

# Native Youth Climate Adaptation Leadership Congress

2024

*Annual Report*



## Purpose & Overview

The Department of the Interior’s Bureau of Indian Affairs, with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), collaborates with multiple federal, tribal, and non-governmental organizations to offer experiential, youth-driven conservation leadership training for Indigenous high school and college-aged youth—the Native Youth Climate Adaptation Leadership Congress (Congress). The Service’s National Conservation Training Center (NCTC) coordinates the inspirational 16-member Congress Core Team to innovate, implement, and invest their funds into the Congress. NCTC hosts the annual program on its campus in Shepherdstown, West Virginia.

NYCALC uses Open Space Technology, a facilitation tool that allows participants to chart their agenda and self-identify into teams to work on topics they are passionate about. In teams, Indigenous youth develop solutions and identify actions they can achieve in their communities—on reservations and in urban Indian communities. To implement community projects, students may apply for mini grants. Though the students make NYCALC successful, the unmatched power of the program comes from diverse Indigenous identities coming together, sharing their culture, and solving modern environmental problems through collaboration. NYCALC is not just a training, it is platform for voices to be heard.

### NYCALC Mission

To develop Indigenous youth as future conservation leaders with the skills, knowledge, and tools to address environmental change and conservation challenges to better serve their schools and home communities.

### Big Question

As Indigenous youth, how can you use the knowledge of your ancestors, elders, and family to adapt to climate change and build resilience?

Participants	2024	Since 2015
High School Students	81	737
College-Age Students	21	177
Adult Mentors	26	196
Tribes Represented	45	158

## Highlights

This year’s Congress offered over 23 hours of professional development to adult faculty, including a basket-weaving workshop led by two Directorate Fellows Program students supported by the FWS’ National Native American Program Office. We wove new, optional, activities such as mural painting, beading, and evening bat walks into the agenda throughout the week—a highlight with the participants.

# Highlights

Students learned about leadership and college and career readiness within the context of addressing climate resiliency within home communities. The program featured interactive plenary and break-out group discussions, cultural sharing, and primarily Native American guest speakers, such as hip-hop artist Christian Takes Gun Parrish, or Supaman, a member of the Apsáalooke Nation; radio personality and podcaster Pete Dominick; film actor, Charley Hogan, T'odiichiinii (Bitter Water Clan)/Akohni Dine (Acoma Pueblo); and musician and scholar Lyla June Johnston, Diné (Navajo)/Tsétsêhéstâhese (Cheyenne). The NYCALC Core Planning Team and special guests presented workshops on topics addressing environmental issues, developing leadership, and interview and resume writing skills.

## Partners

The opportunity to host an Indigenous youth-driven program to train next generation leaders to address conservation challenges within their communities would not be possible without our

partners. The public/private NYCALC Core Planning Team meets year-round to plan and implement the training. New Mexico Wildlife Federation coordinates student participation, safety, and logistics. InterTribal Student Services manages mini-grant funding. The Aspen Institute's Fresh Tracks program helps the Core Planning Team take NYCALC to the next level with more intensive training and capacity building for college-aged leaders. This year NYCALC welcomed the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, the American Indian Higher Education Consortium, and the Department of Defense to the Congress, in addition to new representatives from existing agency partnerships.

High School Student, 2022

I felt very safe. It helped me find who I was. It made me secure in my culture and cherish it.

## NYCALC Core Planning Team

Ancestral Lands Conservation Corps  
Aspen Institute Fresh Tracks  
Bureau of Indian Affairs  
Bureau of Land Management  
Environmental Protection Agency  
Federal Emergency Management Agency  
InterTribal Student Services  
National Aeronautics and Space Administration

USFWS' National Conservation Training Center  
USFWS' Native American Liaison Office  
USDA Forest Service  
U.S. Geological Survey  
South Central Climate Adaptation Science Center  
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
National Park Service  
New Mexico Wildlife Federation

## Sponsors

The Congress allows you to be yourself and be more confident and open to meeting new people from all around the world.

High School Student, 2023

Numerous NYCALC Core Planning Team members provide in-kind support for NYCALC. The NYCALC Core Team recognizes these 2024 fiscal funders:

Bureau of Indian Affairs  
National Conservation Training Center, USFWS  
National Native American Program, USFWS  
National Park Service  
USDA Forest Service  
Bureau of Land Management  
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
U.S. Geological Service  
Bureau of Ocean Energy Management