



confluence

# 2024 ANNUAL REPORT





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## A YEAR IN REVIEW

This year, Confluence continued to center Native educators, knowledge holders, storytellers, and artists in all that we do. We've created intentional spaces— in classrooms and the natural world—that amplify Native voices and foster meaningful connection.

We served more than 2,000 students through programs that brought Native perspectives into schools and learning environments. We elevated creative expression through our Filmmaking Fellows program and supported our 2023-24 Emerging Indigenous Artist. We celebrated Native creativity and resilience through the *Voices of the River* journal and published *My Name Is LaMoosh* by Linda Meanus, a finalist for the Oregon Book Award.

All of this work happened in relationship with the river sites that anchor our programs. These landscapes inspire reflection and help ground our community in a shared sense of place. With the leadership of our new executive director Leah Altman, our first Native ED, we are stepping into the next chapter of our work with renewed purpose.

## NEW LEADERSHIP

In September 2024, Confluence welcomed Leah Altman as our new Executive Director. Leah, who is Oglala Lakota, brings more than 12 years of experience in nonprofit leadership, specializing in fundraising strategy, donor engagement, and grant management.

Before joining Confluence, Leah served as Philanthropy Director at the Intertribal Agriculture Council, where she led the organization's development efforts. Her previous work includes roles with the Native Arts & Cultures Foundation, the Native American Youth and Family Center, Ecotrust, and Friends of the Children.

Leah is also a published writer whose work has appeared in *Indian Country Today*, *Underscore*, *Portland Monthly*, *Oregon Humanities*, and more. She lives in Vancouver, Washington, and is an alumna of the Institute of American Indian Arts. Her first book, *Cekpa: A Memoir*, will be published in November 2025.

# FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

When I first started at Confluence, the thing that stood out to me the most was that Confluence is a keeper of stories, as well as serving as a megaphone to uplift the voices of Native people. With its publications, workshops, teaching materials, videos, podcasts, and archive of over 20 years of creative content, Confluence serves as a cache for Pacific Northwest river cultures. As a Native writer and beadworker, the mission of Confluence resonated with me.

I was also drawn to Confluence because of the people who are involved in the organization. I have grown up inspired by Elders and storytellers Ed Edmo, Linda Meanus, and Elizabeth Woody, reading their books and watching as they progressed in their careers. I had written articles on Linda and Patsy Whitefoot. I had put on events working with Confluence staff members when I worked at organizations like NAYA Family Center and Native Arts & Cultures Foundation. The more I learned about Confluence, the more I realized how my career trajectory aligned to bring me to this exact moment in which my passions aligned with Confluence's need for a Native leader.

The organization currently occupies a liminal space, one in which we are transitioning from one approach and paradigm to the next... one in which the waters we are navigating are murky, brackish. While there is discomfort in that space due to a lack of structure, discord, and not knowing what to expect, it is also a space in which creativity harvests. Brackish water is where life-giving nutrients are found. It is where young salmon go to rest and gather their strength to continue on their journey to the ocean. It serves as a cache of resources needed to survive.

While each Indigenous culture approaches storytelling in different ways, one thing remains the same. Stories equal survivance. Protecting our stories is what helps us to continue our cultures in future generations. The ways in which we share stories may vary, but they are all essential to continuing our ways of life.

Regardless of where we end up in navigating these murky waters, Confluence will always remain committed to protecting our stories and serving as a megaphone for Native people.

Wopila ("Thank you"),



**Leah Altman**  
Executive Director





**This year, we led:**  
**750** students in rural  
Oregon  
**462** students in rural  
Washington  
**35 student field trips**  
to culturally significant  
Confluence sites

# EDUCATION

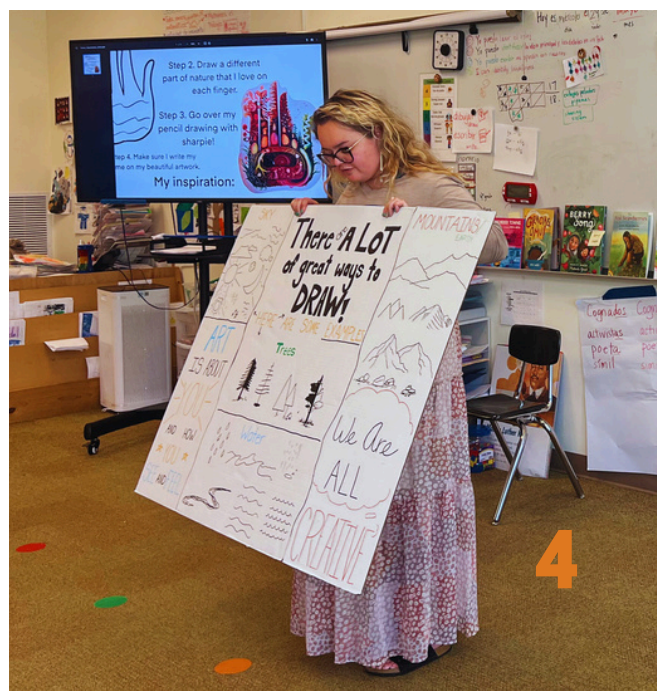
Confluence's education programs reached more students, educators, and communities in-person than ever before last year. Through Confluence in the Classroom and Confluence Outdoors, we connected with more than 2,000 students across Oregon and Washington. These programs bring Native educators and artists into learning spaces—both in schools and in nature—to share Indigenous Knowledge Systems. Here, we build meaningful relationships with the land and deepen understanding of Native histories, cultures, and contemporary issues.

