

IndigenEYEZ

Annual
Highlights

2024



Photo: Aaron Hemens

liml̥əmt thank you

IndigenEYEZ is blessed
with committed funders
large and small.

We raise our hands for
every contribution
&
we honour and
appreciate each of you!



This year has marked a significant chapter in our journey, one of deep introspection and strategic refinement. Recognizing the importance of reflection, we reminded ourselves to take a step out of the rush of the river, so we could take in the whole watershed. We took this year as an opportunity to slow down to a sprint, allowing us to assess, revise, and clarify our next steps—where we'll go, what we we'll become, and who we'll grow into over the next decade.

My understanding of growth has expanded, too. While we have added to our team, inviting in fresh perspectives and strengthening the diversity of our gifts, I have also learned that growth can also mean cutting back—pruning to allow for a healthy and fruitful tree. Deciding to trim budding ideas and letting go of some of the branches has not been an easy process, but I've come to realize that it's essential if we want to deepen our roots and strengthen our core programs—the trunk of our tree.

We spent this past year laying down a foundation for sustainable growth by creating a framework rooted in syilx principles and the IndigenEYEZ vision. Over the next five years, we will strengthen our core programs, creating pathways for Indigenous facilitators to excel and carry the IndigenEYEZ movement forward. Through thoughtful nurturing, we are cultivating a tree that will reach to new heights. We are grateful for the support of our community and partners, which has positioned us for a future where our programs thrive and our facilitators shine. We look forward to continuing this journey together!

KELLY TERBASKET
PROGRAM DIRECTOR

“

I feel more confident and ready to move onwards and upwards with the teachings I have learned.

— SPARK PARTICIPANT

“

I feel revitalized and connected to the land and have found ways to connect with others.

— 13 MOONS PARTICIPANT

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LEARN WITH INDIGENEYEZ

Our vision is an intergenerational network of changemakers energized to decolonize and indigenize their communities by weaving the threads of Indigenous and mainstream approaches and knowledge. At IndigenEYEZ, leadership is not a top-down model or dependent on titles. Instead, we uphold the insight that all people have wisdom and gifts to share. It is our belief that in each and every moment there is the potential to positively influence those around us as a facilitator of change.

Through our mentorship and creative facilitation training programs, we are building a community of practitioners who are breathing life into the fire of Indigenous imagination and powering up our strength for transformation.

“

As somebody who is interested in working with children and perhaps someday starting a cultural daycare, these are skills and gifts I can give back to community, creating that positive ripple effect today and for future generations that I thought I could only dream of!

— SPARK PARTICIPANT

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The IndigiRISE mentorship has been uplifting, educational and inspirational. I've gained confidence as a facilitator, together with valuable workshop experience.

— INDIGERISE
FACILITATOR

GROWING THE CIRCLE OF INDIGENOUS FACILITATORS

In the second year of our creative facilitation mentorship program, we were thrilled to see our group of emerging Indigenous facilitators grow to seven. The IndigeRISE apprentices have been shadowing IndigenEYEZ and kinSHIFT lead facilitators and learning the ins and outs of our approach to workshop development and delivery. We're looking forward to joining our apprentices as they lead their own workshops this summer.

SPARK

Our SPARK training helps frontline workers and emerging leaders build their capacity to better connect with those they serve and to navigate the challenging situations that occur every day in community. SPARK is an Indigenous-led space to learn how to increase participation, bring all voices into the dialogue, and strengthen connection with diverse community members. This year, we introduced the Auntie role into our workshops. Aunties joined our programs, offering wisdom and a culturally safer space for participants to go during workshops if they needed to talk something out.

COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

Learning from our peers can be a powerful experience. We offered our Community of Practice as a space to connect, share and reflect. Facilitators, apprentices and Aunties were invited to join us for eight online circles where we explored different parts of facilitation from leading transformative activities to navigating broken agreements.



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I'm just getting into facilitating my own groups in person. SPARK has helped with ways I can engage and interact with my audience. Before this training, I wouldn't think of doing work on Zoom. SPARK has opened a new world for me to be able to connect with more people and communities.

