CANAR MID-YEAR CONFERENCE JUNE 3-5, 2025



Strength of the Salmon: Navigating, Adapting and Thriving in Adversity

Tribal Language Translations

"Strong Salmon" "Strength of the Salmon" "The Salmon Power"

nacó'xna qepsqéps TITOQATIMT NEZ PERCE, PALUS

ntiytiyáx šxa?xáš

nxa?amxčín DIALECT



NXA?AMXČÍN MOSES-COLUMBIA, WENATCHEE, ENTIAT, CHELAN

swələx^w ?ə tə sčədadx^w LUSHOOTSEED AT NISQUALLY TRIBE

i? ntytyix i? sxaxá?s NSƏLXCIN OKANOGAN, METHOW, NESPELEM, SAN POIL LAKES, COLVILLE



Welcome, Your Coming is Good. ? by t ?as?isilp,

On behalf of the Cowlitz Indian Tribe, it is our honor to extend a warm welcome to all of you as you gather for the 2025 Mid-Year CANAR Conference here in Washington State. This year's theme, "Strength of the Salmon. c'éptani tit sálwax" resonates deeply with the Cowlitz Indian Tribe, as the salmon is not only an important part of our ecosystem but also a powerful symbol of resilience, perseverance, and renewal-values that are at the heart of our culture and our work.

The journey of the salmon parallels the strength we see within our communities. The salmon's return to its birthplace, navigating through countless obstacles, represents our shared resilience and commitment to overcoming challenges, healing, and ultimately thriving. As we come together for this conference, we are reminded of the power of collaboration and unity as we work toward strengthening the well-being of American Indian and Alaska Native communities and supporting culturally responsive rehabilitation services.

The Cowlitz Indian Tribe understands that our people have long relied on the rivers and lands of this region, with the salmon playing a central role in our traditions, diets, and ceremonies. This sacred connection teaches us the importance of stewardship, respect, and balance, all of which guide our work today as we partner with others to build a future where our communities can flourish.

We are excited to share knowledge, collaborate, and learn from one another during this conference. We hope that over the course of this event, you will feel inspired and empowered to continue this journey of healing and transformation in your own communities. We look forward to the conversations, insights, and partnerships that will emerge from this gathering.

Together, we will continue to move forward with the strength of the salmon – resilient, united, and ever moving toward a brighter future.

Thank you. náxwłqwul'as

Sincerely,

COWLITZ INDIAN TRIBE

William B. Iyall, P.E. Tribal Chairman

The Forever People

PO Box 2547 ↔ Longview, WA 98632-8594 ↔ Office: (360) 577-8140 ↔ Email: @cowlitz.org



The Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation P.O. Box 150, Nespelem, WA 99155 (509) 634-2200



FAX: (509) 634-4116

Friday, April 25, 2025

Welcome to the 2025 Mid-Year Strength of the Salmon Conference

Welcome to the beautiful Pacific Northwest and the Consortia of Administrators for Native American Rehabilitation's 2025 Mid-Year Strength of the Salmon Conference in Spokane, Washington.

For decades, the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation have shared a common voice for our region with the five area tribes to protect and enhance our natural resources by bringing salmon home to the Upper Columbia. The theme for this conference is fitting as we navigate, adapt, and thrive in adversity-united for the benefit of all. Attending this conference will allow you to do the same, navigate and network with conference attendees, adapt and grow in workshops and breakout sessions, and participate in recovery talking circles to help you thrive in challenging times as the salmon have.

As we continue to take proactive and collaborative steps, our influence can exceed expectations in fostering independence, inclusion, and integration. While progress may vary among individuals, the methods and practices you implement will support and safeguard everyone involved.

I encourage all participants and visitors to build camaraderie and support and share each other's vision for healthy communities.

I am confident that this conference will exceed your expectations. Lastly, I want to express my my gratitude to everyone for attending. Your commitment is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Mr. Jarred-Michael Erickson

Chairman



SQUAXIN ISLAND TRIBE



Dear CANAR Conference Participants,

On behalf of the Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation Programs of Washington State, it is an honor to welcome you to the CANAR Midyear Conference, Strength of the Salmon, here in Spokane, Washington. We are delighted to host Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation Programs from across the nation in our beautiful homeland.

Washington, known as the Evergreen State, is graced with vast and abundant forests, where towering evergreens stand as symbols of resilience and endurance—qualities reflected in the strength of our Native communities. The waterways that nourish these lands have long served as vital highways for the Squaxin Island Tribe, the "People of the Water." Their ancestral name, Squawksin, from the Lushootseed language, means "in between" or "a piece of land to cross over to another bay," a reminder of the deep connection between our lands, waters, and people.

The Strength of the Salmon theme resonates deeply in our region. Salmon have sustained our communities for generations, embodying perseverance, adaptability, and renewal—qualities that also define our shared commitment to empowering Native individuals through vocational rehabilitation. In addition to salmon, Washington offers an abundance of natural resources, including geoduck, Dungeness crab, oysters, shellfish, apples, cherries, and the renowned Walla Walla sweet onions. These resources reflect the rich traditions and economic strengths of our Tribal nations.

As you gather, share knowledge, and strengthen collaborations, we hope you take time to experience the natural beauty, culture, and hospitality of our region. It is with great pride that we welcome you to our part of the country and look forward to a meaningful and productive conference.

Kristopher Peters

Kristopher Peters Squaxin Chairman



Spokane Tribe of Indians

P.O. Brox 100 · Wolfpinit, WA 99140 · (609) 458-6600 · Frox (509) 458-6675

May 5, 2025

Dear Conference Attendess,

It is both an honor and a pleasure to welcome you to Spokene, Washington, for the 2025 CANAR Mid-Year Conference. On behalf of the Spokene Tribe of Indians, we extend a warm greeting to all participants, speakers, aponsors, and organizers who have come together for what promises to be an inspiring and impactful event.

The Spokane Tribe is especially honored to host this gathering on our ancestral homelands. Our people once inhabited more than three million acres across northeastern Washington, and at times extended our hunting, fishing, and gathering grounds into what is now idaho and Montana. As one of the Interior Salish-speaking tribes, we share cultural and linguistic connections with the Goeur d'Alene, Kalispel, Colville, San Poll, Nespelem, Okanagan, Lakes, the Shuswap of Canada, and the Pend Oreille and Salish of the Flathead Reservation.

Our ancestors were river people, living a semi-nomadic lifestyle centered around the resources gifted by the Creator. They settled along the banks of the Spokane and Columbia Rivers and throughout their tributaries, relying on the waterways for their primary sustenance. Salmon, steelhead, oct, and shellfish made up roughly 60% of their diet, reflecting a deep connection to the land and water that continues to guide us today.

The theme of this conference, "Strength of the Salmon: Nevigating, Adapting, and Thriving in Adversity," holds profound meaning not only for our tribe but for indigenous communities across the nation. Like the salmon, tribes throughout Indian Country have endured challenges and change with resilience and strength—adapting, surviving, and thriving through adversity.

We are proud to host such a distinguished group of professionals, experts, and thought leaders in the field of Vocational Rehabilitation. This conference provides an invaluable opportunity for networking, collaboration, and knowledge sharing. We believe the ideas and innovationa discussed here will play a critical role in advancing American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation and uplifting Native communities.

As you participate in the sessions, workshops, and conversations throughout this event, we encourage you to also experience the rich culture and hospitality of the Spokane region. Our area is known for its breathtaking rivers, tribally owned enterprises and casinos, and Spokane Tribal landmarks. We hope you take time to explore and enjoy the beauty and spirit of our homeland.

We extend our deepest gratitude to everyone who helped make this conference possible—and to each of you for your dedication to this vital work. We look forward to the lasting impact this gathering will have on our communities and beyond.

Thank you for being part of this important event. We wish you a productive, inspiring, and enjoyable experience.

Sincerely,

Gregory K Abrahamson, Chairman Spokane Tribe



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May 9, 2025

Welcome to the 2025 CANAR Midyear Conference in Beautiful Spokane, Washington! Our theme this week is "Strength of the Salmon: Navigating, Adapting, and Thriving in Adversity."

Just as the salmon perseveres through challenging currents, you too have continuously shown resilience in supporting others. This week, the planning committee has been intentional in creating space for you—to reflect, renew, and reconnect with your purpose. As those who give so much of themselves in service to others, it is essential that you take the time to prioritize your own self-care.

My hope for each of you is that you leave this week feeling stronger, more grounded, and deeply reminded that a healthier you benefits not only your well-being but everyone you serve. I encourage you to reflect on one or two ways you can begin putting yourself first—whether that means setting boundaries you've delayed, or allowing others to care for you when needed. Many of us struggle with this, so let's use this time to support one another in the practice of care.

A heartfelt thank you to the Tribes and AIVRS programs across Washington State and other areas who have contributed their time and energy to help plan this conference. Your dedication has not gone unnoticed, and we are truly grateful for your partnership.

I look forward to seeing each and every one of you this week and sharing in this time of growth, collaboration, and renewal.