## CAMP CONFLUENCE

In 2024, Camp Confluence offered both spring break and summer sessions to youth in grades 4–8. These camps provide immersive, interdisciplinary learning guided by Native educators and community leaders from Tribes across the region. More than 60 campers participated in summer programming that included field trips, plant walks, hands-on art and culture, workshops, and storytelling. Thank you to our Native educators who made this work possible: Sam Robinson, Tanna Engdahl, Chris Bailey, Christine and Clifton Bruno, Stephanie Ironheart, James Ironheart, Destany Reeves-Robinson, Emma Johnson, Renee Roman Nose, Patty Kinswa-Gaiser, and Ed Edmo.

## EMERGING INDIGENOUS EDUCATOR

This year, we also hosted a Confluence Emerging Indigenous Artist/Educator. Kitana Connelly has been in the classroom connecting students with art, Native history and culture, and the land we all live on. Connelly has visited multiple schools across Oregon and Washington during this year and will continue through 2025 as she transitions to the position of Arts & Education Facilitator at Confluence. Check out a feature on her work on page 6.





## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In 2024, Confluence supported over 250 K–12 educators across Oregon and Washington through professional development programs that center Indigenous pedagogy, history, and cultural knowledge. Our virtual workshops offer educators the opportunity to engage directly with Native facilitators and explore resources from the Confluence Digital Library, our publications, and field-based programs.

*“The most amazing thing was that these beautiful things that we created were actually being used for very practical purposes and I feel that that's a powerful message, that even practical things can be beautiful and aren't just objects that sit and collect dust, but can actually be used and shared with the community.”*

- Educator Katherine Phillips during our first Confluence Learning Community Conference in 2024



A key milestone this year was the launch of our first Confluence Learning Community Conference, which brought together 25 educators for a day of shared learning. Through storytelling, peer collaboration, and land-based curriculum, participants deepened their understanding of Native lifeways and built tools to bring Indigenous voices into their classrooms.







## EMERGING INDIGENOUS ARTIST AND EDUCATOR

# KITANA CONNELLY

When Kitana began painting in 2020, she wasn't thinking about technique, style, or even the finished product. She was working through her emotions on the canvas.

"I was just using art as a way to get through emotions. I would take a canvas, and I would literally just put my emotions on it, abstractly."

At the time, Kitana had just started exploring her identity as an artist. She didn't call herself one yet, but that changed during her year as the 2023 Emerging Indigenous Educator with Confluence.

"It really felt mostly like opportunity and freedom," said Kitana, a Grand Ronde member of Klickitat, Molalla, and Umpqua descent. "Those are important things for an artist—to just be given that space. And definitely less stress. When I think of Confluence and the position I held, my first thoughts are: space for exploration, and exploration is one of my favorite things to do."

That freedom allowed Kitana to deepen her practice and create something entirely new: a healing-centered art workbook that blends abstract painting, visualization, journaling, and reflection.

"I had never done a book before," said Kitana. "So I had no idea what I was doing, but luckily I got a year to figure it out."

The idea came after hosting a series of community art workshops focused on processing emotions through painting. Kitana took feedback and observations from those workshops to inform the creation of her book. While the sessions were meaningful, she noticed participants often struggled to be vulnerable in a group setting.



Confluence has been honored to spend the last two years in support of artist Kitana Connelly of Twahna Creations as she has grown and transformed in her role.

The program mentors an emerging artist through fiscal support and programming guidance to create a culminating project and further their craft. It has been generously funded by The Roundhouse Foundation for two years.



## EMERGING INDIGENOUS ARTIST AND EDUCATOR



“I did a couple workshops and I was getting feedback from the community, but I did notice that of course it is harder for some than others to be vulnerable with themselves, sometimes surrounded by strangers,” said Kitana. “I wanted to offer something to the community that they could take home and do on their own or do with their small group of friends. It was something more private but still initiating art as healing and connection and culture as healing.”

The book, like her workshops, blends artistic exploration with Indigenous values—something Kitana said was encouraged and supported throughout her time with Confluence.