— SPARK PARTICIPANT

“

13 Moons allowed me to feel safe in a space of women who I know are doing the same things, the same kind of struggles in our lives, and have experienced the same things. It created that sense of trust for me to be able to share bits and pieces of my story. We've been so ingrained in individualistic thinking. I think it's so important to bring us together because colonization has suppressed us as Indigenous women+.

— 13 MOONS PARTICIPANT

A group of Indigenous women and a baby are shown from a low angle, looking up. They are smiling and raising their hands in a circle against a cloudy sky. The woman in the center is holding a baby. The overall mood is joyful and communal.

HONOURING THE ROLES OF INDIGENOUS WOMEN+

13 MOONS

We, as Indigenous women+, carry a lot—we love big and we hold grief and anger in our bodies. Amidst the journey of multi-generational recovery, we find ourselves immersed in a struggle of overwhelming needs and limited resources. Despite this, our hearts urge us to persist and persevere so we can create change in our communities.

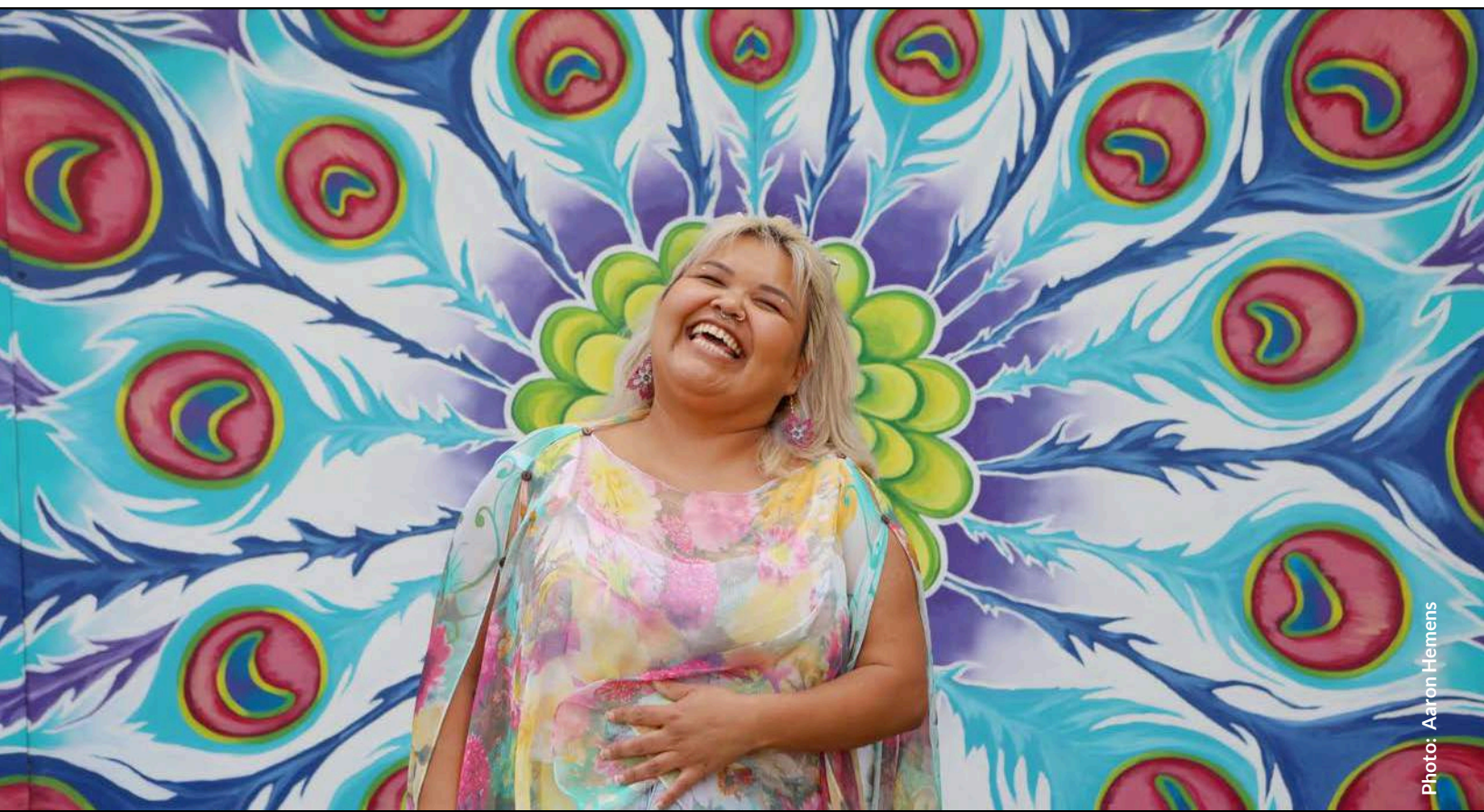
Over eight online sessions and our 3-day in-person gathering, Indigenous women+ from across BC and beyond shared what was in their hearts, minds and spirits. Our stories are our medicine, and each of us has stories that can help, heal, and inspire others.

