

**NATIONAL NATIVE
AMERICAN
ENVIRONMENTAL
AWARENESS SUMMER
YOUTH PRACTICUM
2021 FINAL REPORT**

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A fundamental goal of the Native American Fish & Wildlife Society (NAFWS) is to facilitate the education and collaboration of Native Americans and Alaskan Natives within the fish, wildlife and the natural resources fields specifically in Indian Country. This goal is not exclusively for professionals or adults, but also for our emerging professionals and youth.

A way of meeting and fulfilling that NAFWS' goal is through preparing, engaging, empowering and educating the Native youth about the preservation, conservation, protection and wise use of Mother Earth - our future conservation practitioners, decision-makers and stewards. The NAFWS National Native American Environmental Awareness Summer Youth Practicum (National SYP) plays a vital role in doing so



INTRODUCTION

Amid the COVID-19 Pandemic that caused the cancellation of our 2020 National SYP – NAFWS decided to have an in-person session of the National SYP for summer of 2021. This decision was made at the March 2021 Board of Directors Meeting, where the Education Coordinator, referred as EC hereinafter, proposed to have an in-person National SYP session. Within the proposal, COVID-19 Guidelines were outlined that focused on how the students/staff will travel safely, COVID-19 Liability Waiver process and process of if a student or staff started to exhibit symptoms during the National SYP.

With careful consideration and planning, the NAFWS successfully implemented the 2021 National SYP from Sunday, July 25 to Saturday, July 31, 2021.

PLANNING & COORDINATION

Planning of the National SYP started with updating the contract we had with YMCA of the Rockies in Estes Park, CO. After conversations with the NAFWS lawyer regarding ever changing COVID-19 mandates, the National SYP was rescheduled from the 2nd week of June to the last week of July 2021.

COVID-19

To ensure the utmost safety for staff and students, a COVID-19 Guidelines was produced that outlined COVID-19 hygiene and sanitation guidelines, COVID-19 resources for information specifically for COVID-19 regulations/updates/mandates and a mini action plan in case a situation arise that a student/staff member were to exhibit and feel COVID-19 symptoms. Also, NAFWS worked with their lawyer contractor to produce a COVID liability waiver) which student, student parents/guardians, NAFWS interns, and guest speakers were required to acknowledge and sign. Additionally, the YMCA of the Rockies, produced their own COVID-19 Liability Waiver which the SYP student participants, student parents/guardians, NAFWS staff, and guest speakers had to acknowledge and sign. A COVID-19 package was sent to the NAFWS interns and National SYP student participants that contained hand sanitizer, KN95 masks and EC's contact information prior to the National SYP to aid in safe traveling (*Figure 1*). In addition to the COVID-19 waivers, students and parents had to submit an additional student/parent contract.