“They really give space for the artist to work how the artist wants to work—not try to mold the artist into something they think they should be,” she said. “And that actually took me a while to get used to.”

She also found community among other Indigenous educators and creatives, something she said she hadn’t had in earlier stages of her career. Now, in her new role coordinating Indigenous educators for Confluence, she’s working to ensure others have the same access.

“Almost anything I’ve done this past year would have taken so much longer—or maybe not happened at all,” she says. “I probably never would have made a book in the first place.”

That kind of growth is exactly what Confluence hopes to foster. Kitana is now working with Confluence in a further capacity in our education department, managing camps and connecting with Indigenous educators and artists to share their stories with youth.

By investing in Indigenous educators and artists, we create a ripple effect: supporting creative work rooted in identity and culture, while also strengthening local networks of community and connection.

For Connelly, that investment meant more than a title or paycheck. “It gave me opportunity and freedom,” she says. “And those are important things for an artist—to be given that.”



# PROGRAMMING

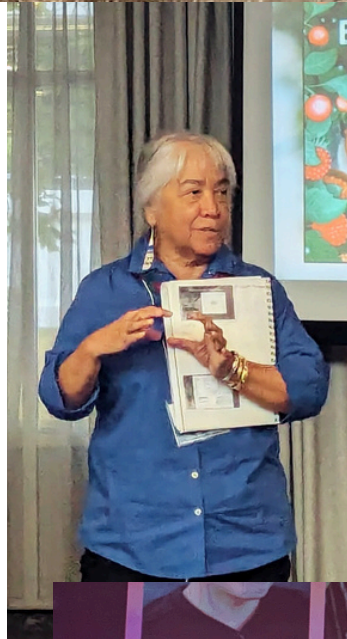
A major milestone this year was the launch of the Voices of the River digital exhibit. Featuring personal narratives that highlight the river's cultural and ecological significance, the exhibit is now on display at multiple institutions, including the Museum at Warm Springs, Tamástslikt Cultural Institute, Yakama Nation Museum, Hood River History Museum, and Vancouver Water Resources Center.

At the Pacific Northwest History Conference, Confluence staff led panels and workshops exploring Indigenous literature and storytelling in education and shared Voices of the River journals with every attendee.

## FILMMAKER FELLOWS

We also continued our support for Indigenous filmmakers through the second annual Confluence Filmmaker Fellows program, presented with Oregon Film.

This year, three filmmakers received direct grants (one at \$5,000 and two at \$2,500), while two emerging artists received full camera kits valued at \$800 each. The Warm Springs Community Action Team also received a camera kit to support their youth filmmaking projects.



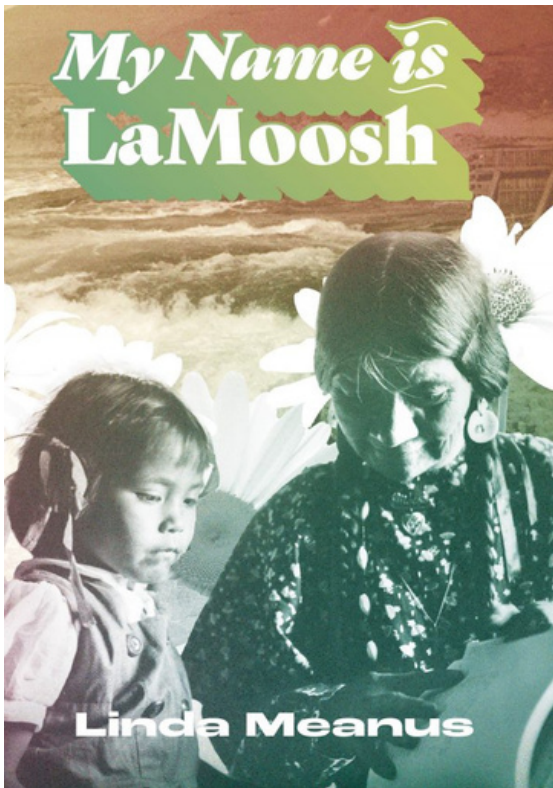
2024 Highlights include:

- Weaving workshops with Grand Ronde artist Stephanie Craig
- Birding and stewardship events at the Sandy River Delta Bird Blind
- Heritage Days celebrations at Sacajawea State Park
- Support for the Nez Perce Redheart Band Ceremony in partnership with the City of Vancouver and Fort Vancouver National Historic Site





## MY NAME IS LAMOOSH: OREGON BOOK AWARD



In April, Confluence joined Linda Meanus at the Oregon Book Awards to celebrate *My Name is LaMoosh* (co-published by Confluence and OSU Press). Literary Arts' Oregon Book Awards program honors the state's finest accomplishments by Oregon writers who work in genres of poetry, fiction, graphic literature, drama, literary nonfiction, and literature for young readers. Its nomination as a finalist for the Eloise Jarvis McGraw Award for Children's Literature highlights its contribution to the literary community of Oregon. This recognition is a culmination of not just the three-year journey it took to publish the book, but also Linda's multi-decade career in education. In September 2025, we will honor Linda at our annual Legacy Maker gathering alongside Lillian Pitt and Elizabeth Woody.

