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Medicine Ways Conference

HEALING THE PAST,
EMPOWERING THE FUTURE

43RD ANNUAL

MEDICINE WAYS CONFERENCE

SATURDAY, APRIL 19, 2025

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, RIVERSIDE

Medicine Ways Conference

Healing the Past, Empowering the Future

8:30- 9:30 (SSC Lobby).

- Registration and Breakfast

9:30– 10:00 (MPR).

- Welcome, Blessing, & Birdsongs
 - NASP, Michael & Will Madrigal

10:10– 10:25 (MPR).

- Introductions
 - NASA-UCR Student Chapter

10:35– 11:20 (MPR).

- Keynote: Our Stories are Medicine: Honoring the Past Empowering the Future
 - Vanessa Brierty

11:35– 12:10 (SSC 229).

- Healing our past, Empowering our Future Through Cultural Resilience
 - Wayne Cortez

12:25– 1:00 (SSC 229).

- Way of the Sacred Mountain MMIW Red Tipi Healing Prayer
 - Norms Sands & Teyana Viscarra

1:05 – 2:00 (MPR).

- Lunch and Closing

WELCOME!

For over four decades, UCR's Native American Student Association and Native American Student Programs have hosted the annual Medicine Ways Conference. Each year the theme has changed to reflect the times, with the students of NASA leading the way. The theme this year was selected to be "Healing the Past, Empowering the Future" to discuss the ways in which traditional practices can help heal generational trauma. Please take a moment to hear a few of the student voices that led to this year's theme:

Forgotten is the equivalent of losing. Everything we do, share, and practice is our way of keeping our traditions, cultures, and loved ones alive. It is through the way that we persevere, that we still practice the way it's true to us, the way that we continue what was passed on to us, that is healing our past, and still persevering into the future.

❖ -Jordyn Ramirez (NASA Co-Chair - Biochemistry) ❖

"It is a revolutionary act to look at the past, and dare to break cycles that no longer serve us, it is a revolutionary act to stand in the current, and move in ways that create paths that are easy to follow."

❖ -Izzi Reyes (NASA Member - History) ❖

Healing generational trauma means reclaiming the cultural practices that were stolen and condemned for centuries, honoring the wisdom of our ancestors while forging our own path. It's about building resilience, not just within myself, but within my community. Every step forward, including my presence in academia, is an act of defiance against the systems that tried to erase us. This journey is both deeply personal and powerfully collective, as we restore what was lost and create a stronger future.

❖ -Alikoi Parra (AISES Treasurer - Business) ❖

As our respective peoples move forward it is crucial to preserve and remember our traditions. Without centering ourselves within our culture, we can lose ourselves, and be unable to overcome the challenges of life. In short, to forget the traditions of our ancestors, would surely mean the extinction of our peoples.

❖ -Nogwa Howard Smith (AISES President - Mechanical Engineering) ❖

As Native peoples continue to carry the weight of generational trauma, it's important that we come together as a community and begin to heal by reconnecting with our past. Through the wisdom of our ancestors, we can find the strength to heal for the future. By acknowledging the presence of trauma, we uncover the answers that help us persevere—and in doing so, we ensure that future generations will grow strong and proud of their roots.

❖ -Angel Barrera (NAHS President - Creative Writing) ❖

I believe that mass incarceration is a factor of generational trauma and that through traditional medicine, we can begin to heal our communities that are behind bars. I believe that it is important to discuss this topic at this year's conference, because our brothers and sisters behind bars are, all too often, forgotten.

❖ -Art Valles (NASA Co-Chair - Ethnic Studies) ❖



A word on this year's illustration:

The 2025 Medicine Ways Conference theme is healing the past through traditional medicine. With this theme in mind, I incorporated it into my design. The circle around the earth is a woven basket, and the hand is holding a medicine bag. I believe it is important to show these items as they are connected to native cultures across the country. While every tribe has different traditions, we all have suffered great injustices and deserve to heal.

