



CANAR ANNUAL CONFERENCE

December 2-4, 2025

***Our Story: 50 Years
Advancing Self-Determination
through TVR***



Table of Contents

Section	Content Includes	Page Number
I. Overview & Context		5
	Letters from Tribal Leaders	5–6
	Welcome from the CANAR President	7
	Conference Theme and Artist Spotlight	1, 23
	AIVRTTAC Presents: The TVR Journey Guide	54
II. Historical Foundations		9
	AIVRS Funded Projects (Map & Grantees)	9
	TVR Program Initial Grant Start Date (Timeline)	10–13
	CANAR History & Formation	15
	What Are AIVRS Projects? & Historical Timeline (1975–2025)	16–17
	CANAR Conference History	18–19
III. Conference Schedule & Speakers		8
	Agenda at a Glance (Daily Schedule Summary)	8
	General Session Keynote Presenters	28
	Keynote Presenter Bios	29–30
	Breakout Sessions Descriptions & Presenter Bios	33–48

	Detailed Daily Agenda	62-64
IV. Events, Logistics, & Leadership		20
	CRC and CEU Credits Information	20
	Hotel Map (Gila River/Wild Horse Pass)	21
	Conference Emcees and Entertainment	24, 25, 26
	Banquet Entertainment	25-26
	Special Events (Bingo, Glow Walk, Rock Your Moc's)	53
	CANAR Volunteer Committees	27
	Years of TVR Service Recognition	55
	Meet the CANAR Executive Board & Bios	56-61
	Donation Acknowledgement	68
	Future Events (Save the Dates)	69





The Navajo Nation **DR. BUU NYGREN** *PRESIDENT*

Yideeskáadi Nitsáhákees | *Think for the Future*

November 5, 2025

Yá'át'ééh! Welcome to all CANAR attendees.

The Consortia on Administrators for Native American Rehabilitation (CANAR) is dedicated to enhancing vocational rehabilitation services for Native Americans and Alaska Natives with disabilities. We are honored that this year's conference will celebrate 50 years of advocating for culturally appropriate practices and positive employment outcomes. This is a powerful affirmation of our identity as strong and inclusive Tribal Nations.

This year holds special significance: we collectively mark the 50th Anniversary of Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation (TVR) Services. This milestone is encapsulated in the theme: *Our Story: 50 Years of Advancing Self-Determination through TVR*.

I commend the visionary leaders and tireless advocates across all Indian Country who worked to incorporate culturally responsive vocational rehabilitation services into the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Their collective advocacy was a crucial act of self-determination, ensuring that our programs are tailored to the unique values, language, and culture of the Diné people and all Native communities served by TVR programs.

We honor this history by reaffirming our mandate: to ensure equal access and opportunity for every Navajo individual to secure and sustain meaningful employment. The talents and skills of people with disabilities are not merely a benefit—they are an essential resource that strengthens our Nation's prosperity and long-term economic growth.

As the Navajo Nation President, I view this work as a critical component of my administration's overarching focus on combating poverty and securing necessities for all Navajo homes. Our collective forward progress depends on our commitment to those who face the steepest challenges. Be assured, you have my personal and unwavering commitment to strongly advocate on behalf of every Navajo citizen with a disability. We will champion policies and secure the resources necessary to ensure that everyone has the chance to thrive.

Let us move forward, together, with purpose and resolve, and continue to strengthen our Tribal communities and expand opportunity, while celebrating the success of all TVR Programs in advancing self-determination for Native people everywhere.

Respectfully,

Dr. Buu Nygren, *President*
THE NAVAJO NATION

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SALT RIVER PIMA-MARICOPA INDIAN COMMUNITY

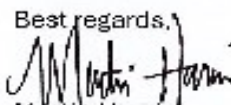
10005 E. Osborn Road / Scottsdale, Arizona 85256-9722
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Ske:g taş (Good Day! – O'odham)
Kamduum (How are you? – Piipaash)

On behalf of the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community, we would like to welcome you to the 2025 Annual CANAR Conference, located in the Gila River Indian Community, Wild Horse Pass, hosted by the Arizona Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation (TVR) Programs. We hope you enjoy this beautiful time of year here in Arizona.