## VOICES OF THE RIVER VOL. 3

On November 7, 2024, Confluence, PRAx, and the Center for the Humanities celebrated the launch of Volume 3 of *Voices of the River*, an annual journal highlighting Indigenous perspectives of the Columbia River watershed. Volume 3 speaks to the theme of "Side Channels and Healing." Because of this theme, we held the release along a tributary of the Columbia River for the first time in Corvallis. A panel of journal contributors—Indigenous artists, poets, researchers, and organizational leaders—spoke at the event about their creative process and their personal relationships to water, identity, and teaching. Over the last few years, the journal has established itself as a venue for Indigenous voices to highlight ideas about place, continuity, resurgence of salmon and the river, and our river ancestors.







## LEGACY MAKER 2024

The Legacy Maker Gathering is more than a celebration—it's a reaffirmation of our shared commitment to storytelling, education, and Native-led cultural preservation. On September 14, 2024, our Confluence community came together to honor the life and legacy of Shoshone-Bannock poet Ed Edmo. The informal evening featured traditional First Food appetizers, heartfelt testimonials about Confluence's impact, and powerful words from Ed himself.

Ed's legacy spans decades—from his childhood at Celilo Falls to his role today as an Elder and educator. As a founding force behind Confluence's programming, Ed has guided hundreds of students each year through Confluence in the Classroom and Outdoors, teaching about Indigenous cultures and the power of keeping our words.

*"Storytelling is essential for the proper growth and development of well-rounded human beings who can laugh at life's problems, laugh at themselves, and learn how to overcome problems that come with living."*

- Notes on Storytelling, Ed Edmo



Looking ahead, the 2025 Legacy Maker Gathering will honor three extraordinary women who have shaped the cultural and educational landscape of the Pacific Northwest: Lillian Pitt, Native artist and cultural bridge-builder; Linda Meanus, educator, author, and community leader; Elizabeth Woody, former Oregon Poet Laureate and lifelong advocate.

Join us in celebrating their contributions on September 20.





# DONOR HIGHLIGHT

*"It's the opportunity to stand beside the people who are working hard to have the Native American story not be a historical artifact, rather to be a current, relevant, and thriving part of the community."*

- Paul Speer

## PAUL & DEBORAH SPEER

Paul and Deborah Speer have supported Confluence for over ten years, drawn to the organization's unique focus on education, storytelling, and cultural resilience. As Paul puts it, "Confluence, I think, represents an organization that's not out trying to preserve history as if it was a museum. It's primarily an education organization, and education happens in a lot of different ways."

What continues to resonate for the Speers is Confluence's commitment to uplifting Native voices in ways that are culturally responsive and community-driven. "There are generations that have gotten disconnected from who they are," Paul says. "There are youth growing up in an environment that has done everything possible in the last couple hundred years to annihilate them and make them go away. This work serves to help them realize that they have a place in the world, that they are proud individuals, that they have agency and self determination, that they have made important contributions and continue to, and that they're not going away."

The Speers were first involved with Confluence in its early stages as we began documenting and preserving the stories of Elders through film and audio interviews. "The first stories that came out were so, so compelling," Paul recalls. "These are voices of people who are not going to be around forever. This is time-urgent."

That sense of urgency is paired with a view towards the future. "The long arc is real," Paul says. "And sometimes it doesn't take a very linear path. My hope is that 20, 30, 40, 50, 100 years from now, there are members of the Native community saying, 'My grandparents had the opportunity to learn about our culture in their classrooms from the work of Confluence, and as a result of that, my kids are prospering.'"

Paul and Deborah's support is grounded in a broader commitment to equity and education across many groups in the communities they are part of, but Confluence's role stands out. "If you're going to focus on assistance in this area for the Native community, it's going to be Confluence. We feel very strongly about the mission."



# DONOR HIGHLIGHT

## Inatai Foundation

The Inatai Foundation is a Washington-based nonprofit dedicated to transforming systems of power and advancing racial equity by supporting community-led solutions. Their work centers those most impacted by injustice, with a focus on long-term movement building and organizational sustainability. Inatai has supported Confluence through their President's Fund award, helping to fund our staff retreat and Native-led strategic planning process. This critical investment also supported general operations and capacity expansion, allowing us to grow in ways that align with our mission and values.