Illustrator
FRANCINE PHILLIPS
 Fort Yuma Quechan Indian Tribe
 (She/Her)

Francine is a 19-year-old member of the Fort Yuma Quechan Indian Tribe. She, as a pre-med, has worked on contributing to local indigenous and underserved communities. School-wide organizations she's a part of are NASA (Native American Student Association), where she serves as treasurer, Underground Scholars Program as a representative for Diversity Counsel, and a member of the Medical Scholars Program.



Cahuilla Birdsinger
WILL MADRIGAL
 Cahuilla Band of Indians

Will Madrigal and fellow Birdsingers will open the day after the blessing with Cahuilla songs, welcoming our students, staff, faculty, honored guests and attendees to these homelands of the Cahuilla, Tongva, Serrano, and Luiseño peoples.



**OUR STORIES ARE MEDICINE: HONORING THE
PAST EMPOWERING THE FUTURE**
DISTRICT DIRECTOR VANESSA BRIERTY

Pueblo of Laguna

Vanessa Brierty, from the Pueblo of Laguna, serves as the District Director for California's first Native American legislator, James Ramos. Formerly a Consultant to the California Legislative Native American Caucus, she is one of the few Native Americans to serve in the state's legislature. Vanessa holds a Bachelor's in Health Education, is a Certified Health Education Specialist, and earned a Master's in Indigenous Education. She recently completed ASU's Indigenous Leadership Academy. Passionate about education, mental health, and policy, she advocates for Native voices while staying rooted in her culture, community service, and roles as a daughter, sister, and auntie.



Our Stories Are Medicine: Honoring the Past, Empowering the Future is a reflection on the impact of historical trauma and the strength found in cultural connection. Vanessa shares how colonization disrupted community wellness and identity—but also how traditional healing, rooted in ceremony, storytelling, and spiritual practices, continues to strengthen our communities. It is a reminder that healing isn't linear; it is sacred, collective, and cultural. By embracing Indigenous knowledge systems, we not only honor our ancestors but create healthier pathways for future generations—grounded in identity, truth, and the medicine found in our stories.

WAY OF THE SACRED MOUNTAIN

MMIW RED TIPI HEALING PRAYER

NORM SANDS & TEYANA VISCARRA

*Yaqui/Apache
(He/Him)*

*Piro-Tiwa Pueblo/Apache
She/Her*

Teyana's visual art practice integrates Indigenous traditions with contemporary artistic expressions. Through this process she brings heightened visibility to the MMIW crisis, finding ways to strengthen our resolve in confronting it. In her ongoing commitment to the MMIW crisis, the Sacred Altars —initiated through daily sunrise prayer runs—serves as a profound form of spiritual and artistic expression. These altars, created on earthen canvases, represent a meditative practice and a form of “resistance art”. They carry the stories of loss and healing, embodying the sacred connection between our prayers, ancestors, and the land. As a central piece of our “Walking in Beauty” exhibit, these altars transform spiritual and emotional pain into a visual narrative for healing, getting to places in our soul words cannot touch.



Norm's work, the intersection of multimedia, printmaking, and structure is deeply rooted in preserving and advancing indigenous cultural protocols through contemporary expressions. Over the years of screen printing the Shawls and Bandanas, he has witnessed how mechanical methods can uphold and transcend traditional practices, creating art that resonates authentically with Native Artistic Message. His work delves into innovative techniques and structural approaches, enhancing the ability to convey the sacredness of screen print as a prayer. This intersection deepens the impact of our community's stories and prayers, particularly in Honoring Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW).