Warmest regards,

Emma De La Cruz, MHR, LPC

President, CANAR

Agenda at a glance

Day 1: Tuesday, June 3th

7:30 AM - 8:45 AM Breakfast - Grand Ballroom A Welcome - Grand Ballroom A 9:00 AM - 9:30 AM 9:30 AM - 9:45 AM Break 9:45 AM - 12:00 PM CANAR Membership Meeting - Grand Ballroom A 12:00 PM - 1:30 PM Lunch on Your Own CANAR Membership Meeting (Cont.) - Grand Ballroom A 1:30 PM - 3:00 PM 3:00 PM - 3:30 PM 3:30 PM - 5:00 PM Talking Circles - Meeting Room 1, 2, 4, & 5 5:00 PM - 6:00 PM AIVRTTAC Gathering - Grand Ballroom A 6:30 PM - 8:30 PM Fish Wars Documentary - Grand Ballroom A Recovery Talking Circle - Grand Ballroom A 9:00 PM - 10:00 PM

Day 2: Wednesday, June 4th

7:30 AM - 8:45 AM Breakfast - Grand Ballroom A 9:00 AM - 10:00 AM Opening Ceremony, Welcome & CANAR Highlights - Grand Ballroom A 10:00 AM - 10:30 AM Break 10:30 AM - 12:00 PM Keynote - Grand Ballroom A Lunch on Your Own 12:00 PM - 1:30 PM 1:30 PM - 3:00 PM Break Out Sessions - Meeting Room 1, 2, 4, & 5 3:00 PM - 3:30 PM Break 3:30 PM - 5:00 PM Break Out Sessions - Meeting Room 1, 2, 4, & 5

6:00 PM - 7:00 PM Glow Walk - Grand Ballroom A

8:00 PM - 9:00 PM Recovery Talking Circle - Grand Ballroom A

Day 3: Thursday, June 5th

7:30 AM - 8:45 AM Breakfast - Grand Ballroom A 9:00 AM - 10:00 AM Keynote - Grand Ballroom A

10:00 AM - 10:30 AM Break

10:30 AM - 12:00 PM Keynote - Grand Ballroom A

12:00 PM - 1:30 PM Lunch on Your Own

1:30 PM - 3:00 PM Break Out Sessions - Meeting Room 1, 2, 4, & 5

3:00 PM - 3:30 PM Break

3:30 PM - 5:00 PM Break Out Sessions - Meeting Room 1, 2, 4, & 5

6:45 PM - 9:00 PM Banquet and Closing Ceremonies - Grand Ballroom A

9:00 PM - 10:00 PM Recovery Talking Circle - Grand Ballroom A

CRC and CEU Credits Provided





ATTENTION

If you need **CRC credits** for attending this conference, you need to pick up a **COLORED BLUE** CRC attendance verification form at the registration table and have a room facilitator verify your attendance **AT EACH SESSION YOU ATTEND**.

Please be sure to list your name and email address legibly, and turn in your completed CRC form at the end of the conference in the collection box at the registration table.

<u>Completion of evaluation forms in each session is mandatory for receipt of CRC credits.</u> Your CRC credits will be emailed to you by the CANAR CRC Committee.

If you need <u>CEU credits</u> for attending this conference, please pick up the same verification form at registration and have your sessions stamped by a room facilitator. At the end of the conference, you will turn in your completed form at registration and pick up a <u>CEU certificate</u>.

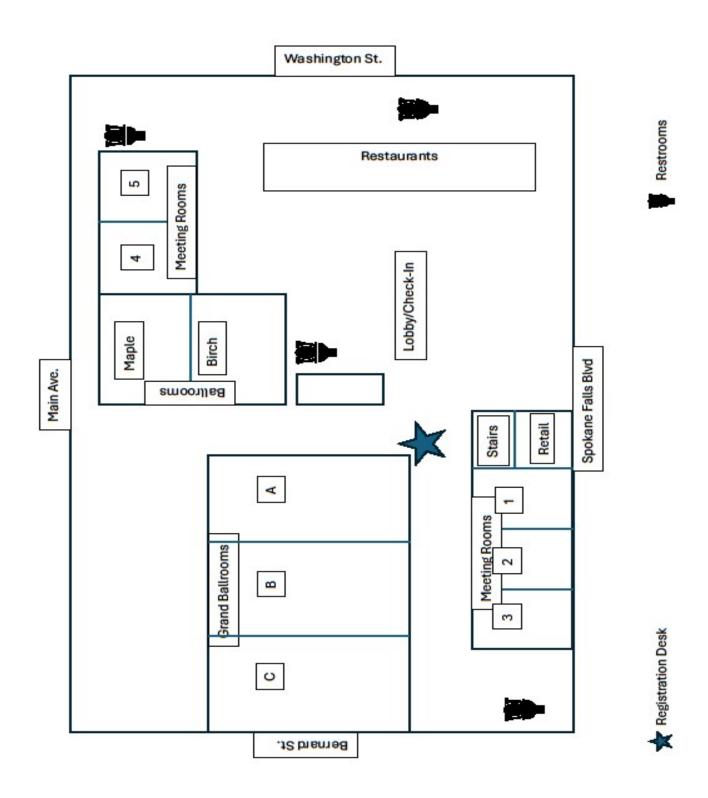
If you do not need CRC or CEU credits, you will not need to worry about getting these forms.

For more information, contact: Mary Lundy Meruvia, CANAR Membership Coordinator mary.meruvia@choctaw.org

OR

Adi Schaeffer, Events Manager, Northern Arizona University Adi.Schaeffer@nau.edu

The Historic Davenport Hotel Hotel Map





Welcome from the 2025 CANAR Executive Board

The CANAR Executive Board extends a warm welcome to our annual conference, set in the beautiful city of Spokane, Washington! We deeply appreciate the significant effort and sacrifices many of you have made to join us. Your presence is truly valued, and we offer you our most sincere greetings.

A CANAR conference offers a uniquely supportive atmosphere, characterized by evident mutual admiration and respect. The CANAR Executive Board acknowledges and celebrates the remarkable and dedicated work you undertake within your communities. This conference serves as a testament to our collective achievements.

We would especially like to recognize and thank the Washington Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation Programs for their exceptional contributions to this conference and for the thoughtful touches that promise to make it a truly meaningful experience. With deep respect, we also honor all the Indigenous communities who have played a role in this gathering. We are grateful for your enduring wisdom, knowledge, and vibrant presence in this land.

Our conference theme, "Strength of the Salmon: Navigating, Adapting, and Thriving in Adversity," deeply resonates with the vital work we do. Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation recognizes and builds upon the inherent strengths and cultural wisdom within Tribal communities, empowering individuals to overcome employment barriers. This journey emphasizes resilience, strategic adaptation, and continuous progress, ultimately fostering meaningful and sustainable vocational success that honors individual potential and Tribal values.

We encourage your full participation in all aspects of the conference – from the insightful general and breakout sessions to the engaging evening activities. Embrace the opportunities to learn, connect, and network with fellow TVR professionals and our valued partners. Finally, the CANAR Board expresses our heartfelt gratitude to each of you who generously volunteered your time and energy to bring this event to fruition. Your contributions are invaluable, and we are deeply thankful for your support.

VFW Color Guard

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS

VFW Color Guard

Merwin "Gene" Brisbois proudly served in the United States Army from September 1971 to August 1978. During his military career, he was stationed in Germany, Korea, and various locations across the United States. Gene was awarded the National Defense Service Medal and the Good Conduct Medal in recognition of his service. Gene retired from the Spokane Indian Housing Authority after working 20+ years for them. Today, Gene continues his dedication to service as Wellpinit VFW Post 10711 Chaplain. He remains committed to supporting his community, offering help and guidance to fellow veterans and those in need.

Alfred "Al" Hubert served in the U.S. Army National Guard from March 1983 to March 1984, and later in the U.S. Army Reserve. Al has dedicated much of his life to serving his community. He has worked as an EMT for the Spokane Tribe for the past 13 years, providing vital emergency care. In addition, he spent 10 years working at the Tribe's Post and Pole operation, 10 years supporting cultural preservation efforts, and six years at Two Rivers Casino. Through his continued service in various roles, Al remains a committed and valued member of the Spokane Tribal community.

Aaron Scott served in the United States Marine Corps Reserves for six years. During his service, he was called to active duty for Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm from January 14, 1991, to June 20, 1991, and participated in the NATO Exercise Battle Griffin 91 from February 28, 1991, to March 17, 1991. In recognition of his service, Aaron was awarded the National Defense Service Medal, the Sea Service Deployment Ribbon, and the Rifle Expert Badge. Today, he continues his leadership and dedication to service as a Department Manager at the Spokane Tribe Casino.

Cheryl Covington served in the United States Marine Corps from June 3, 2001, to June 4, 2005. During her service, Cheryl was deployed to Kuwait and Iraq in 2003, where she provided security at pop-up camps along convoy routes from Kuwait to Baghdad, Iraq, ensuring the safe passage of military personnel and supplies. In 2004, she was deployed to Africa, where she served in her Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) of disbursing. She was also stationed at various locations across the United States. Cheryl completed the Corporals Leadership Course during her time in the Marine Corps. After her military service, Cheryl continued to serve her community through several roles with the Spokane Tribe.

Opening Prayer





Carol Evans is the past Chairwoman of the Spokane Tribal Business Council and is the first woman to serve as Tribal Chair. Prior to being elected to the Spokane Tribal Council in 2013, she worked twenty-eight years as the Chief Financial Officer for the Spokane Tribe of Indians. Carol graduated from Eastern Washington University with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Business Administration and retains a CPA Inactive Certificate from the State of Washington.