For our third year of 13 Moons, we welcomed over 40 new and returning Indigenous women+ to our circle. Together, we reinvigorated our sense of pride, belonging and community, lifting each other up and strengthening one another's courage to reimagine the future for the next generations.

“

13 Moons helped me in so many ways. I found connection, belonging, and the power to share my voice. These sessions have added such a value to all of the work I do in my professional life, and it has helped me to ground myself in my identity. This work will ripple into my life and the lives of all those around me.

— 13 MOONS PARTICIPANT



OUR WORK WITH ALLIES: KINSHIFT & TABLE TALKS

kinSHIFT WORKSHOPS

kinSHIFT was created in response to settler allies asking how they could build more respectful relationships with Indigenous peoples and places. When we started these online workshops, our goal was to create a stream of revenue that would support our work with Indigenous communities. As kinSHIFT continues to grow into a sustaining social enterprise, we are grateful for the diverse range of people and settler-led organizations who join us around the virtual fire to learn and unlearn as we all work towards reconciliation.

www.kinSHIFT.ca

TABLE TALKS is a grassroots initiative begun in collaboration with the South Okanagan Similkaameen Community Foundation in order to share tools to support neighbourhoods to engage in courageous conversations about anti-Indigenous racism. We have enjoyed engaging with Table Talks hosts and guests who have generously shared their authenticity and vulnerability. Our vision of settlers gathered around the kitchen table engaging in meaningful conversation continues to grow as we explore partnership opportunities and expand to the boardroom table with Table Talks for a corporate audience.



My heart is full following my final session of Table Talks. A group of settler friends and I have learned and unlearned together, had difficult conversations, explored historical amnesia, the importance of connection to land, the impact of micro-aggressions, our own positionality in colonial oppressive systems, and Indigenous-specific racism, all as part of our own journeys in learning the truth, and moving towards reconciliation. And all using kinSHIFT's unique relational approach to learning."

— TABLE TALKS HOST



Photo: Jude Brunt

OUR WORK WITH ALLIES: kinSHIFT SCHOOLS

INDIGENIZING & DECOLONIZING CLASSROOM CULTURE

Our kinSHIFT in schools program helps staff cultivate safer and more inclusive spaces, exploring how we can strengthen our courage and capacity for building a classroom community with the flexibility to introduce and engage effectively with difficult topics such as colonization, genocide and residential schools. This year, we offered our kinSHIFT Schools program to a group of enthusiastic educators and staff from the Central Okanagan School District. Over four in-person, full-day workshops, facilitators supported participants to navigate the new and important journey of indigenizing and decolonizing their classrooms and school cultures.

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It's uncomfortable to sit with the feelings that come up as a settler when hearing the experience of Indigenous people, but I am understanding more and more that if I can sit with these feelings and not push them away, that my shame can be transformed into something powerful and helpful—for the greater good of all.