Way of the Sacred Mountain, an Indigenous-led nonprofit, grew from our Grassroots Prayerful Actions and Activism, advocating for Indigenous Rights and Sovereignty. We are dedicated to protecting all that is sacred: our Mother Earth, Water, Sacred Sites, and our People, while amplifying the silenced crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Relatives (MMIW/R). Central to our work is the MMIW Red Tipi Healing Prayer weaving Indigenous communities together like sweetgrass across Turtle Island. Through this sacred act of reciprocity, we raise awareness, confront injustice, and affirm the beauty of our humanity, working collectively to end violence against Indigenous peoples seen in the faces of our Missing and Murdered.

wayofthesacredmountain.org. FB @wayofthesacredmountain

IG @wayofthesacredmountain

HEALING OUR PAST, EMPOWERING OUR FUTURE THROUGH CULTURAL RESILIENCE

WAYNE CORTEZ

Desert Cahuilla from Torres Martinez Reservation

To reflect on the past with intention / To empower future generations This conversation is about more than history. It's about how our roots give us the strength, and how we can use that strength to empower what's next".



Wayne Cortez is a tribal member of the Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians. He is the Native Peer Support Specialist for Riverside San Bernardino County Indian health and is currently enrolled with CCAPP to become a substance abuse counselor. Mr. Cortez is also the founder of his own Native Non - Profit. He has four siblings, seven beautiful grandkids and support in the form of his wife whom he has been married to going on 40 years.

UCR Land Acknowledgment



Rupert (Cahuilla) & Jeannette Henry Costo (Cherokee)

"We at UCR would like to respectfully acknowledge and recognize our responsibility to the original and current caretakers of this land, water, and air: the Cahuilla [ka-wee-ahh], Tongva [tong-va], Luiseño [loo-say-ngo], and Serrano [se-ran-oh] peoples and all of their ancestors and descendants, past, present, and future. Today this meeting place is home to many Indigenous peoples from all over the world, including UCR faculty, students, and staff, and we are grateful to have the opportunity to live and work on these homelands."

Native American Student Programs (NASP) was formed in 1980, making UC Riverside the first UC campus to open an office with a full-time staff dedicated to American Indian student support.

One of nine Ethnic & Gender Offices located in Costo Hall; named in honor of Rupert (Cahuilla) & Jeannette Henry Costo (Cherokee). Rupert Costo was a key player in the foundation and establishment of UC Riverside.

Native American Student Association



Native American Student Association (NASA) consists of students from various Native American communities throughout the United States and from other diverse backgrounds. In addition, NASA also represents Indigenous communities from Mexico, Canada, and other areas of the Americas. These students are dedicated to establishing strong ties with neighboring Native American communities in order to increase the representation of Native American students at UCR. NASA provides a rich cultural environment through which Native American students on campus can prosper. NASA coordinates and sponsors various programs throughout the school year, with the Medicine Ways Conference being one of their principal events.

Native American Student Programs



Native American Student Programs (NASP) office is to provide educational, cultural, and social support for UCR students, specifically for Native American/American Indian Students. The NASP office coordinates a variety of activities and programs designed to expand education awareness for our UCR campus as well as the local communities. Additionally, NASP encourages the development and enhancement of leadership and interpersonal communication skills through active participation of students, which makes it possible to plan, organize, and implement innovative programs that promote and educate the campus community about the uniqueness of Indigenous Peoples.

MS. UCR POWWOW PRINCESS

CHEWEKA LAWSON

Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians
(She/Her)



Our Miss UCR is responsible for upholding the highest standards of leadership, cultural and community involvement, and serving as a role model to people of all ages. Miss UCR spreads joy and culture while wearing her royalty regalia and crown in the UCR Blue and Yellow colors. Cheweka engages within our community and provides support, not only to our events, but other events around our area, including her home community in Long Beach.



UC RIVERSIDE
POWWOW
VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!



UC RIVERSIDE POW WOW

SAVE THE DATE:
May 23 - 25, 2025

Riverside Sports Complex
1000 W. Blaine St. Riverside, CA 92507

Head Staff TBA

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT:

NASP.UCR.EDU

FB: NASPUCR

IG: NASPUCR

ARTS & CRAFTS VENDOR APPLICATION
ARE AVAILABLE ON OUR WEBSITE
DEADLINE: APRIL 21, 2025



**VOLUNTEER SIGN UP
USING QR CODE**

