



Native ACTION Network

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## NATIVE ACTION NETWORK RECOGNIZES FIVE *CHAMPIONS OF OUR FUTURE* DURING 19<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL WOMEN'S FORUM

SEATTLE, WA, August 17, 2023— Native Action Network, A Seattle-based nonprofit, announced that Mary Wilber (Osoyoos Indian Band), Jeri-Marie Bennett (Lummi/Suquamish/Duwamish), Teresa Iyall Williams (Coeur d'Alene) and Binah McCloud (Puyallup) have won the Enduring Spirit Award. For the first time a Rising Star award will be given to Alana Quintasket (Swinomish).

Native Action Network recognizes Native women for their lifetime commitments to building strong, healthy Native communities and intergenerational connection. Each year, a public call for nominations is released, and women selected to receive awards are celebrated amongst their peers at a Women's Leadership Forum. Recipients of the Enduring Spirit Award have contributed significantly to positive change within their communities. These leaders have advocated powerfully for environmental protections, access to quality education, holistic health and wellness, cultural preservation, traditional knowledge, tribal sovereignty, strengthening of treaty rights, tribal economic development and beyond.

Mary Wilber (Smeech-Sta-Kaw-Kaw) is a member of the Osoyoos Indian Band of Osoyoos, British Columbia in the Okanagan Valley. Mary has worked as the Eastside Native Education Title VI Program Director for 22+yrs for students in the Lake Washington, Bellevue, & Northshore school districts. She mentors, teaches, coaches, and advocates for over 245 Native students. Mary has served on the board for the National Indian Education Association for the past several years, volunteers as a CASA, as well as teaches kindergarten at her church. Mary is a previous recipient of the Adelaine Garcia award, recipient of the Eastside Civic Leadership Award, NIEA Educator of the year award, served on the board of Washington Native American Education Consortium, helped organize Native Tory Leadership Academy, & more.

Jeri-Marie Bennett is a Lummi tribal member. She was raised in Puyallup, where she now resides. Jeri-Marie attended Bellevue College and the University of Washington. During her long involvement with the local Native American community, she has served as Program Manager at the Seattle Indian Center, co-creator of Life Quest, Volunteer Guardian Ad Litem for King County Juvenile Court, is a founding member of the state's Indian Child Welfare Coalition, President of the Ethnic Heritage Council of the Pacific Northwest, to name a few. She is currently writing about Indian boarding schools in Washington and Oregon.

Teresa Iyall Williams (Yo-Ski-Pei) is a Coeur d'Alene tribal member. She graduated from Western Washington University, majoring in English and Speech Communications and earned a teaching certificate. Teresa has taught a variety of topics at Chief Leschi Secondary School, Wa-He-Lut Indian School, Tracyton Elementary, at Tulalip Elementary and Cascade Elementary and at military installations. Teresa received her master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction from

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Lesley University, and Western Washington University with an administrative credential. Teresa's work has been published in various journals and anthologies. Teresa retired in 2017, however, she stays up to date on her certifications, and serves on several local committees.

Binah McCloud is a Puyallup tribal member. Her parents are Janet and Don McCloud. She has served at Chief Leschi Schools for over 25 years and has launched and developed its culture program and served multiple generations of students. She has represented the school and her tribe throughout her life, including internationally. Binah was actively involved in the work of PAV, Puyallup's Against Violence - a grass roots organization that fought the youth gang culture plaguing tribal youth. In her program she connected youth to their culture and used fundraising strategies to collect enough resources to send youth on countless experiences, showing them a future possible for themselves that they did not know existed. This was work done before the tribe had resources and led a generation of youth to a healthy active life.

Alana Quintasket (siwəlcəʔ), is a citizen of the Swinomish Indian Tribal Community and first-term senator for the governing body at Swinomish. Elected in 2020 at the age of 27, Senator Quintasket has been dedicated to learning and passing on the teachings of her ancestors since a young age. She is a fluent Lushootseed language speaker. She studied Early Childhood and Family Studies and American Indian Studies (BA) at the University of Washington, and recently received her Master's in American Indian Studies from Arizona State University.

The awards will be presented during a celebration luncheon on September 15, 2023, at the Westin in downtown Seattle, which coincides with the [19th annual Native Women's Leadership Forum](#). Tickets to the Forum and the Luncheon can be found [here](#).

Native Action Network (NAN) is a non-profit organized to promote Native women's full representation, participation, and leadership in local, state, tribal, and national affairs. NAN achieves this by hosting intergenerational leadership forums, youth academies, a 10-month Legacy of Leadership cohort, leadership luncheons, nonprofit capacity building workshops, as well as other community development and civic participation activities. All of NAN's programming and resources are intended to empower Native women of all ages.

For more information about Native Action Network, visit [www.nativeactionnetwork.org](http://www.nativeactionnetwork.org), or follow us on Facebook: [www.facebook.com/nativeactionnetwork](https://www.facebook.com/nativeactionnetwork), or Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/nativeactionnetwork>

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