— ELEMENTS OF TRUTH PARTICIPANT

“

This has been a valuable experience. After each session, I'm always left with new insights especially after a creative activity. These often bring an aha moment.

— ELEMENTS OF TRUTH PARTICIPANT

OKANAGAN COLLEGE RESEARCH PROJECT

q'wítmi?st: Pulling our hearts and minds together to strengthen ourselves to face unknown challenges

IndigenEYEZ is working with Okanagan College, syilx community collaborators and community partners to innovate a program that will bring Indigenous and settler participants together to connect, co-create, integrate and transform their perspectives, skills, and capacities to create relational and systems change in their organizations and communities. Led by Dr. Natalie Cohen and Dr. Norah Bowman from Okanagan College, the KINdling q'wítmi?st project applies research methodologies that resonate with syilx principles of relationship, reciprocity, responsibility, and respect. The project name speaks to how our creative empowerment methodologies work to kindle the syilx concept of q'wítmi?st.



CELEBRATING AN ENDURING PARTNERSHIP

Our multi-year partnership with UBC Okanagan, “Co-Curricular-Making: Honoring Indigenous Connections to Land, Culture and the Relational Self,” is coming to an end, though we are confident that the relationship growing between IndigenEYEZ and Dr. Margaret Macintryre Latta and her team at the School of Education will continue to produce opportunities for meaningful collaboration.

Since 2020, we have had the pleasure of connecting with educators from across syilx homelands through online roundtables and powerful in-person gatherings. It has been immensely fulfilling and inspiring to dream together and co-create a more equitable future for the next generation of changemakers.

“

Each workshop I take away something that is difficult to articulate.

Much of the information itself is not new, but due to the teaching style, I understand and feel the information on a different level.

— ELEMENTS OF TRUTH
PARTICIPANT



“

You could say what you wanted and say what you felt.
There was support and people could relate.
There were words of guidance and support.

— HERON PARTICIPANT

snk'lip | coyote-artwork by Sofia Auger Nybida

INDIGENIZING: HERON

Following the positive feedback we received after its pilot year, HERON returned for a second season offering a series of six workshops for Indigenous peoples who live or work in settler-dominated spaces.

HERON offers opportunities for participants to explore authenticity, integrity, and the masks they feel called to put on when working with settlers. This year, participants engaged in discussions about white supremacy culture and how it shows up in themselves and others in work environments. They shared their reflections and experiences with each other, offering and receiving support around drawing strength from Indigenous ways of being and knowing. We continue to host this series so that participants can walk away feeling revitalized and confident in themselves, their values, their emotions and in the important roles they hold.

“

I can see why HERON is really valuable. It's rich in the safety and comfort it provides. Folks are so willing to share, which is so unlike the corporate world where people don't openly share or make space for it.

— HERON PARTICIPANT

OUR WORK WITH YOUTH

We're grateful for ongoing invitations to get involved with Indigenous youth. The heart of our work has been—and continues to be—to encircle the our young people with the support and resources they need to create and sustain thriving healthy communities.

SYILX YOUTH & SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP PROGRAM

In response to the lack of syilx facilitators and the growing interest from settler-led organizations to collaborate with syilx peoples, the idea for a youth training program emerged, spearheaded by Okanagan Nation Alliance, IndigenEYEZ and local social impact hub, Purppl.

This fall, syilx youth ages 18-35 are invited to partake in a six-month social entrepreneurship program that will support them to build confidence, communication, and collaboration skills, preparing them for income-generating opportunities. The program seeks to provide a supportive environment that validates and uplifts their indigeneity and 'syilx smarts.'

WARRIOR CAMPS

IndigenEYEZ facilitators are thrilled to return to two upcoming youth camps this year. We will again be engaging with youth from three Nations— syilx Okanagan, Secwépemc and Ktunaxa— when they gather for the third annual Salmon Warriors Camp, part of the larger Bringing the Salmon Home Columbia River Salmon Reintroduction Initiative.

www.columbiariversalmon.ca

We'll also be facilitating the second annual Language Warriors Camp, a syilx youth-led nsyilxcən language revitalization project.