On Jun 12, 2013, Carol took oath of office for the Spokane Tribal Business Council. She is the second woman to be elected for a Tribal Council position and her mother, Pauline Stearns, was the first Tribal Council woman of her Tribe. Carol resides on the Spokane Indian Reservation along the banks of the Spokane River with her husband, Terry Evans, of forty-six years. They have four children ranging from twenty-six to forty-five years of age. Also, they are blessed with nine beautiful grandchildren and love spending time with them.

Carol truly believes that our spiritual tradition shows us the way to live in harmony and balance that includes a deep conviction to respect all things. One must respect self, our earth and each other as these are all gifts from our Creator. Each and every matter of creation has a purpose, and one purpose is as important as another. Shay u hoy (that is all).

Drum Group



Bad Canyon drum group is from Wellpinit Washington, on the Spokane Indian Reservation and other reservations. We love to sing and love to travel because sharing our medicine to sing to and for others, is medicine to us. We are grateful for the drum as the drum takes care of us and brings us to places, we wouldn't think we would be at today. Bad Canyon thanks you for having us today! If you would like to contact us, feel free to at: 360-739-4201 or email Corraljrg@gmail.com

Conference Artist Spotlight



I am a simple man so the description of this logo is simple as well. The Strength of the Salmon walks hand in hand with our own. The Salmon has been here with us since the beginning and like us, has endured impossible odds. Survivors.

Marty "Mojo" Andrews
PO Box 82
Inchelium, WA 99138
(509) 680-2609
mojo_andrews@hotmail.com

Glow Walk Artist Spotlight



The salmon jumping out of the water is a representation of navigating challenges and adapting to its environment. Just like the salmon faces upstream currents and obstacles, the leap shows its strength and determination to thrive in adversity.

The canoe and tipi represent the journey and the tools used to navigate through life. Just as canoes are used to travel across water, they symbolize the means by which people navigate their own challenges and paths.

Valerie Adrian Coeur d'alene Tribe

Conference EMCEE

Thank you to the Conference Emcee, Dave Madera, for being the Conference Moderator and Event Facilitator.



My name is Dave Madera, an enrolled member of the Spokane Tribe and a proud descendant of the Arrow Lakes Band of the Colville Confederated Tribes. I am the son of Bernadine Villegas and Dave Madera Sr., and I honor my grandparents - Adaline Peters and Hank Wynne on my father's side, and Mary Marchand and John Baptiste Seymour on my mother's side.

I currently live on the Spokane Indian Reservation with my wife, Markalene Madera. I have the privilege of teaching culture at Wellpinit Elementary School, where I find great joy in working with the students. We are blessed with six sons, one daughter, and eight wonderful grandchildren.

For over ten years, I've been honored to serve as a Master of Ceremonies at powwows and public events. This role has given me the opportunity to meet many incredible people, travel to new places, and continue learning along the way. My journey has been deeply rewarding and humbling, filled with growth and shared experiences.

Conference Banquet Entertainment

Thank you to Isaac Tonasket for providing the CANAR Conference Entertainment!



Isaac Tonasket is an enrolled Colville Tribal Member and a descendant of the Spokane Tribe. Isaac has lived his entire life on the Spokane Indian Reservation. Isaac is deeply rooted in his culture and Tribal Traditions. Isaac is a musician, a social media influencer, motivational speaker, and entrepreneur.

FISH WAR DOCUMENTARY

Thank you to Tim Peone for presenting the Fish War Documentary to the CANAR Mid-Year Conference participants!







Tribal Fish Hatchery. Tim is a member of the Spokane Tribe, has lived his entire life on the Spokane Indian Reservation aside from 4 years attending College at Eastern Washington University (EWU) where he gained a biology degree in 1988, served as a fishery biologist for EWU from 1988-1990, and from 1990 to present serves as the Manager of the Spokane Tribal Fish Hatchery. Tim's favorite pastime is family time, his favorite hobbies are hunting and fishing with his wife Tonya Peone, he has 4 kids and 7 grandkids. Culturally, spiritually and personally Tim is passionate about operating the hatchery to ensure its primary objective of providing meaningful Tribal subsistence and Sport recreational fisheries in Lake Roosevelt.

THANK YOU TO CANAR'S INCREDIBLE VOLUNTEERS! THIS EVENT WOULD NOT BE POSSIBLE WITHOUT YOU!

CANAR MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE:

Rachel Allen

Diana Baker

Gina Bundy

Debbie Davenport

Iamie Emanuel

Rebecca Holland

Feather Holt

Jolleen Laverdure

Amanda Race

Tricia Robertson

Angie Santa Ana

Mary Lundy Meruvia

CANAR MID-YEAR CONFERENCE SESSION FACILITATORS:

Beanie Alexander

Rachel Allen

Merchaylee Bell

Cami Falcon

Celeste Hunt

Vickie Hunt

Dr. Tammy Keller

Kimlyn Lambert

Jolleen Laverdure

Laurae MacClain

Mary Lundy Meruvia

Selena Phillips

Amanda Race

Chervl Revels

Bobbie Rosa

Mary Ross

Teresa Sarabia

Paula Seanez

Karlie Jackson Smith

Carol Strader

Yolanda Tova

Joyce Tsosie

CANAR LEADERSHIP COMMITTEE:

Rachel Allen

Iackie Iohn

Adrian Smith

Ernest Oberst

Nadine Lamotte

CANAR CONFERENCE PLANNING COMMITTEE:

Darrin Cisco

Paula Thomas-Smith

Wayne Dagel

Rebecca Holland

Christopher Zilar

Iana Finkbonner

Ashton Pewenofkit

Diana Baker

Carmela Falcon

Iim Allen

Amber Sutterlict

Alyssa Ford

Lorrie Ellsworth

Melissa Williams

Chelsie Brann

Laurae MacClain

Mary Dupuis

Rossetta LaClair

William Marchant

Lovinia "Beani" Alexander

Kyle Rogers

Ashley Whitefoot

CANAR BYLAWS COMMITTEE:

Rebecca Holland

Marie Parker-Strahan

Laurae McClain

Iana Finkbonner

Toonie Pierce

Jackie John

Christa Martin

Taushina Wilson

Susie Calhoun

CANAR POLICY AND ADVOCACY COMMITTEE:

Christopher Zilar

Alana LittleBird

Cami Falcon

Leila Taylor

Mary Lundy Meruvia

CANAR PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS AND RESEARCH COMMITTEE:

Emma De La Cruz

General Session Keynote Presenters

Wednesday, June 4, 2025 10:30am - 12:00pm Shajira Brown & Elizabeth Layman Strength in Stories: Building Financial Resilience Through Lived Experience

Thursday, June 5, 2025 9:00am - 10:00am Christopher Zilar How to Talk to Your Legislators

Thursday, June 5, 2025 10:30am - 12:00pm Warren Seyler Spokane Tribe History, Culture, and Traditions

Keynote Bios

Shajira Brown & Elizabeth Layman Strength in Stories: Building Financial Resilience Through Lived Experience



Shajira Brown is Director Community Partnerships at National Disability Institute etc.at National Disability Institute (NDI), where she leads the Community Partnership Initiative to ensure that both internal and external efforts reflect fairness and inclusivity for people with disabilities. With over a decade of experience in human services, Shajira brings deep grassroots knowledge and a strong professional background to her work. Her past roles include Psychiatric Rehabilitation Worker, Manager of Special Projects, and Director of Social Services.

Shajira earned her Bachelor's Degree in Professional Studies from the City University of New York–Medgar Evers College and a Graduate Degree in Public Administration from the University of Baltimore. Outside of her professional life, Shajira is passionate about spreading joy in her local community by hosting candle-making classes. She's a proud mom of two amazing boys—a rambunctious 4-year-old who's obsessed with magnetic building blocks and a 19-year-old lacrosse enthusiast. Shajira has been happily married for 8 years to her incredibly handy husband, whose ability to fix just about anything helps the family save money regularly.

Elizabeth (Liz) Layman is a Director at National Disability Institute (NDI). She has subject matter expertise at the intersection of health, financial empowerment and technology. Since 2015, she has developed curricula for FDIC's Money Smart and CFPB's Your Money, Your Goals; managed user experience research for tech giants; and collaborated with community development organizations like Prosperity Now and Financial Health Network. Most recently, Liz led a national study on the



impact of autonomous vehicles on employment and entrepreneurship for people with disabilities. Liz earned her bachelor's in English and Disability Studies at the University of California, Berkeley and her master's in Public Health at the George Washington University. Outside of her professional life, Liz is passionate about food systems. She co-leads a Girl Scout troop of precocious 11 year olds, who love composting, gardening and cooking. Liz's preferred form of exercise each week is preparing huge trays of food with paddle-sized spatulas for elders in her community. She is married to her high school sweetheart, and they are happily eating their way through Washington, D.C.