## Meyer Memorial Trust

Meyer Memorial Trust is an Oregon-based foundation committed to accelerating racial, social, and economic justice across the state. For over a decade, Meyer has been a trusted partner to Confluence, supporting a wide range of programs—from professional development and learning communities to culturally grounded art education. Meyer has provided key funding for our strategic planning launch and board leadership development, helping to lay the groundwork for Confluence's next chapter.

In 2025, both Inatai and Meyer, among many other amazing partners and community, have continued to step up, supporting our continued efforts to transform as a fully Native-led and Native-serving organization. Their investment in leadership development, strategic planning, and organizational growth reflects a deep belief in the transformative power of Native-led work.

We are profoundly grateful for their partnerships, and the many organizations that support us. Their support not only sustains Confluence—it uplifts our vision for a future grounded in Native self-determinance, community care, and cultural resilience.

We invite others to stand with us and invest in this work, ensuring Native voices continue to lead the way.





# 2024 Donors

## Organizations and Businesses

Metro  
Inatai Foundation  
Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office  
East Multnomah Soil & Water Conservation District  
Gray Family Foundation  
National Park Foundation  
D27 Foundation  
Roundhouse Foundation  
Washington State Arts Commission  
Trail Blazers Foundation  
Kinsman Foundation  
Paul G. Allen Family Foundation  
Realvest Foundation  
Waldon M. Groves Fund  
Wisdom of the Elders  
Oregon Film  
Lewis and Clark Trail Alliance  
PGE Foundation  
The Honorable Frank L. and Arlene G. Price Foundation  
Lower Columbia Estuary Partnership  
Spirit Mountain Community Fund  
Ford Family Foundation  
Autzen Foundation  
Native American Youth and Family Center  
Portland Art Museum  
Waste Connections of Washington  
Lamb-Baldwin Foundation  
Riverview Community Bank  
Oregon Community Foundation  
Oregon Historical Society  
Ecotrust  
Inter-Fluve  
PayPal Giving Fund  
Oregon State University  
Unitarian Universalist Community Church of Washington County  
Community Foundation of Southwest Washington  
Portland Women's Forum  
Fred Meyer Membership Giving  
Broughton and Mary Bishop Foundation  
Peter and Susan Bishop Fund of OCF  
John and Betty Gray Geography Fund of OCF  
Jordan Schnitzer & Thomas Lauderdale Confluence Art Endowment Fund of OCF



# 2024 Donors Individual Donors

## **Over \$1,000**

Paul & Deborah Speer  
Luanne Lundberg  
Gayle Rothrock  
Priscilla Bernard Wieden:  
In loving memory of Dan  
Wieden  
Betsy & Tom Henning  
Mary Bishop  
Truman Collins and  
Nancy Ives  
Deborah Fischer  
Cherida Collins Smith  
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Ann Ongerth  
Mark & Carolyn Holtzen  
Carl and Nancy Wamser  
Jay Morgensen  
Paul Jacobsen  
Gun Denhart  
Michael & Cindy Kirshner  
Barbara Kommer & Kurt  
Koenig  
Bea Zizlavsky

## **Over \$500**

Meg Becker  
Rachon Hanson  
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Joseph Ichter  
Jenny Rieke  
Martha Sharman & J.  
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## **Over \$250**

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K Joyce Crumrine  
Charles Eaton  
Ellen Hall-Chave  
Kala Wellman  
John Russell  
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Ahlschwede  
Louise Cabeen

## **Over \$250**

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Jennifer Basham  
Mary King  
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Hinerfeld  
Glennis & Barry Lundberg  
Richard Marantz  
Ann Reiner  
George Stevenson  
Elisabeth Walton Potter

## **Over \$100**

Kathleen Fisher  
Cheryl Claar  
Jenni Grey  
Linda Hargreaves  
Zora Hess  
Caryl Parrish  
Betsy Powell  
Peg Willis  
Robert S Hopkins  
Ranesto Angeles & Ellen  
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Pat & James Yilk  
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# 2024 Donors

## Individual Donors

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Erinne Goodell  
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Joan Hoffman  
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Maggie Starr  
Stephanie Arnold  
Elizabeth Blaustein  
Tracy Duncan  
Margaret McCue  
Linda Minor  
Bradley Richardson  
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Wendy Daray  
Dell Drake  
Suzanne Fouty  
Elizabeth Guevara  
Stu Levy  
Sharon Moore  
Jenn Murphy  
Marc Peters  
Cynthia Stowell  
Timothea Sutton  
Ian Thompson  
Aldine and Robert  
Thornton  
Ron Carley & Mary Rose  
Navarro  
Elaine Nelson  
Lucille Ausman  
Peter Condra  
Christine Linder  
Susan Onesky  
Lorena Shah  
Rebeccah Winnier  
Darlisa Black  
Clifton & Christine Bruno  
Ruth Parr  
Linda Richards  
Chris Woolley  
Claire Alexander  
Karin Ross  
Natasha Stockem  
Ashley Schofield  
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Timothy Hecox  
Katharine Phelps  
Juniper Post  
Brad Richardson  
Olivia Spagnuolo





# VALUES-DRIVEN BUDGET

At Confluence, our work is grounded in relationships—between Ancestors, Community, Tribal Peoples, land, water, and story. In the beginning of 2025, we co-created values through deep reflection with our board, staff, and Advisory Community. As we reflect on 2024, we are committed to assessing and aligning our spending with our values.