It helped me decolonize my mindset, and fill in the gaps that western society fails to fill.

— 13 MOONS PARTICIPANT



THE FUTURE: INDIGENEYEZ INSTITUTE

Our work invites all voices to create the movement needed to strengthen our communities, revitalize the circle around our children, and transform the systemic patterns that disconnect us. This is how we heal relationships and lift up the next generations. Colonization fragmented Indigenous ways of being. IndigenEYEZ is rebuilding this thread-by-thread, relationship-by-relationship. Only by growing the capacity of communities to realize their own hopes and dreams can we make real impact. This is our purpose. We teach skills to engage more deeply, share the vision more clearly, and keep going even when it gets tough.

Our focus now is to refine our existing trainings, test them within a sequenced micro-credential pathway, and develop and deepen partnerships with communities that have identified a need for greater capacity to steward collective change work. All of this is laying the foundation for our ambitious plan to scale up to launch the IndigeRISE Institute. The Institute will serve as a home for our trainings and will provide a learning ecosystem with credential recognition where people can follow their own learning pathway and return over time as they are ready to learn more.

“

My mindset has shifted. I feel worthy of a leader. 13 Moons showed me how much I have to offer as a leader for my family, and community and, hopefully, one day, the land.

— 13 MOONS PARTICIPANT

INDIGENOUS IMAGINATION—LIBERATED!

FROM THE INDIGENEYEZ NEWSLETTER | JANUARY 2024
BY AARON HEMENS

What does strengthening our creativity have to do with indigenizing? At IndigenEYEZ, we frequently get asked this question. Some people find it hard to see the value of the arts-based practices we use in our workshops. To help explore this question, we reached out to two syilx Nation members who are passionate about creativity and its power for transformation—Carrie Terbasket and Warren Hooley.

Carrie is a member of the Lower Similkameen Indian Band (LSIB). Before going to UBC Okanagan and graduating this past year in Cultural Studies, Carrie had spent most of her working life in environment conservation where she was helping to find new technical measures to protect the land and waterways. After spending 20 years in that field, she had come to realize that the most powerful way to caretake for the land is through building community and getting people back out on the land.

“I think that at the heart of healing and moving forward is authentically seeing our communities as something that’s rooted down into land and expressed through our own hands - living in the power of who we are. It is about coming together. It’s about learning how to be in relationship with each other again.”

Warren Hooley is a creative and professional development facilitator originally from the Penticton Indian Band (PIB). Currently living in Vancouver his career has spanned over the past 13 years including the facilitation of over 2,500 workshops on the topics of creative facilitation, decolonization and community building.

Warren explains that creativity is the ability to have an idea and then bring it into life. He points out that our society only encourages those who show talent to express themselves through the arts.

“As we grow up and as we go through our high school years, we can often be made fun of for any creative expression including singing, dancing and drawing etc. In the Indigenous world we see art forms as a way of healing. It doesn’t matter whether you’re good at it or not! It is about the inherent value of being seen and heard and known for your stories and who you are.”

For Carrie, who now works as a writer and researcher with IndigenEYEZ, education and self reflection during her time in the Cultural Studies program helped her realize that nurturing, exploring and expressing creativity is key to community development.

She sees creativity as being at the root of Indigenous resurgence—as being the path to freedom for Indigenous people living in a colonized world. “It finally clicked in my head that in the colonized world, we’re meant to believe that we are individuals, and that we are separate and apart from everybody and everything else,” she said. “syilx creativity is never in isolation from others, syilx resurgence and self-determination will never come from inside that colonial box - it’s there, we have to reckon with it, but it is not ours.”

IndigenEYEZ Newsletter article continued...

Warren echoes these same insights. He says that we live in a world of unbalanced systems, where the Western world prioritizes certain values like productivity, independence and mind-based intelligence over creativity, self care and relationship building.

In this context, he says, creativity can help restore some of that balance that has been lost.