Keynote Bios

Christopher Zilar How to Talk to Your Legislators

Christopher Zilar works for Spokane Tribe of Indians as the director of Vocational Rehabilitation; he has been there since 2016. Previous to this work, he has been a truck driver, school teacher, HIV prevention specialist, and manager for a local chamber of commerce that focused on diversity and inclusion. Christopher says he receives more out of his work than he is able to give. In his current job, he witnesses respect for elders, the sanctity of life, and prioritization of family over all else. Christopher has completed three medical mission trips to



Rwanda, a country in central Africa. He still has several friends living in Rwanda, one of whom he unofficially adopted and helped move to the US. Christopher and his wife live about an hour NW of Spokane, WA, on the Spokane River right across the river from Spokane Tribe's land. They have six grown children, two grandkids, a dog, and a cat. They spend much of their free time developing their land, camping, traveling, or just sitting by the river and holding hands.

Warren Seyler Spokane Tribe History, Culture and Traditions



Warren Seyler is a member of the Spokane Tribe of Indians, a historian and storyteller. He served fifteen years on the Spokane Tribe's Business Council during a period of that time he held the position of Tribal Chairman. While in this capacity he took a leadership role in national, regional and local tribal social, economic and educational issues. Recognized for his efforts he was appointed by President Clinton to the National Advisory Council on Indian Education (NACIE). For the past 18 years he has worked in the Spokane Tribes Department of Natural

Resources (DNR) managing the BPA Coordination office. Developing a college student internship program assisting tribal members to learn about future natural resource careers. Today he concentrates his time educating others in the region about the Spokane Tribe of Indians, their past, their present and their future. In 1910 the famed American artist Edward Curtis visited the Spokane's country. Later Curtis wrote "We have always wronged the Indian, but the greatest wrongs we are doing him today are born of our misunderstanding him." Warren hopes by change this misunderstanding by providing truths of tribal history.





Breakout Sessions

Sicangu Vocational Rehabilitation Program Dr. Tammy Keller

No Abstract Provided

Outreach to Veterans and Their Families Amy Claridge & Buck Richardson

The presentation will reach out to all individuals that have contact with Veterans and their family members through their normal course of work, to assist them in understanding the programs & benefits available through the Veterans Administration that the Veterans earned while serving in the different branches of the Military. The presenters will also introduce the attendees to the new programs available in the VA to Veterans & family members to help them with Healthcare and Benefit access which they may or may not understand how to utilize.

TVR Post-Employment Services Wayne Dagel & Rebecca Holland

This breakout session offers an overview of Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation (TVR) Post-Employment Services (PES). Participants will gain practical knowledge through information sharing, training, and group discussion, focusing on how to effectively support American Indians and Alaska Natives with disabilities in maintaining and advancing their careers. We will explore how PES, grounded in individualized plans for employment (IPEs) and culturally relevant support, aims to ensure job retention and career growth. Attendees will learn the foundational principles of PES and gain insights into the timing and delivery of this vital VR service.

The Five Feathers Employment Training Program Caleb Titus

No Abstract Provided

Key Elements of Holistic Tribal VR Project Services Lee Gaseoma & Jon Ringlero

The key elements of a holistic Tribal VR Project focus on the provision of culturally responsive and appropriate services based on the participant's needs and preferences while respecting diverse cultural backgrounds. It also requires the Tribal VR Counselor to consider the four domains of a participant's physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional needs, and the environment in which the participant resides. And involves understanding the cultural factors that may influence the individual's vocational goals, support system, and overall success in achieving gainful employment. Learning about the participant's beliefs, values, traditions, communication styles, and informed choice will ensure that the participant fully understands the TVR journey.

American Indian and Alaska Native in VR Programs: A Scoping Review Elizabeth Boland, PhD & Jamie Emanuel

No Abstract Provided

TVR Self-Employment: Finding Your Profit Point Catherine Ipsen, PhD & Rebecca Holland

Self-employment is an important employment option for people with disabilities. The Tribal Self-Employment Toolkit (TVR SET) was developed to support AIVRS counselors in serving consumers who express an interest in self-employment. Building on past CANAR presentations, this session provides participants with hands-on experience with the financial side of business start-up. During this session, participants will work in teams to develop a business idea, pricing a product, and determine how much they will need to make and sell to break even. Participants will learn a few terms such as variable costs, fixed costs, and capital costs and how to use worksheets included in the TVR SET website to do a break-even analysis and sales forecast. We hope that these experiences are fun and provide insights on how to support consumers who are interested in starting their own businesses. Come to this session to fulfill your entrepreneurial passions and learn about business planning.

Region X VR Coalition - Stronger Together Susie Calhoun, Kelly Franklin & Keith Oxols

No Abstract Provided

School to Work: Partnering for a Seamless Transition Melinda Bocci, Mistie Larch, & Amber Lehman

School-to-Work creates a student-focused experience that leads to community-based jobs as students transition from school into the working world. Through collaboration with DSHS' Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, students who experience intellectual and developmental disabilities have choices. They help in the creation of their employment goals, they decide which provider they want to help support their employment endeavors, and they choose where they want to work. With the passing and implantation of Senate Bill 5790, students across the state can now have access to this opportunity. The new School-to-Work program, recently launched as a pilot, provides various payment points along the way for direct service outcomes. It also identifies the roles and responsibilities of individual members of the student's support team and provides monthly progress reports to them. This informational session will introduce a passage into the transition world. It will provide the chance to explore the big picture of transition and learn more about the new School-to-Work pilot. It will also give an opportunity to experience the Student Guide and ask questions of the School-to-Work team from the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation.

Lakota Legends: Animal - Assisted Therapy Project Dr. Tammy Keller

No Abstract Provided

Creating a Container for Online Service Delivery Kimber Olson

It is difficult to provide the guidance and counseling that are so important in our vocational rehabilitation work on an online platform. We may feel uneasy or nervous about providing a group or individual structure to our TVR participants in a Zoom or other online setting. This workshop will examine how to safely, effectively, and ethically provide a container that will help both the counselor and the TVR participant be fully present, engaged, and contained.



Supporting Job Seekers with Criminal Backgrounds Christa Martin

This interactive presentation will guide participants in effectively supporting job seekers with diverse criminal backgrounds, building their confidence in serving this often-marginalized population. Recognizing the disproportionate representation of individuals with disabilities in the justice system, this session will provide essential tools, resources, and practical takeaways. Participants will learn how to empower clients as self-advocates and how professionals can become stronger allies, ultimately aiming to improve job retention and reduce recidivism. Key topics will include understanding background checks, exploring expungement options, navigating applications and interviews, and leveraging resources like federal bonding and the Work Opportunity Tax Credit.

Lifecycles: A Pathway to Yoyot-ness LaDonna Bluff & Melodi Wynne, PhD.

No Abstract Provided

New Tribal VR Directors: What You Really Need to Know But Didn't Know to Ask

Cami Falcon & Christopher Zilar

Taking on the role of a Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation (TVR) Director is both an honor and a challenge. Yet, many of us enter this vital position without a full understanding of the responsibilities, expectations, or unspoken rules that come with it. Stepping into the role of a TVR Director is a complex responsibility—one that often begins with more questions than answers. This session, Everything I Wish I Knew as a New TVR Director, But Didn't Know to Ask, is designed to support new and emerging TVR leaders by sharing practical insights gained through lived experience. Presenters, Cami and Christopher, will help participants understand federal reporting requirements and navigating relationships with the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), to building trust with Tribal leadership and delivering culturally grounded services. This presentation explores the many facets of the director's role that are rarely covered in orientation. Participants will walk away with a clearer understanding of their responsibilities, tools for more effective program management, and guidance for building sustainable, community-centered VR services. Whether you're just beginning your TVR journey or looking to strengthen your foundation, this session offers candid advice and support every new director needs—but often doesn't know to ask for.

Pre-Apprenticeships: Individualized Creative Workforce Development Mary Dibiase & Wayne Dagel

No Abstract Provided

Inviting the Sacred Wound into Circle: RE-Storying Indigenous Mind-Body Medicine Kimber Olson

Indigenous communities have recognized the necessity to heal from historical trauma and current harm. This presentation will delve into a strengths-based Indigenous approach to reconnecting with self, land, community, and spirit through established Indigenous mindfulness practices inherent in their neuro-informative nature. By intertwining ancient wisdom with contemporary scientific evidence, this model encourages participants to uncover something equally emergent and restorative within themselves. Together, we will practice Indigenous mindfulness, learn about research results undertaken with Indigenous co-researchers, and access free resources to integrate these practices into your work or community.











ATTENTION: CANAR, Inc. Has a New Address



Please update your records! CANAR, Inc. has established a new address to receive mail. Many Tribal finance offices still have old CANAR addresses, leading to confusion with checks and communications. To avoid further issues, please instruct your finance offices to delete all old CANAR addresses and add the permanent address below to their systems. This change has been communicated via the 121 list-serve, CANAR Constant Contact, the AIVRTTAC AWU newsletter. Here is the address change:

CANAR, Inc. 1100 Poydras Street, Ste. 2900 PMB# 6885 New Orleans, LA 70163

Navajo Nation Celebrates 50 Years of Providing Tribal VR Services!