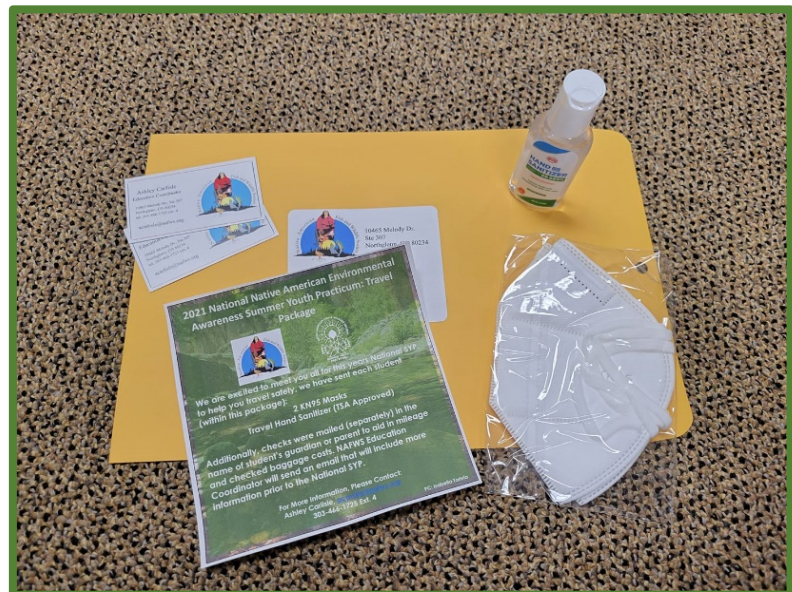


Figure 1: COVID-19 Travel Package

OUR HOST - YMCA OF THE ROCKIES



Figure 2: Entrance to YMCA of the Rockies, Estes Park, CO

Our contract with YMCA of the Rockies included a reservation in the Deer Ridge Lodge (*Figure 3*) of 8 rooms equipped with 2 bunkbeds, 1 queen-sized bed, bathroom (shower/toilet), 3 meals (*Figure 4*) and a meeting room (*Figure 5*). The YMCA Team were great to work with by being flexible, patient and accommodating to our group.

YMCA provided fireplaces, sports equipment rentals, swimming pool, volleyball courts, basketball courts, mini-golf, hiking trails and grass fields that our staff and students could enjoy in their free time (*Figure 6*). These amenities were complimentary to NAFWS as guests.



Figure 3: Deer Ridge Lodge



Figure 4: Cafeteria at the YMCA



Figure 5: Meeting Room



Figure 6: YMCA Fields

STUDENT RECRUITMENT & PARTICIPATION

Since the 2020 National SYP was cancelled due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, the students who had submitted applications and that were accepted to participate in 2020 were “grandfathered” in to participate in the 2021 National SYP. A total of eight students (3 boys, 5 girls) applications were transferred to the 2021 National SYP, of those eight, 2 boys and 4 girls committed and confirmed their participation in this year’s National SYP.

The EC decided to have a second recruitment campaign to recruit additional students to participate. Applications and flyers (Figure 7) were sent the first week of June 2021 to Bureau of Indian Education schools, NAFWS staff and board, EC’s contacts, as well as posted on NAFWS website and social medias (Twitter, Instagram and Facebook). Of this additional recruitment, we received a total of four applications.

After our 2nd recruitment campaign, the NAFWS had a total of 10 student participants (2 boys, 8 girls) that confirmed and committed to attending the 2021 National SYP. Our student applicants represented four federally recognized tribes and one state recognized tribe. We did have one student cancel his participation which is what lead to a total of 9 student participants (1 boy, 8 girls).

COUNSELORS

We did not have a call for counselors this year because we were able to assign the counselor positions to the NAFWS Summer Interns. Each intern had a background check completed prior due to working with students under the age of 18 years of age.

Additionally, counselors are required to review and sign a counselor contract which entails responsibilities as a counselor as well as rules and guidelines of being a counselor. Each intern was required to review and submit a counselor contract. Interns participated in a Counselor Orientation that outlined counselor responsibilities, expectations, guidelines, counselor contract and to address questions/comments.

PRESENTERS

A goal for the National SYP is to provide a diverse learning space and curriculum for our students. The EC started to contact and request for instructors in March, once the decision for an in-person session was made. This enabled the EC to include as much information possible when requesting for instructors. In contacting potential instructors, the request outlined the dates of the National SYP, time frames and a lesson plan template. The lesson plan template served more as a framework for the presenter’s session. The template and instructor request encouraged that the



Figure 7: National SYP Student Announcement Flyer

session include an overview of organization or agency, hands-on activity, personal testimony of career path or storytelling and a mini motivational segment.

Most, if not all the topics of the sessions of previous National SYPs were focused on natural resources, Traditional Ecological Knowledge and culture. This year, we incorporated professional development topics and exercises such as: SMART Goal Setting, Practicing Independency, Being Proactive, Networking and Resume Building.

TRAVEL

For student travel, the NAFWS covered their mileage to and from the airport (2 round trips; drop off student before the National SYP, pick up student after the National SYP), airfare, airfare insurance, luggage fees for 1 checked bag to and from the National SYP. For students, who have not either flown before or in a long time, a flight guide was created to guide students in how to pack, how does airport security work and travel tips.