These values are not simply aspirational—they are living commitments that shaped how we moved, responded, and resourced our work. This values-driven financial summary reflects how we invested in the heart of our mission: connecting people to the history, living cultures, and ecology of the Columbia River system through Indigenous voices.

As we look ahead into 2025, these values are helping us grow forward. They are guiding our launch of a Community Participatory Strategic Planning process, anchoring our path in cultural responsibility, listening, and relational accountability. This work would not be possible without the trust and guidance of our partners.

We are honored to walk alongside the following Tribal Nations:

- Chinook Indian Nation
- Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation
- Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians
- Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde Community of Oregon
- Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation
- Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs
- Cowlitz Indian Tribe
- Nez Perce Tribe

Together, we are charting a path grounded in values, place, and generations to come.

# VALUES-DRIVEN BUDGET

## Relational Accountability

*Rooting our work in respect, trust, care, and integrity*

Expenses Aligned:

- Salaries & benefits
- Insurance & Workers' Comp.
- Board and staff meeting support
- Office and administrative care

## Heart-Centered Truth-Telling

*Leading with love, courage, and authenticity*

Expenses Aligned:

- Education Program delivery
- Marketing and storytelling
- Public programming and events

## Connection to Place and People

*Nurturing ties to people, land, water, and culture*

Expenses Aligned:

- Travel for community connection and site visits
- IT infrastructure to support hybrid connection
- Programming and care at the Vancouver Land Bridge

## Reindigenizing Futures

*Weaving ancestral knowledge into today's world*

Expenses Aligned:

- Professional services for education and archiving
- Infrastructure for digital storytelling and education (website)

## Survivance & Healing

*Honoring Indigenous strength and committing to healing*

Expenses Aligned:

- Trainings and wellness support
- Community-centered facilitation: included in professional services and travel

## Creative Sovereignty

*Embracing storytelling and creative expression*

Expenses Aligned:

- Retail operations and creative revenue
- Program income reinvested into community