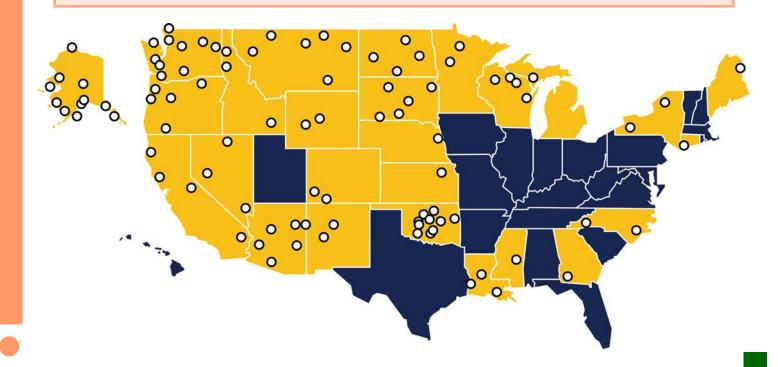


The Navajo Nation proudly invites you to commemorate a landmark occasion – the **50th Anniversary of the very first Tribal VR Program!**

Our Story: "The Power of Self-Determination in Advancing Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation," speaks to the strength of our collective spirit. We are thrilled to offer all members a chance to engage with powerful stories that shape our legacy.

Plans are underway for our celebration in the month of **October 2025**. Further details about specific dates for this gathering, as well as information on hotels and registration, will follow in due course. We hope you will join us in honoring this milestone.

AIVRS Funded Projects



American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Services

Project Directory (93 Grantees in 26 states)

Alaska	Pacific	Rocky Mountain
Alaska (12 grants)	California (4)	Wyoming (2)
Northwest	Western	Montana (6)
Washington (11)	Nevada (3)	Idaho (3)
Oregon (5)	Arizona (5)	Southwest
Great Plains	Eastern	Colorado (2)
North Dakota (4)	Connecticut (1)	New Mexico (2)
South Dakota (5)	Maine (1)	Midwest
Nebraska (1)	Michigan (1)	Minnesota (2)
Southern Plains	New York (2)	Wisconsin (4)
Kansas (1)	Georgia (1)	
Oklahoma (10)	Mississippi (1)	
A CONTRACTOR	North Carolina (2)	
	Louisiana (3)	

CANAR HISTORY



After the passage of the Rehabilitation Act Amendment in 1992, considerable actions were taken to enhance cultural competence in rehabilitation service delivery, increase outreach and services to persons with disabilities from diverse populations, and develop recruitment strategies of persons from diverse backgrounds to work in areas of rehabilitation. The Amendments required the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services with the U.S. Department of Education, to develop a national strategic plan, known as the Rehabilitation Cultural Diversity Initiative (RCDI) that would implement priority training on issues of cultural diversity to all programs funded under the Rehabilitation Act.

Between 1992 and 1993, several RCDI meetings were coordinated by the Region VIII Rehabilitation Continuing Education Program (RCEP) to address the current service delivery system within Section 121 (130 at the time) funded American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Services Projects (AIVRS). Issues and concerns were expressed regarding initiating and improving tribally-appropriate vocational rehabilitation service provision on reservations nationwide, since State VR services and administrative plans often conflicted with tribal norms, eventually leading to high rates of unsuccessful closures among Native American clients. As a result, on January 22, 1993, the Consortia of Administrators for Native American Rehabilitation (CANAR) was established to function as a national platform for advocating the need for effective rehabilitation service delivery for American Indians and Alaska Natives with disabilities. The CANAR serves as the official voice of Native American rehabilitation programs, which provide VR services to American Indians and Alaska Natives with disabilities who reside on or near Federal or State reservations, Alaska Native villages, rancheros, and pueblos. CANAR addresses the strengths, resources, interests, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, and informed choice (the GREAT 8) of American Indian and Alaska Native consumers so they may engage in, obtain, or retain gainful employment, including self-employment, telecommuting, and business ownership.

After the CANAR met its first five-year initiative (1993-1998), their administrative offices relocated from Region VIII RCEP at the University of Northern Colorado to the American Indian Rehabilitation Research and Training Center (AIRRTC) located at the Institute for Human Development, an Arizona University Affiliated Program at Northern Arizona University. The CANAR continues to form collaborative working relationships with Northern Arizona University through involvement with the American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Training and Technical Assistance Center - AIVRTTAC), the Northwest Indian College TVR Institute, state rehabilitation agencies, tribal health and social service programs, Capacity Building Projects, and federal services agencies, such as the U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Labor. Partnering with these organizations allows the CANAR to promote the needs of AIVRS projects and make sure their voice is heard so that American Indian and Alaska Native consumers are served in a culturally appropriate and beneficial manner.

CANAR TIMELINE

1975-

First grant to American Indian Tribe to operate VR program, Arizona State VR Agency funds Navajo Nation.

1981

Regulations published for the operation of AIVRS projects

1993

January - CANAR Formed July - Denver, Colorado Established at University of Northern Colorado under RSA's Rehabilitation Cultural Diversity Initiative

1995

*Region 10 Conference on Native America Vocational Rehabilitation

1997

October - Bellevue, Washington "CANAR Annual Conference"

1999

February - Seattle, Washington
"Symposium on the Reauthorization of
the Rehabilitation Act"

2000 - Present

CANAR continues to provide advocacy and support for the AIVRS Programs.

1978

Rehabilitation Act amended to establish Section 131 to make grants to American Indian Tribes

1986

Section 131 project directors establish an ad-hoc group, the American Indian Vocational Directors' Association, a precursor to CANAR.

1994

August - Polson, Montana
"Summer Institute for Section 130
American Indian Vocational

1996

April - Albuquerque, New Mexico

"1996 National Conference on Native American Rehabilitation" (Sponsored by CANAR and Region 8 Rehabilitation Cultural Diversity Initiative

October - Bellevue, Washington
CANAR Annual Conference

1998

October - Seattle, Washington "CANAR Annual Conference"

1995 - 2000

Native American Rehabilitation meeting held in Choctaw,
Mississippi. Started as a cooperative training agreement with the state VR agency, but partners were invited from across the country. This grew into a national conference. Beginning of the CANAR Mid-Year Conference.

CANAR CONFERENCE HISTORY

2008 - 2024

YEAR	MID-YEAR CONFERENCE	ANNUAL CONFERENCE
2024	Chandler, Arizona Hosted by Arizona TVR Programs	Las Vegas, Nevada Hosted by Nevada TVR Programs
2023	Niagara Falls, New York Hosted by Seneca Nation and St. Regis	Costa Mesa, California Location Conference
2022	No Conference	Tulsa, Oklahoma Hosted by Oklahoma TVR Programs
2021	No Conference	No Conference
2020	No Conference	No Conference
2019	Mashantucket, Connecticut Hosted by Mashantucket Pequot TVR	New Orleans, Louisiana Hosted by Louisiana TVR Programs
2018	Prior Lake, Minnesota Hosted by White Earth TVR	Scottsdale, Arizona Hosted by Arizona TVR Programs
2017	Tulsa, Oklahoma Hosted by Oklahoma TVR Programs	Las Vegas, Nevada Hosted by Nevada TVR Programs
2016	Baltimore, Maryland Location Conference	Alpine, California Hosted by Sycuan TVR
2015	Myrtle Beach, South Carolina Hosted by Lumbee TVR	Salt Lack City, Utah Location Conference
2014	Albuquerque, New Mexico Hosted by New Mexico TVR Programs	Panama City Beach, Florida Hosted by Lower Muscogee Creek TVR
2013	Billings, Montana Hosted by Montana TVR Programs	Portland, Oregon Hosted by Oregon TVR Programs
2012	Niagara Falls, New York Hosted by Seneca Nation TVR	Seattle, Washington Hosted by Washington TVR Programs
2011	Green Bay, Wisconsin Hosted by Wisconsin TVR Programs	Orlando, Florida Hosted by Lower Muscogee Creek TVR
2010	Myrtle Beach, South Carolina Hosted by Lumbee TVR	San Diego, California Hosted by Sycuan TVR
2009	Anchorage, Alaska - Hosted by Alaska TVR Programs	Norman, Oklahoma Hosted by Oklahoma TVR Council
2008	Niagara Falls, New York - Hosted by Sene- ca Nation TVR	Phoenix, Arizona Hosted by Navajo Nation OSERS

CANAR CONFERENCE HISTORY (CONTINUED)

1989 - 2007

VEAD	MID VEAD CONFEDENCE	ANNUAL COMPERENCE
YEAR	MID-YEAR CONFERENCE	ANNUAL CONFERENCE
2007	Savannah, Georgia Hosted by Lower Muscogee Creek TVR	Washington, DC Location Conference
2006	Green Bay, Wisconsin Hosted by Wisconsin TVR Programs	Seattle, Washington Hosted by Western WA University
2005	Rapid City, South Dakota Hosted by Standing Rock TVR	Seattle, Washington Hosted by Western WA University
2004	Coeur d'Alene, Idaho Hosted by Coeur d'Alene TVR	Seattle, Washington Hosted by Western WA University
2003	Savannah, Georgia Hosted by Lower Muscogee Creek TVR	Seattle, Washington Hosted by Western WA University
2002	Green Bay, Wisconsin Hosted by Wisconsin TVR Programs	Seattle, Washington Hosted by Western WA University
2001	Oklahoma City, Oklahoma Hosted by Oklahoma TVR Council	Seattle, Washington Hosted by Western WA University
2000	Choctaw, Mississippi Hosted by Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians TVR	Seattle, Washington Hosted by Western WA University
1999	Choctaw, Mississippi Hosted by Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians TVR	Seattle, Washington Hosted by Western WA University
1998	Choctaw, Mississippi Hosted by Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians TVR	Seattle, Washington Hosted by Western WA University
1997	Choctaw, Mississippi Hosted by Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians TVR	Bellevue, Washington Hosted by Region 10 RSA
1996	Albuquerque, New Mexico Hosted by Region 8 RSA	Bellevue, Washington Hosted by Region 10 RSA
1995	Mid-Year Conference Begins	Bellevue, Washington Hosted by Region 10 RSA
1994	N/A	Polson, Montana Summer Institute for Section 130 AIVRS
1993	CANAR Formed in January 1993	Polson, Montana Summer Institute for Section 130 American Indian Vocational AIVRS
1989	1st Annual 130 VR Directors' Conference	Salt Lake City , Utah