This year's theme, "Our Story: 50 Years of Advancing Self-Determination through TVR" is a very powerful theme, celebrating the 50th anniversary of the very first TVR Program, in Navajo Nation. Now, fifty years later, SRPMIC is proud to be home to Salt River Vocational Rehabilitation, one of the 94 Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation programs throughout the nation, serving our Community Members who have disabilities, and helping them become employed, self-sufficient, and productive members of the Community. We appreciate and recognize all the work that you all are doing in your respective tribal communities.

We hope you have a wonderful celebration and productive conference. Welcome to Arizona.

Best regards,

Martin Harvier
President



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CONSORTIA OF ADMINISTRATORS FOR NATIVE AMERICAN REHABILITATION, INC.

December 2, 2025

Greetings from the President,

As we gather for the 2025 Annual CANAR Conference, I am filled with gratitude for your continued dedication to the mission of Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation. Serving as your President has been an honor, and I am inspired by the strength and collaboration that define our CANAR community.

This year, CANAR has continued to grow in membership, partnerships, and advocacy. Our connections with CSAVR, NAMRC, and RSA have strengthened, ensuring that Tribal voices are represented in critical national discussions on funding, policy, and equity. Together, we are reinforcing the importance of cultural competence, sovereignty, and self-determination in vocational rehabilitation.

Behind the scenes, the Executive Board has focused on improving operations, enhancing communication through our website, and building sustainable systems that will support CANAR's long-term stability. These efforts ensure our organization remains transparent, effective, and responsive to member needs.

This conference holds special meaning as we celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the Navajo Nation's Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation Program. We proudly honor their leadership Rehabilitation, vision, and unwavering commitment to empowering Native people with disabilities. Their legacy stands as a beacon of resilience and excellence for all Tribal VR programs across the nation.

I extend heartfelt appreciation to the Executive Board for their hard work and to all CANAR members for your continued service and advocacy. Together, we are building bridges, shaping policy, and creating opportunities that transform lives.

Thank you for all you do. I look forward to the year ahead as we continue to grow in unity and purpose.

With gratitude and respect,

Emma De La Cruz, MHR, LPC

Emma De La Cruz, MHR, LPC
President, CANAR

Agenda at a Glance

Day 1: Tuesday, December 2nd

7:30 AM - 8:45 AM	Breakfast - Palo Verde AB
7:30 AM - 5:00 PM	Registration - Palo Verde Foyer
9:00 AM - 9:30 AM	Welcome - Palo Verde AB
9:30 AM - 9:45 AM	Break
9:45 AM - 12:00 PM	CANAR Membership Meeting - Palo Verde AB
12:00 PM - 1:30 PM	Lunch on Your Own
1:30 PM - 3:00 PM	CANAR Membership Meeting - Palo Verde AB
3:00 PM - 3:20 PM	Break
3:30 PM - 5:00 PM	Talking Circles (TBA)
5:30 PM - 6:30 PM	AIVRTTAC Gathering - Palo Verde AB
8:00 PM - 9:00 PM	Recovery Talking Circle - Palo Verde AB