PARENT MEETING

A week prior to the National SYP, the EC held a parent meeting on Zoom for the parents/guardians of the National SYP student participants to be able to review traveling logistics, meet & greet and provide any updates. Having this meeting ensured that students and their parents/guardians knew their travel times, pick up times, usage of their travel advances and to “break the ice” as well as get students excited for the National SYP.

AGENDA

Our weekly agenda comprised of fun activities, a day fieldtrip, souvenir shopping, team building activities, evening talking circles, free time and most importantly, informative lectures from NAFWS Staff, NAFWS Interns, and guest speakers.

MONDAY, JULY 26: ORIENTATION & INTRODUCTION TO NAFWS

To start our week, we began with student orientation this allowed the EC and NAFWS Staff to establish rules, go over the student contract and YMCA of the Rockies guidelines. This was important because having a set of rules and guidelines can ensure a safe, fun, respectful and enriching experience for students, NAFWS Staff, NAFWS Interns, YMCA facility and team, guest speakers and nature.

Teambuilding exercises allowed students to get comfortable with one another by having activities to involve communication, teamwork, competition, and laughter.

Additionally, the students had their first guest lecture. The EC invited Sally Carufel-Williams, previous NAFWS Education Coordinator and her husband Rick Williams, who is an advocate for Native scholars. They both gave empowering stories and talks that set the overall tone for the National SYP. A main aspect of their talk included the explanation of the *R Principles* and offering great words of encouragement and wisdom.

Talking Circles

Each evening after dinner, we had a talking circle (*Figure 8*) that allowed for students, interns and staff to reflect on the day. Each person were required to answer:

1. What was your positive for the day?
2. What was your negative for the day?
3. How did your negative turn to a positive?
4. Question of the Day – Examples include name something you would like to work on, name one thing you would like to do more research on or would like to learn more about, and name one thing you learned.



Figure 8: NAFWS Staff & Students at a Talking Circle, Photo: S. Chischilly

TUESDAY, JULY 27: NAFWS DAY + NATIVE AMERICAN RIGHTS FUND

On Tuesday, all of our NAFWS Staff presented on the work that they do within their positions in NAFWS, personal career paths and about past work/educational experiences.

Our second guest speaker, Mr. Dallin Maybee, Native American Rights Fund: Discussed current Indian law policies and movements, environmental injustice and Finding and Using Your Voice to assert your rights.

In the evening, we had a film screening of the newly release film documentary, *Inhabitants - An Indigenous Perspective*. This film focused on a few different conservation projects happening in four different Tribal Nations of the United States (*Figure 9*).



Figure 9: Photo of Inhabitants, An Indigenous Perspective film, Photo Taken from inhabitantsfilm.com

Our evening ended with a networking exercise led by the EC. This exercise allowed NAFWS Staff and Interns to have a one-on-one conversation with each of the student participants, encouraged student's to practice their elevator speeches and foster professional relationships. The exercise lasted an hour, so each conversation was 5 minutes.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 28: GUEST SPEAKERS & LECTURES

The day that was lecture heavy was our guest speaker day, in which, the students enjoyed and were able to learn a lot of information about different career fields and paths including hearing about our Executive Director's career path (*Figure 10*).

Below is the list of our guest presenters, whom presented on Wednesday. Also, provided below is a little presentation summary:

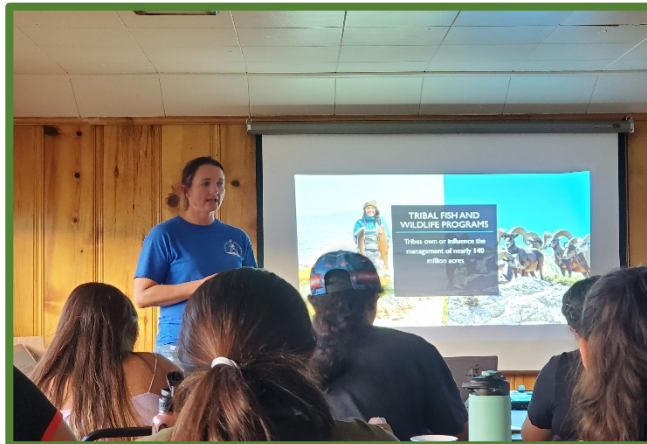


Figure 10: Dr. Julie Thorstenson, NAFWS Executive Director presenting on her career path and Tribal natural resources. Photo: S. Chischilly