SPECIAL EVENTS

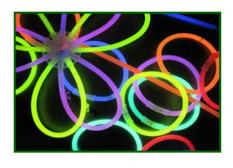
Recovery Talking Circle Evenings - Location TBA All in Recovery are Welcome





Tuesday Night
Fish War Documentary
7pm: Grand Ballroom A
Highlights the violent struggle faced by
Indigenous nations to exercise their
treaty-protected right to harvest salmon
in the Pacific Northwest

Wednesday Night Glow Walk (First 75 to Show Up Get a T-shirt) Meet in Grand Ballroom A at 6pm





Wednesday All Day
"Rock Your Mocs"
Wear Traditional Clothing to Showcase
Your Unique, Individual Tribal Identities!

Nominations for Staff of the Year

Director/Manager of the Year

Debbie Davenport (Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma)
Jennifer Brower (Inupiat Community of the Artic Slope)
Chelsie Brann (Samish Indian Nation)

Counselor/Case Manager of the Year

Tammy Cooper - Woodrich (North Intertribal TVR Program)

Support Staff of the Year

Roxanne Pluff (Coeur d'Alene TVR Program)
Brooke Whipple (Pinoleville Pomo Nation)
Merchaylee Bell (Mississippi Band of Choctaw)
Tia Wadena (White Earth Nation)

Meet Your CANAR Executive Board



President
Emma De La Cruz
State of Oklahoma DVR
Okemah, OK

Vice President
Treva Roanhorse
Former Director,
Navajo Nation OSERS, AZ

Treasurer
Christopher Zilar
Spokane Tribe VR Program
Wellpinit, WA

Secretary
Jana Finkbonner
North Intertribal VR Program
Bellingham, WA



Membership Coordinator

Mary Lundy Meruvia

Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians VR Program

Sargent at Arms Rebecca Holland

Choctaw. MS

AIVRTTAC, Northern Arizona University Billings, MT Former Director, Pueblo of Jemez TVR, NM



Member at Large
Amanda Race
Tanana Chiefs Conference TVR

Fairbanks. AK

PRESIDENT Emma De La Cruz



Emma is recognized as a leader who values working with others and thrives in an environment of continuous improvement. Emma has a passion to help others reach their goals and achieve their full potential. She is a licensed psychotherapist. Emma has dedicated the past eleven years to Muscogee Creek Nation, serving in a managerial capacity. Her focus has been on overseeing nonprofit federal grants dedicated to the American Indian population across a thirteen-county service area, exhibiting versatility in various roles. She currently works for the Oklahoma Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. In her role as an educator, Emma has imparted knowledge in various areas and describes herself as a lifetime learner. Students not only regard her as an educator but also as a mentor, benefiting from her guidance. Beyond the educational realm, Emma has served as a licensed psychotherapist

in hospitals and outpatient clinics. Her intrinsic drive has earned her accolades from patients who describe her as an inspiration and a compassionate presence during their times of need. As a director, she effectively leads her staff, emphasizing teamwork through her actions, not just words. Emma has successfully managed two federal grant programs, showcasing her proficiency in policy writing and grant management. Outside of work, Emma finds joy in continuous learning, volunteering, spending quality time with family, reading, and exploring new destinations through travel. Emma's multifaceted experiences and unwavering commitment reflect a professional who excels both in leadership and as a compassionate team member.

VICE-PRESIDENT Treva Roanhorse



Treva Roanhorse is a member of the Navajo Nation and fluent in the Navajo language with strong values of Navajo traditional culture and the way of life. Treva resides on the Navajo Nation in New Mexico. She is the former President of the Consortia of Administrators for Native American Rehabilitation (CANAR) and former Director of Navajo Nation Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services. Currently, Treva is an Advisory Council member with Northwest Indian College Tribal Vocational Institute and an advisor to Find Their Way Program for Native American Youth Transition with the Sonoran Center for Excellence in Disabilities with University of

Arizona. She is also an advisor to Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) RRTC. Treva was elected CANAR Vice-President in December 2023 for a two-year term.

TREASURER Christopher Zilar



Christopher Zilar works for Spokane Tribe of Indians as the director of Vocational Rehabilitation; he has been there since 2016. Previous to this work, he has been a truck driver, school teacher, HIV prevention specialist, and manager for a local chamber of commerce that focused on diversity and inclusion. Christopher says he receives more out of his work than he is able to give. In his current job, he witnesses respect for elders, the sanctity of life, and prioritization of family over all else. Christopher has completed three medical mission trips to Rwanda, a country in central Africa. He still has several friends living

in Rwanda, one of whom he unofficially adopted and helped move to the US. Christopher and his wife live about an hour NW of Spokane, WA, on the Spokane River right across the river from Spokane Tribe's land. They have six grown children, two grandkids, a dog, and a cat. They spend much of their free time developing their land, camping, traveling, or just sitting by the river and holding hands.

SECRETARYJana Finkbonner



Jana Finkbonner, is a member of the Lummi Nation. Lummi Nation is located primarily on a 5-mile peninsula, northwest of Bellingham; ancestral land includes Washington's northernmost coast and southern British Columbia. She currently lives in Bellingham with her two beautiful children, supportive boyfriend, and extended family. She has worked for the Stillaguamish Tribe of Indians as the Director of the North Intertribal Vocational Rehabilitation (NIVRP) Program for the past 16 years. NIVRP is a consortium grant that provides VR services to five Tribes in three counties. Before working with the Stillaguamish Tribe, she worked for 11 years at the Lummi Nation Employment

and Training Center. Before her work in the employment and training field, she worked for various programs at Northwest Indian College. Her dedication to providing education and vocational opportunities within tribal communities is what brings her great joy.

MEMBERSHIP COORDINATOR

Mary Lundy Meruvia



Mary Lundy Meruvia, Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC), is the Program Director for the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians' Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program. She has worked for the tribe since 1988, beginning as a Rehabilitation Counselor and Vocational Evaluator. She has been active in CANAR (The Consortia of Administrators for Native American Rehabilitation), holding office, chairing a committee, or fulfilling work tasks from 1993 when she became Program Director; and is a member of the National Rehabilitation Association and its state chapter, the Rehabilitation Association of Mississippi. She is also an appointed member of the Mississippi State Rehabilitation Council of which

she is the current Chairperson. Mary lives near Philadelphia, Mississippi. In her time outside of rehabilitation work, she enjoys following in her father's footsteps as an aspiring farmer, producing Certified Tree Farm timber and commercial beef cattle on a fourth-generation family farm. Her biggest life accomplishment has been raising three productive adults: Ouida, William, and Sophia.

SARGENT AT ARMS Rebecca Holland



Rebecca Holland began her career in vocational rehabilitation in 1994. She is currently a Vocational Rehabilitation Coordinator for the NAU AIVRTTAC team. Prior to that, she worked for the State of Montana as a VR Counselor Supervisor in Billings, Montana. Before moving to Montana in 2020, Rebecca worked as the program manager for the Jemez Vocational Rehabilitation Program at the Pueblo of Jemez in New Mexico for 14 years and cultivated an excellent TVR program for the Tribe. She began her work in vocational rehabilitation with the Albuquerque Veteran's Administration and worked as their psychometrist. She holds a Master of Science degree in Rehabilitation Counseling from San Diego State University with a CRC certification and has a certificate from San Diego State University in Post-Employment Training in American Indian Rehabilitation (PET-AIR). She has

held various board positions on the State Rehabilitation Council, the Statewide Independent Living Council and currently is the Sargent at Arms for the CANAR. She also serves on the Advisory Board for the TVR Institute at Northwest Indian College and serves on the Advisory Board for the University of Montana, Disability and Rural Institute Tribal VR Self-Employment website. Rebecca has 2 children and 5 grandchildren. Her husband and children are enrolled members of the Cherokee Nation. Rebecca loves being an advocate for individuals with disabilities and particularly enjoys her work with Native American/Alaska Native Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation Programs. She is a passionate person who believes that every human being has a right to a satisfying, fulfilling and independent life.