“There is value and great benefit to everyone if we find a way to bring more balance to the values we prioritize in society. With a little more focus on community building, creative expression, self care and emotional intelligence I believe a lot of the detriment of the Western capitalist world can be negated or minimized.” he says.

Carrie has come to see that creativity is really just an expression of our connection to the land and to the world around us. “It’s almost like a collaboration, in a way. For example, writing in collaboration with a river; the thoughts and ideas that come while you’re listening to the river—wouldn’t you say then, that the river is a part of what comes out?” she says.

She believes that the connections she’s made to the land through her writing are also a way for her to connect with her ancestors. “The Indigenous perspective of time isn’t linear. It isn’t this one straight line. If you look at the ‘yil’ word in ‘syilx’, it’s about the spiral that continuously binds and goes on forever, constantly coming back to itself as it moves and evolves through time” she explains.

In addition to being a writer, she now views herself as an artist, a title that has taken her a long time to accept.

“I think that art is our way outside of the colonial box. It doesn’t have to make sense, everybody can do it. It doesn’t have to be beautiful, it doesn’t have to be capital ‘A’ art. Everybody can do it. I think that is such a healing medicine. It’s almost like a place of respite because it is exhausting living in a colonized world.”

For Carrie, being creative is the most powerful medicine she’s ever found. “It shows me more of who I am—and who I am is a lot more than just the individual, the ego, or this one singular body,” she says.

“Our ancestors are right—we are never alone. There are always ways to tap into that connection. Creativity is a way to actualize our infinite web of connections, including our ancestral ties.”





IndigenEYEZ Newsletter article continued...

But to be creative, to be vulnerable, and to show your whole self— can be scary. “Being vulnerable is such a privilege. Vulnerability can be dangerous for an Indigenous person,” she says. “IndigenEYEZ is able to create that safe space of healing as an offering, a welcoming, an invitation to rest. It is a chance to let yourself be seen. A chance to play and to laugh.”

Similarly, Warren notes that judgment— something that is so common in the Western world—is likely the biggestcrippler of creativity.

“Creativity offers so much benefit to our lives, to our self esteem and our ability to heal and express ourselves. It’s about being able to take an idea and have the confidence and sense of security to bring it into the world. It’s trickier to step into our creative ability when we know we will be met with more judgement than support. Creativity just might be humanity’s greatest resource.” he says.

“We have to think of creativity in an Indigenous context, which is not the same as it is in a colonial context,” Carrie says. She believes that Indigenous creativity is needed, no matter how small it is—or whether the world sees it or not. “It might just be for yourself. It might be freeing yourself a bit so that you can be a better auntie, uncle, or untie - mom or dad, grandma or friend.

Because that is also an outcome of self expression. It’s putting your best forward for your loved ones,” she says. “It doesn’t have to be hanging your painting in an art gallery. Creativity can be being the best auntie you can be.”

Carrie says that being in touch with our creativity, our gifts, our interconnectedness—and finding a way to express all of that—is a form of Indigenous creativity that is necessary to healing and strengthening our communities. “Certainly, our ancestors knew all about the power that each person has. Expressing that power, enacting that power, and offering our gifts out to the community—that is how we survive,” she says.

Carrie points to the work being done by IndigenEYEZ to build community through creativity and play. “That is helping to ignite change in small spaces,” she says. “Can you imagine being in community and being able to create with your community members? Sharing space and truly seeing one another - that is world changing!”

“I think that’s the ultimate goal when IndigenEYEZ brings creativity into workshops. Because at the heart, it is creativity that will build strong community.” ■

We gratefully acknowledge that syilx knowledge and nsyilxcən language and translation has been shared by various knowledge holders and language speakers from within our syilx nation. Indigenous peoples of the syilx nation are the exclusive owners of our cultural and intellectual properties.



IndigenEYEZ



kinSHIFT

Photo: Aaron Hemens

As a project on MakeWay's shared platform, IndigenEYEZ benefits from the governance, human resources, financial, and grant management oversight provided by MakeWay. Strategic direction and daily management of activities sits with the IndigenEYEZ team.



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