusts.

### In addition, the Alliance is seeking resources to:

- ▶ Increase Alliance staff capacity to engage in this work, including through a new tribal liaison and Indigenous land relationships role.
- ▶ Continue to develop new resources and grant programs to support Indigenous-led conservation, grow land trust allyship, support Indigenous land relationships and expand collaborative work with tribes and Indigenous partners.

“I was fortunate to participate in the Land Trust Alliance’s inaugural Indigenous Summit in September of 2023 at Rally in Portland, Oregon. Listening and learning about the many ways Indigenous peoples were continuing to care for the land through multiple strategies (land back, land rescue, land return, land conservation, co-management, etc.) inspired me to commit deeper to my board service to the Native Land Conservancy, the first all-Native land trust east of the Mississippi, located in Mashpee, Massachusetts. **For year two of the Indigenous Summit, I was honored to join the planning team** to help create an experience that was, hopefully, as powerful and inspiring to the participants as the one I had participated in.”

**PAM ELLIS**  
**HASSANAMISCO NIPMUC**

Principal/owner, Chagwás Cultural Resource Consultants, LLC





“The Summit and integration of First People’s voices throughout Rally is an important start to the work ahead as we all live on and steward Indigenous lands. In the face of climate change, we are seeing more intense natural disasters that devastate communities. **Indigenous peoples’ reciprocal relationships with nature and its cycles provide solutions** for coming into right relationship with land and Earth’s finite resources in the face of this challenge. The Summit and Rally hold space for this to happen.”

**SHAE KAMAKAALA**  
**NATIVE HAWAIIAN**

Director of ‘Āina Protection  
at Hawai‘i Land Trust

◀ The 2024 Indigenous Summit Planning Team.  
Photo by Forrest King-Cortes

**Thank you to the attendees,  
planning team, facilitators, organizing partners and sponsors  
for making the 2024 Indigenous Land Conservation Summit possible.**

#### THE 2024 PLANNING TEAM MEMBERS

Bella Noka (Narragansett); Cristina J. Cabrera (Taíno); Darren Ranco (Penobscot); Dinalyn Spears (Narragansett/Niantic);  
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Jessa Rae Growing Thunder (Dakota/Nakoda); Pamela Ellis (Hassanamisco Nipmuc); and Shae Kamakaala (Native Hawaiian).

#### ORGANIZER



#### SPONSORS & SUPPORTERS