- Sharon Scully, United States Department of Agriculture Animal and Plant Health Inspection Services (USDA-APHIS) Wildlife Services: Described Wildlife Services careers, work and research on avian deaths at airports by airplanes, personal career path and showed bird wing samples.
- Melissa Castiano, United States Fish & Wildlife Service Tribal Liaison: Focused on sharing her personal career path, what she does as a Tribal liaison and discussed Native Youth Community Adaptation and Leadership Congress (NYCALC) opportunity.
- Adda Gutman, USDA-APHIS Plant Protection and Quarantine: Described Plant Protection and Quarantine careers, work and research on invasive pests in U.S. forests, shared personal career path, help students create moth traps and showed insect specimens.
- Sarah Zimmermann and Lori Neff, Greenwood Wildlife Rehabilitation Center: Presented on the work that the rehabilitation center does, gave instructions and guidelines of reporting injured wildlife, shared personal career path and showed a variety of wildlife items (i.e. squirrels nest, bobcat skull).

Also, students had to opportunity to explore downtown Estes Park to go souvenir shopping and to explore the downtown area. Our day ended with our NAFWS Interns presenting about their college experiences and encouraging students to think about achieving higher education and goals they have set for themselves.

Honoraria

Honoraria was gifted to the guest presenters which included a National SYP t-shirt (*Figure 11*), National SYP stickers, thank-you card and a YMCA of the Rockies coffee cup.



*Figure 11: Ashley Carlisle, Education Coordinator, presenting National SYP T-shirt to Kyle of ColoState Forest Nursery.
Photo: R. Romero*

THURSDAY, JULY 29: FIELD TRIP TO FORT COLLINS, COLORADO

Trees, Water, People Head Quarters

Trees, Water, People organized our field trip to their head quarters in Fort Collins, Colorado in which James Calabaza and Emily Schwartz led the day. They presented on the work that TWP does within Tribal Nations including sharing a little about their conservation work abroad in Nicaragua, Mexico, El Salvador as well as sharing the importance of networking and personal career paths.

Colorado State Forest Nursery

We also visited the Colorado State Forest Nursery, where Kyle, gave a tour of the nursery facilities and explained the work that they do, discussed the process of nurturing trees from seeds to seedlings and talked about personal career path.

Colorado State University



Figure 12: Dr. Shane Kanatous presenting in a lecture hall at CSU. Photo: R. Romero

Lunch was provided by Trees, Water, People at the Colorado State University (CSU) campus. The students were able to learn about CSU's Native American Cultural Center (NACC) and their services, resources, scholarships and opportunities of the NACC for Native students from Tiffani Kelly, the assistant director of NACC. She also gave examples of the diversity work that CSU has done and continuing to work on.

The students were able to receive a small tour of parts of the CSU campus including the Lory Student Center, Plaza, Warner College of Natural Resources and exterior buildings. To conclude the trip, students visited Dr. Shane Kanatous, an assistant professor within CSU's Biology Department (*Figure 12*). His session was located in a large lecture room which gave a "collegey" feel for students. Dr. Kanatous shared his personal career path, discussed research in his biology lab focusing on marine mammal physiology and gave a mini lecture involving marine physiology.

FRIDAY, JULY 30: CLOSING DAY

Our week went by so quick by our closing day, we have all learned so much and our students were ready to exercise their knowledge that they gained and critical thinking skills with the SYP Scenarios. The NAFWS Interns organized four scenario exercises regarding natural conservation issues and that challenged students to think critically about the different perspectives and stakeholders involved including possible solutions and challenges. After each scenario, students would present their group's thoughts, solutions, pros, cons and additional feedback to NAFWS staff and interns (*Figure 13*).