## Curiosity & Collaboration

*Staying open, brave, and community-centered*

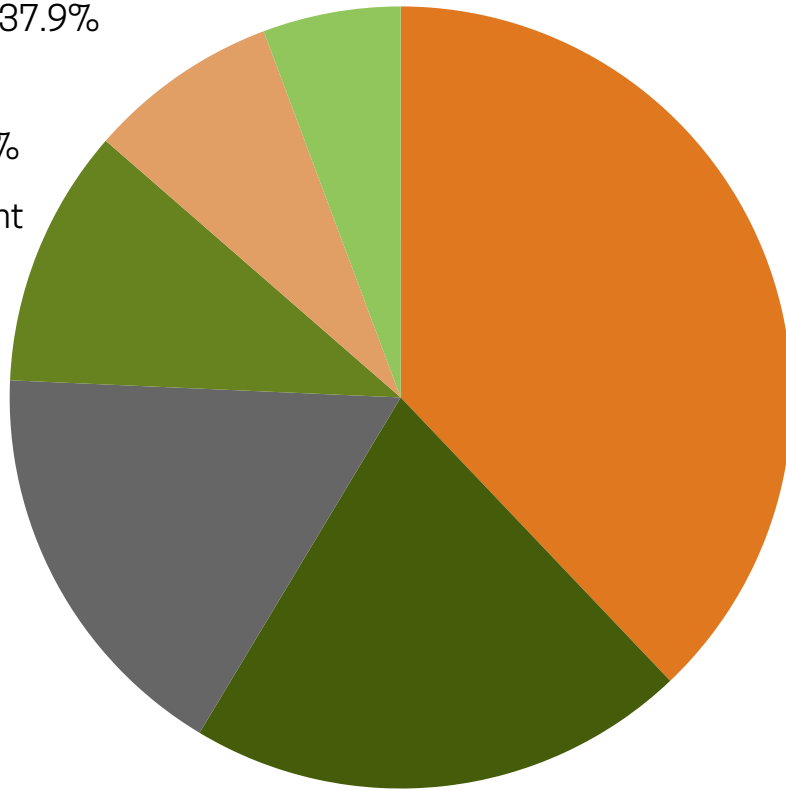
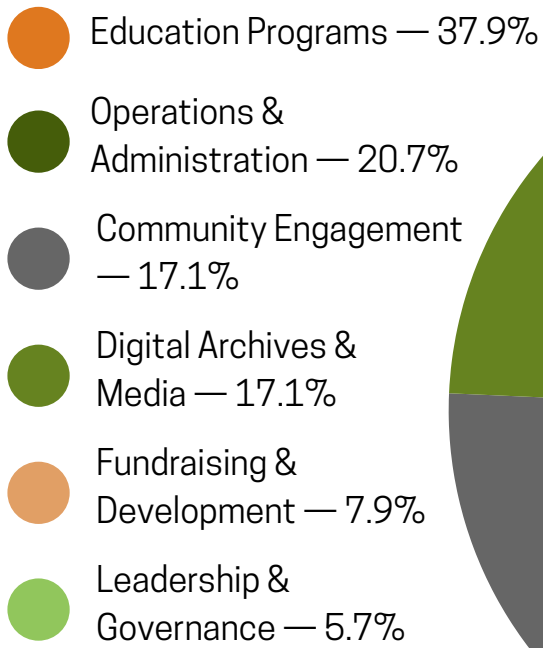
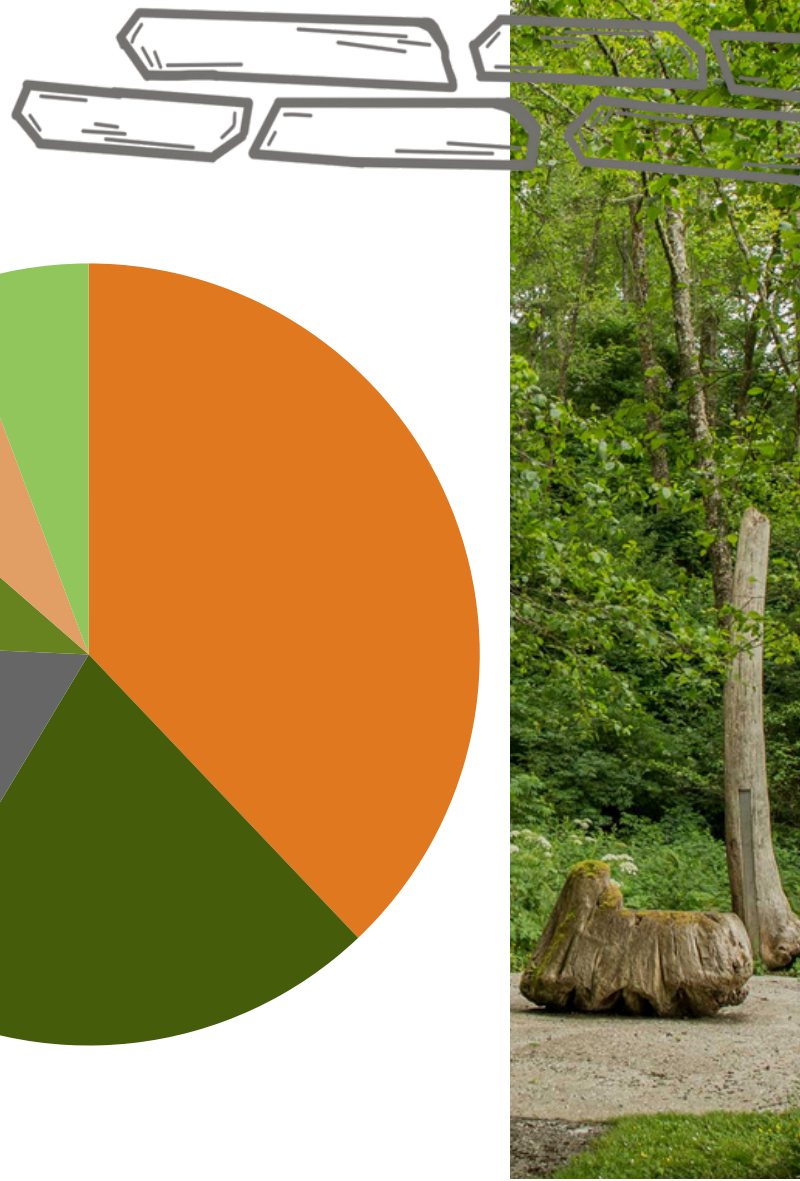
Expenses Aligned:

- Fundraising and donor engagement
- Events and sponsorships

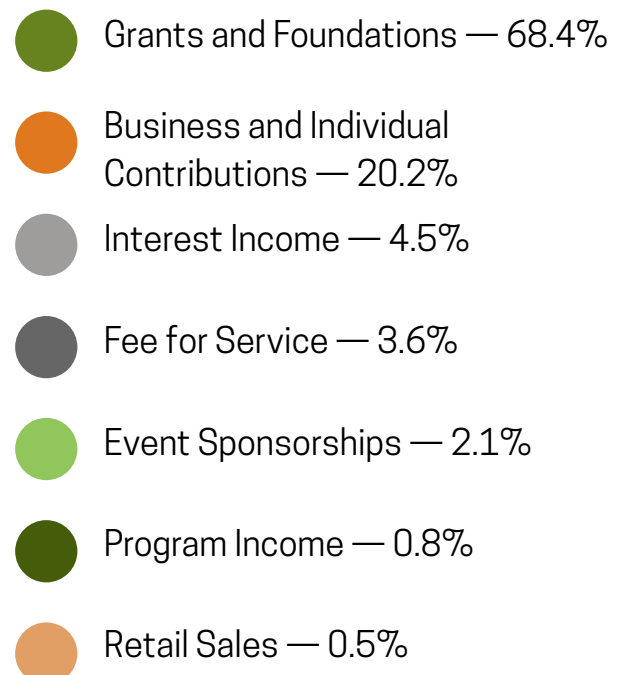
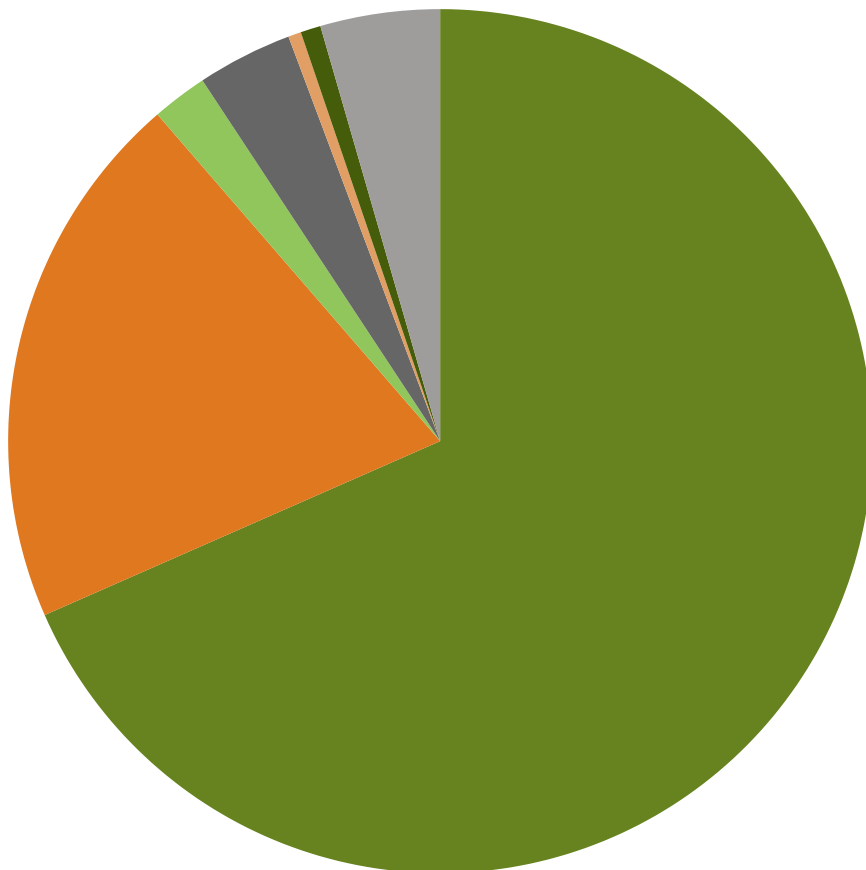




## FINANCIALS CONTINUED



## REVENUE





# STRATEGIC PLANNING

## The Year Ahead at Confluence

In 2025, Confluence is launching a strategic planning process under the guidance of Native leadership for the first time in the organization's history. With nearly all goals from our 2021–2025 Strategic Blueprint completed, we are now turning our attention to the future—with a renewed focus on centering Native voices, needs, and priorities.

This next phase will be shaped through a community participatory approach, prioritizing input from our Tribal partners throughout the Columbia River system. Throughout the summer, Confluence will host a series of community listening sessions in Tribal and rural communities across Oregon and Washington. These sessions are designed to gather direct feedback and insight on how Confluence can best support and amplify Native voices in the years to come. This inclusive process will be supported by strategic planning, board development, and executive leadership consultants who will help gather and synthesize information from community dialogue, surveys, and staff and board input. The result will be a new 3–5-year plan that guides Confluence's work through 2030 and strengthens our commitment to being a fully Native-led and Native-serving organization.

As we grow into this next chapter, Confluence is seeking support for our planning and capacity-building efforts. With your partnership, we aim to build an organization that reflects and responds to the needs of the Indigenous communities we serve—rooted in listening, grounded in relationships, and guided by Native leadership.