MEMBER AT LARGE

Amanda Race



Amanda Race, MA, CRC, is the TVR Coordinator/Counselor for the Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC) Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation program since January 2008. She has over 30 years' experience working with people with disabilities. She has spent 25 of those years working at TCC, a Tribal Consortia of 42 Federally recognized Tribes in the Interior of Alaska. Amanda moved to Fairbanks in 1986 to attend the University of Alaska Fairbanks from Summerville, South Carolina, near Charleston Naval Base. Her father was in the

Navy most of her life. She began school in Scotland and lived in Iceland, Hawaii, Ohio, Illinois and West Virginia. Amanda received a Master's Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling from Western Washington University in December 2007 through a RSA scholarship. She has been a Certification for Rehabilitation Counselor since April 2008. Amanda was elected Member-At-Large for CANAR in December 2023 and is on the CANAR Conference Planning Committee, CRC Ad Hoc & Conference Facilitator Committees. She loves to spend time with her family in Colorado, her friends and her partner, Daniel, of 19 years. She has two cats, her fur family, and enjoys reading, playing trivia games, listening to music, watching the Fairbanks Ice Dogs hockey team and going to movies.

CONFERENCE COMMITTEE CHAIR Darrin Cisco



Darrin Cisco is a member of the Apache Tribe of Oklahoma, and 20-year veteran of tribal VR. Since his youth Darrin was taught traditional ways by his parents, grandparents, relatives, elders, and elders of neighboring tribes. He attends, participates in, and conducts ceremonies, and other cultural events all over the country. Darrin is the proud father of five boys and five girls in which

he passes on the tribal culture and language. Darrin is one of the tribes' cultural historians and one of a very few that still speak and teach the Apache language. Darrin was appointed as the chair of the CANAR Conference and Planning Committee in June 2023.

LEADERSHIP COMMITTEE CHAIR Rachel Allen



Rachel is the current director of the Delaware Nation Vocational Rehabilitation Program, which covers 8 counties in Oklahoma. Prior to becoming the director, Rachel served as a VR Counselor for 4-1/2 years in tribal VR. Other experience includes working as a disability determination specialist with the Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services, which consisted of processing Social Security Disability Insurance applications, working with an NIH-funded study to reduce the risk of heart disease for American Indians in SW Oklahoma through the University of Oklahoma Health Services Center (Balance), and doing contract work for the

Native American parent technical assistance program (Visions). Rachel received her Bachelor of Science degrees at Oklahoma State University in psychology and zoology, and her Masters of Science in Rehabilitation Counseling from San Diego State University, where she participated in the Post Employment Training-American Indian Rehabilitation (PET-AIR) program. Rachel is a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC).

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND RESEARCH COMMITTEE CHAIR

Emma De La Cruz



Emma is recognized as a leader who values working with others and thrives in an environment of continuous improvement. Emma has a passion to help others reach their goals and achieve their full potential. She is a licensed psychotherapist. Emma has dedicated the past eleven years to Muscogee Creek Nation, serving in a managerial capacity. Her focus has been on overseeing nonprofit federal grants dedicated to the American Indian population across a thirteen-county service area, exhibiting versatility in various roles. She currently works for the Oklahoma Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. In her role as an educator, Emma has imparted knowledge in various areas and describes herself as a lifetime learner. Students not only regard her as an educator

but also as a mentor, benefiting from her guidance. Beyond the educational realm, Emma has served as a licensed psychotherapist in hospitals and outpatient clinics. Her intrinsic drive has earned her accolades from patients who describe her as an inspiration and a compassionate presence during their times of need. As a director, she effectively leads her staff, emphasizing teamwork through her actions, not just words. Emma has successfully managed two federal grant programs, showcasing her proficiency in policy writing and grant management. Outside of work, Emma finds joy in continuous learning, volunteering, spending quality time with family, reading, and exploring new destinations through travel. Emma's multifaceted experiences and unwavering commitment reflect a professional who excels both in leadership and as a compassionate team member.



2025 Mid-Year CANAR Conference Davenport Grand Hotel Spokane, WA June 3-5, 2025 Agenda At-A-Glance



Strength of the Salmon: Navigating, Adapting, and Thriving in Adversity

Monday, June 2nd

Start	End	Session Title	Room
10:00AM	2:00PM	CANAR Executive Board Meeting	Redwood Boardroom

Tuesday, June 3rd

Start	End	Session Title	Presenters	Room
7:30AM	8:45AM	Breakfast		Grand Ballroom A
7:30AM	5:00PM	Registration	0 10000 1000 20 100 100 100 100	Grand Ballroom A
9:00AM	9:30AM	Welcome	Emma De La Cruz	Grand Ballroom A
9:30AM	9:45AM	Break		
9:45AM	12:00PM	Membership Meeting	CANAR Board	Grand Ballroom A
12:00PM	1:30PM	Lunch (On Your Own)		
1:30PM	3:00PM	Membership Meeting	CANAR Board	Grand Ballroom A
3:00PM	3:20PM	Break		
3:30PM	5:00PM	Talking Circles	mit not Deffingers on	And the state of t
3:30PM	5:00PM	Directors	Jana Finkbonner	Meeting Room 1
3:30PM	5:00PM	Counselors	Melissa Williams	Meeting Room 2
3:30PM	5:00PM	Support Staff	Lorrie Ellsworth	Meeting Room 4
3:30PM	5:00PM	Partners	Wayne Dagel	Meeting Room 5
5:00PM	6:00PM	AIVRTTAC Session	Wayne Dagel	Grand Ballroom A
5:30PM	6:30PM	Dinner (On Your Own)	man and the state of the state	
6:30PM	8:30PM	Fish War	Tim Peone/Documentary	Grand Ballroom A
9:00PM	10:00PM	Recovery Talking Circle	TBA	Grand Ballroom A





2025 Mid-Year CANAR Conference Davenport Grand Hotel Spokane, WA June 3-5, 2025 Agenda At-A-Glance



Wednesday, June 4th

Start	End	Session Title	Presenters	Room
7:30AM	8:45AM	Breakfast		Grand Ballroom A
7:30AM	5:00PM	Registration		Grand Ballroom A
9:00AM	10:00AM	Opening Ceremony Welcome and CANAR Highlights	Emma De La Cruz	Grand Ballroom A
10:00AM	10:30PM	Break		
10:30PM	12:00PM	Keynote	Shajira Brown and Elizabeth Layman National Disability Institute	Grand Ballroom A
12:00PM	1:30PM	Lunch (On Your Own)		
1:30PM	3:00PM	BREAKOUT SESSIONS	Presenters	Room
1:30PM	3:00PM	Sicangu Vocational Rehabilitation Program	Dr. Tammy Keller	Meeting Room 1
1:30PM	3:00PM	Outreach to Veterans and Their Families	Amy Claridge, Buck Richardson	Meeting Room 2
1:30PM	3:00PM	TVR Post Employment Services	Wayne Dagel, Rebecca Holland	Meeting Room 4
1:30PM	3:00PM	The Five Feathers Employment Training Program	Caleb Titus	Meeting Room 5
3:00PM	3:30PM	Break	×	
3:30PM	5:00PM	BREAKOUT SESSIONS	Presenters	Room
3:30PM	5:00PM	Key Elements of Holistic Tribal VR Project Services	Dr. Lee Gaseoma, Jon Ringlero	Meeting Room 1
3:30PM	5:00PM	American Indian and Alaska Native in VR Programs: A Scoping Review	Elizabeth Boland, PhD, Jamie Emanuel	Meeting Room 2
3:30PM	5:00PM	TVR Self-Employment: Finding Your Profit Point	Rebecca Holland, Catherine Ispen, PhD	Meeting Room 4
3:30PM	5:00PM	Region X VR Coalition-Stronger Together	Susie Calhoun, Kelly Franklin, Keith Ozols	Meeting Room 5
5:00PM	6:00PM	Dinner (On Your Own)		
6:00PM	7:00PM	GLOW WALK	100000	Grand Ballroom A
8:00PM	9:00PM	Recovery Talking Circle	TBA	Grand Ballroom A