In addition the Closing Day, the EC thought that having a closing presentation titled, *Now What? Where Do We Go From Here?*, is important to outline the entire week’s “take-aways” as well as outlined what lessons and tips from each day including encouragement to continue to learn as well as apply, share, and practice the information learned from the National SYP. This presentation also outlined the students’ travel arrangements to help them plan and pack.



Figure 13: National SYP student group presenting their wildlife management plan. Photo: R. Romero

Closing BBQ

After the Closing Presentation, the EC allowed for students to have free time to be able to enjoy each other’s last moments together before traveling back home. At the same time, NAFWS Staff and Interns worked to prepare for the BBQ, photobooth and awards ceremony. Each student at the awards ceremony received a Estes Park baseball cap, YMCA of the Rockies sticker and a completion certificate. Also, students in the beginning of the week received a binder with the National SYP agenda, SYP stickers, pencils, pens, metal water bottle and a National SYP T-shirt.



Figure 14: Closing BBQ, EC, Jovon J., and Mathis M. cooking tortillas. Photo: S. Chischilly

PARTNERSHIPS

A great partnership evolved from the 2020 National SYP with the non-profit organization, Trees Water People (TWP), based in Fort Collins, Colorado. The Education Coordinator and the TWP contact person, James Calabaza, agreed to let TWP arrange the Fort Collins field trip for our Thursday Fort Collins field trip including covering the costs for lunch for NAFWS staff, counselors and students. Mr. Calabaza was given the freedom to organize the Fort Collins Field Trip Agenda.



Figure 15: National SYP students, interns and EC outside of Trees, Water, People Headquarters. Photo: R. Romero

CHALLENGES & LESSONS LEARNED

Overall, the 2021 National SYP was a wonderful and great learning experience for the student participants as well as the NAFWS Staff and guest presenters. We did have to navigate through several challenges ranging from preparing for the unknown and known impacts of COVID-19 to a student misplacing a wallet. One main challenge was planning an in-person session in the midst of the COVID-19 Pandemic. This specific challenge impacted lodging reservations, travel safety (federal law to wear a mask, encouraging students to wear KN95 masks), entrance into the Rocky Mountain National Park (only allowed to make a time reservation to enter the park 24 hours prior, sold-out reservations) and confirming presenters (travel restrictions, employees working from home).

A couple of lessons learned and recommendations that were voiced by NAFWS Staff, NAFWS Interns, and student participants include a visit to Rocky Mountain National Park, spend more time at CSU campus, more outside and hands-on activities.

CONCLUSION

The National SYP has engaged Native high school students for years and will continue to do with years to come. It has also provided a great learning, teaching and mentoring experience for natural resource professionals that participated as guest speakers, partners and who are a part of NAFWS Staff/Interns. The monumental moments that NAFWS staff recall from the National SYP is when the National SYP students would introduce themselves all in their languages and hearing the well-thought, engaging and challenging questions asked by students. These specific moments gave tremendous amounts of hope and pride in our Native Youth and their work/ability to become strong leaders, conservationists and protectors of Mother Earth and Native peoples. We are definitely excited to see and hear of the journeys of our National SYP students. We hope to continue this cycle by continuing to implement National SYPs in the future.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We have great appreciation for Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) for granting funding to allow us to plan and implement a summer camp that engages our Native Youth with natural resources and with incredible role models. The NAFWS would like to thank the YMCA of the Rockies team for hosting our group and providing a safe environment for our National SYP. Additionally, sending a huge thanks to our guest speakers for using their time to travel, present and engage with our students including sharing their personal career paths. Thank-You to Mr. James Calabaza from Trees, Water, People for organizing our Fort Collins day trip and funding our Subway lunch. Much appreciation to *Inhabitants* film team for allowing us to host a film screening of their newly released film, *Inhabitants - An Indigenous Perspective*. Lastly, many, many thanks to the NAFWS Staff and Interns team for presenting, participating, help in organizing and implementing the National SYP.