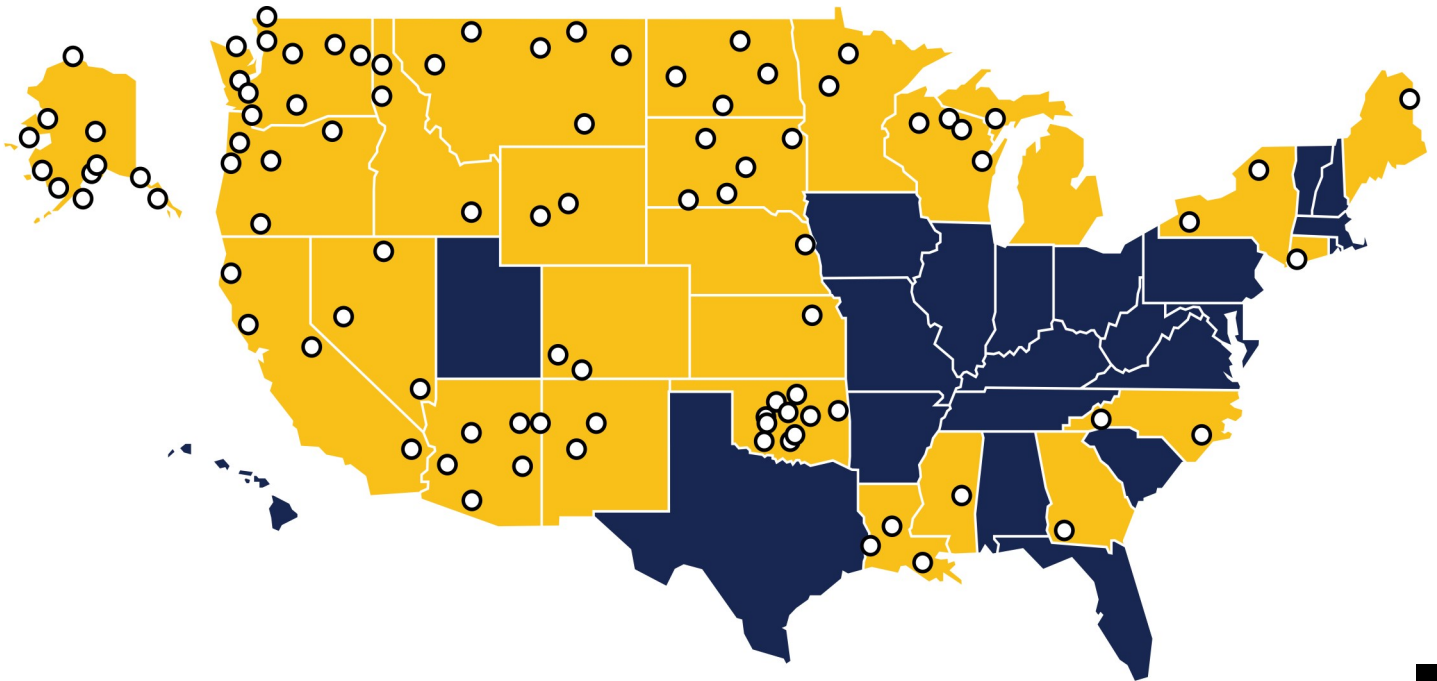
Day 2: Wednesday, December 3rd

7:30 AM - 8:30 AM	Breakfast - Palo Verde AB
7:30 AM - 5:00 PM	Registration - Palo Verde Foyer
8:30 AM - 10:15 AM	Opening Ceremony and Blessing - Palo Verde AB
10:15 AM - 10:30 AM	Break
10:30 AM - 12:00 PM	Keynote - Palo Verde AB
12:00 PM - 1:30 PM	Lunch on Your Own
1:30 PM - 3:00 PM	Break Out Sessions - Yucca, Willow, Cholla, & Agave
3:00 PM - 3:30 PM	Break
3:30 PM - 5:00 PM	Break Out Sessions - Yucca, Willow, Cholla, & Agave
6:00 PM - 7:00 PM	Glow Walk - Palo Verde AB
8:00 PM - 9:00 PM	Recovery Talking Circle - Palo Verde AB

Day 3: Thursday, December 4th

7:30 AM - 8:45 AM	Breakfast - Palo Verde AB
9:00 AM - 10:00 AM	Keynote - Palo Verde AB
10:00 AM - 10:30 AM	Break
10:30 AM - 12:00 PM	Keynote - Palo Verde AB
12:00 PM - 1:30 PM	Lunch on Your Own
1:30 PM - 3:00 PM	Break Out Sessions - Yucca, Willow, Cholla, & Agave
3:00 PM - 3:30 PM	Break
3:30 PM - 5:00 PM	Break Out Sessions - Yucca, Willow, Cholla, & Agave
6:00 PM - 9:00 PM	Banquet and Closing Ceremonies - Palo Verde AB
9:00 PM - 10:00 PM	Recovery Talking Circle - Palo Verde AB
5:45 PM - 9:00 PM	Banquet and Closing Ceremonies - Catalina Ballroom Lobby
9:00 PM - 10:00 PM	Recovery Talking Circle - Laguna Beach 3