2025 Mid-Year CANAR Conference Davenport Grand Hotel Spokane, WA June 3-5, 2025 Agenda At-A-Glance

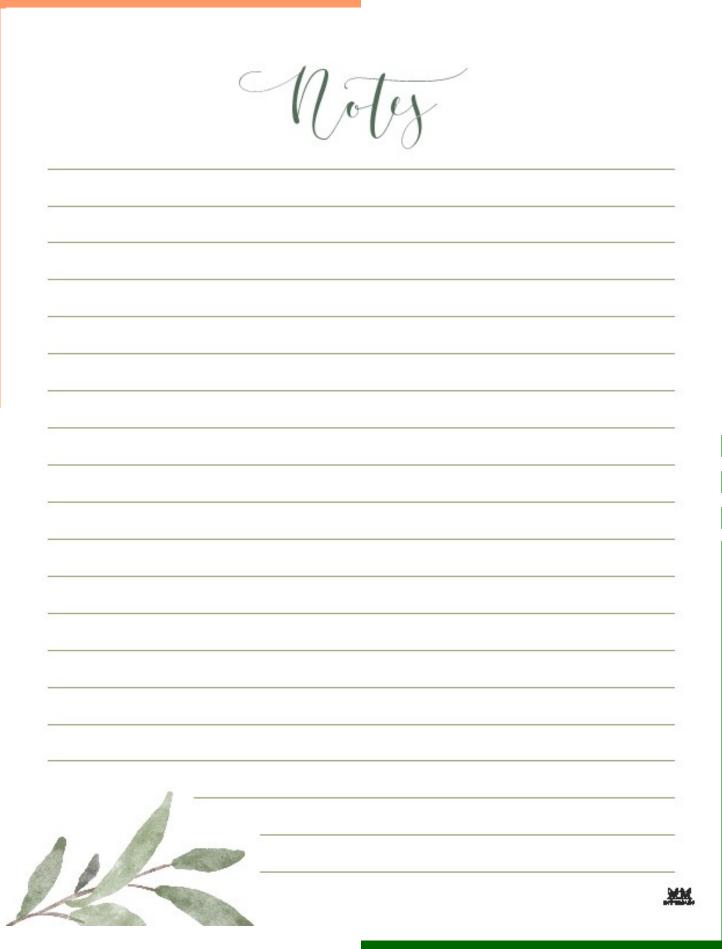


Thursday, June 5th

Start	End	Session Title	Presenters	Room
7:30AM	8:45AM	Breakfast		Grand Ballroom A
9:00AM	10:00AM	How to Talk to Your Legislators	Christopher Zilar	Grand Ballroom A
10:00AM	10:30AM	Break		
10:30AM	12:00PM	Spokane Tribe History, Culture, and Traditions	Warren Seyler	Grand Ballroom A
12:00PM	1:30PM	Lunch (On Your Own)		
1:30PM	3:00PM	BREAKOUT SESSIONS	Presenters	Room
1:30PM	3:00PM	School to Work: Partnering for a Seamless Transition	Melinda Bocci, Mistie Larch Amber Lehman	Meeting Room 1
1:30PM	3:00PM	Lakota Legends: Animal-Assisted Therapy Project	Dr. Tammy Keller	Meeting Room 2
1:30PM	3:00PM	Creating a Container for Online Service Delivery	Kimber Olson	Meeting Room 4
1:30PM	3:00PM	Supporting Job Seekers with Criminal Backgrounds	Christa Martin	Meeting Room 5
3:00PM	3:30PM	Break		
3:30PM	5:00PM	BREAKOUT SESSIONS	Presenters	Room
3:30PM	5:00PM	Lifecycles: A Pathway to Yoyot-ness	LaDonna Bluff, Melodi Wynne, PhD	Meeting Room 1
3:30PM	5:00PM	New Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation Directors: What You Really Need to Know But Didn't Know to Ask	Cami Falcon, Christopher Zilar	Meeting Room 2
3:30PM	5:00PM	Pre-Apprenticeships: Individualized, Creative Workforce Development	Mary Dibiase, Wayne Dagel	Meeting Room 4
3:30PM	5:00PM	Inviting the Sacred Wound into Circle: Re-Storying Indigenous Mind- Body Medicine	Kimber Olson	Meeting Room 5
6:00PM	9:00PM	BANQUET/Closing Ceremonies		Grand Ballroom A
9:00PM	10:00PM	Recovery Talking Circle	TBA	Grand Ballroom A







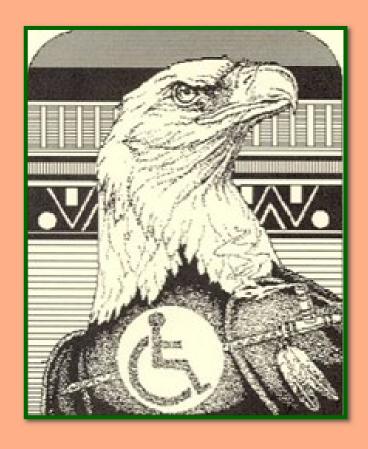


"Save the Dates"

CANAR Annual Conference December 2025 Wild Horse Pass Chandler, Arizona



CANAR Mid-Year Conference June 2026 TBA



Additional Abstracts

Sicangu Vocational Rehabilitation Program - Dr. Tammy Keller

This presentation highlights the services, outcomes, and assessment data from the Sicangu Vocational Rehabilitation Program (SVRP), a grant-funded initiative serving Native Americans with disabilities residing on or near the Rosebud Sioux Indian Reservation. The program's mission is to assist individuals with disability-related employment barriers by providing personalized vocational services in collaboration with the Rosebud Sioux Tribe, Sinte Gleska University, and South Dakota State VR. Core services include individualized assessments, job readiness training, job coaching, career planning, and post-employment support—all guided by the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). Eligibility criteria and the step-by-step intake process are detailed, offering a clear overview of how SVRP fosters career development for eligible consumers.

Through analysis of the 2020 to current fiscal years, the presentation explores consumer career interests, aptitudes, and satisfaction indicators derived from WOWI assessments. It reveals shifting vocational trends, including a growing interest in sales and technical careers, as well as strengths in verbal, mechanical, and abstract thinking skills. The data also identifies gaps in numerical and organizational abilities, suggesting targeted areas for training. These findings help inform strategies to align local employment opportunities with consumer interests and capabilities, ultimately supporting SVRP's mission of improving quality of life through gainful, meaningful employment.

The Five Feathers Employment Training Program- Caleb Titus

The Five Feathers Employment Training Program was created by Cowlitz Employment Support Services, the Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation program serving our area of South West Washington. Five Feathers is a small café on the Cowlitz Campus. Through learning to operate all aspects of the Five Feathers coffee stand, participants can practice transferable skills that will aid them in future employment and move forward into the workforce with confidence. This presentation will cover how Five Feathers operates as a café, how participants journey through the Five Feathers Employment Training

Program, and provide a framework for any Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation program to create an employment training program in their own service area.

American Indians and Alaska Natives in Vocational Rehabilitation Programs: A Scoping Review – Elizabeth Boland, PhD and Jamie Boland

Little is known about how to best support the provision of vocational rehabilitation (VR) services to American Indians/Alaska Natives (AI/AN) with disabilities. This community faces many challenges to accessing VR services, including a general lack of cultural knowledge among service providers. The aim of this scoping review was to identify what types of VR services, supports, and interventions are beneficial for AI/AN with disabilities. Academic literature was pulled on February 2022 using the following databases: Academic Search Complete, CINAHL, Medline, PsycINFO, and SocINDEX. We also grouped the articles into three categories based on the quality of evidence: (1) evidence-based, (2) promising, or (3) emerging. This scoping review identified 16 articles that met inclusion criteria. We organized our findings around the steps of the Tribal VR process. The majority of findings were centered on relationship building and cultural significance. This scoping review highlights the lack of literature on VR services, supports, and interventions associated with benefits to AI/AN with disabilities.

Region X VR Coalition - Stronger Together - Susie Calhoun, Kelly Franklin and Keith Oxols

Since 2014, Vocational Rehabilitation Directors, Tribal Directors, Rehabilitation Educators, Client Assistance Programs, State Rehabilitation Directors, partners, and staff in Region X have continued a commitment of collaboration through the structure of the Region X Vocational Rehabilitation Coalition - RXVRC. The Region X Coalition includes VR professionals from Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, and Washington. This coalition coordinated and facilitated by the Center for Continuing Education in Rehabilitation at the University of Washington, provides opportunities for Region X VR professionals to foster relationship development and compare best practices through frequent communication, networking, and educational opportunities. The Region X VR collaboration brings Vocational Rehabilitation professionals (Public VR General Programs, VR Blind services, VR Tribal program, SRC, CAP,

RCE, and partners) together through gatherings that include annual regional meetings, community of practice opportunities, and additional services. This group of VR professionals acknowledges the fundamental truth of the value of working together, so that we are stronger together in meeting the needs of those we serve and in creating a supportive community for the professional doing the work.

Lakota Legends Animal Assisted Therapy

The Lakota Legends Animal-Assisted Therapy (AAT) Project is a culturally grounded initiative developed to address the unique mental health challenges faced by the Rosebud Sioux Tribe. Rooted in traditional Lakota values and practices, the project integrates animal-assisted therapy with modern psychological approaches to bridge the gap in mental health services for Indigenous populations. Guided by attachment theory and narrative therapy, the program aims to reduce historical trauma, increase engagement, and enhance the cultural identity of participants. The project utilizes a mixed methods approach, collecting both qualitative and quantitative data from tribal stakeholders to inform its structure and implementation.

Survey responses revealed a strong desire for therapeutic practices that emphasize cultural rituals, storytelling, and spiritual connections with animals. Key findings show that flexible scheduling, safe environments, and the incorporation of traditional practices significantly improve client engagement and retention. The *Lakota Legends AAT Program* not only addresses urgent community needs but also serves as a model for developing culturally responsive mental health interventions in Indigenous communities. The project recommends continued collaboration with tribal leaders and expanded research to assess long-term outcomes and broader applicability.

Lifecycles: A Pathway to Yoyot-ness - Melodi Wynne, PhD, Ladonna Boyd-Bluff

"Culture heals" is the message the presenters got from listening to regional Tribal Elders in 2019. Knowledge shared by Elders was used to create a series of interactive groups outlined in the Lifecycles Handbook and enhanced by use of the snčxlxlpustn workbook. Presenters will showcase the materials, tell the story and background of the Lifecycle model, demonstrate how materials are used to bring strength and well-being to individuals, and families and

communities through culturally grounded connection. Connectedness to self, others, and all life elements heals, and you are welcome to this non-hierarchical way of working together on an individual and collective journey toward wholeness and wellbeing. There are hands-on exercises for the participant/relatives, and there will be time for dialogue and questions.