AIVRS Funded Projects



American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Services

Project Directory (93 Grantees in 26 states)

Alaska

Alaska (12 grants)

Northwest

Washington (11)

Oregon (5)

Great Plains

North Dakota (4)

South Dakota (5)

Nebraska (1)

Southern Plains

Kansas (1)

Oklahoma (10)

Pacific

California (4)

Western

Nevada (3)

Arizona (5)

Eastern

Connecticut (1)

Maine (1)

Michigan (1)

New York (2)

Georgia (1)

Mississippi (1)

North Carolina (2)

Louisiana (3)

Rocky Mountain

Wyoming (2)

Montana (6)

Idaho (3)

Southwest

Colorado (2)

New Mexico (2)

Midwest

Minnesota (2)

Wisconsin (4)

TVR Program Initial Grant Start Date

TVR Name	Location	Year Began Services
Navajo Nation OSERS	Arizona	1975
Northern Cheyenne	Montana	1985
Chippewa Cree	Montana	1985
Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes	Montana	1986
Shoshone-Bannock	Idaho	1986
Yakama	Washington	1986
Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians	Mississippi	1987
Kodiak Area Native Association	Alaska	1988
Bristol Bay Native Association	Alaska	1989
North Intertribal	Washington	1992
Standing Rock Sioux Tribe	North/South Dakota	1993
Pine Ridge Oglala Sioux	South Dakota	1993
Coville Confederated Tribes	Washington	1993
Cherokee Nation	Oklahoma	1993
South Puget International Planning Agency	Washington	1994
Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma	Oklahoma	1994
Giniw Waakaa'igan Red Lake	Minnesota	1994
Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians	North Dakota	1994
Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs	Oregon	1994
Sycuan Inter-Tribal	California	1994
Hannahville Indian Community	Michigan	1995
Tanana Chiefs Conference	Alaska	1995
Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes	Alaska	1995
Maniilaq Tribe	Alaska	1995

TVR Program Initial Grant Start Date (Cont.)

TVR Name	Location	Year Began Services
Cheyenne River Sioux	South Dakota	1995
Iowa Tribe of Oklahoma	Oklahoma	1995
Fort Belknap Tribes	Montana	1995
Fort Peck Assiniboine Sioux	Montana	1995
The Klamath Tribes	Oregon	1995
Pueblo of Zuni	New Mexico	1996
Pueblo of Laguna-Acoma	New Mexico	1996
Apache Tribe of Oklahoma	Oklahoma	1997
Southern Ute Tribe	Colorado	1997
Ute Mountain Ute Tribe	Colorado	1997
Blackfeet Nation	Montana	1997
Lower Brule Sioux	South Dakota	1997
Pueblo of Jemez	New Mexico	1997
Chickasaw Nation	Oklahoma	1997
Delaware Nation	Oklahoma	1998
Lummi Tribe	Washington	1998
Cheyenne & Arapaho Tribes	Oklahoma	1998
Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association, Inc.	Alaska	1998
Eastern Shoshone Red Feathered Eagle	Wyoming	1997
White Earth Reservation Tribal Council	Minnesota	1999
Northern Arapaho	Wyoming	1999
Spirit Lake Nation	North Dakota	1998
Southern Ute Indian Tribe	Colorado	1999
Seneca Nation of Indians	New York	1999
St. Regis Mohawk Tribe	New York	1999
Comanche Nation	Oklahoma	1999
Creek Nation	Oklahoma	1999

TVR Program Initial Grant Start Date (Cont.)

TVR Name	Location	Year Began Services
Muscogee Creek Nation	Oklahoma	1999
Fort Mojave Indian Tribe	California	1999
Eastern Band of Cherokee Tribe	North Carolina	1999
Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina	North Carolina	1999
Great Lakes Inter-Tribal Council	Wisconsin	1999
Hoopa Yurok	California	1999
White Earth Reservation Tribal Council	Minnesota	1999
Confederated Tribes of Grande Ronde	Oregon	1995
Oneida Tribe of Indians	Wisconsin	1999
Tohono O'odham Nation	Arizona	1999
Association of Village Council Presidents	Alaska	2000
White Mountain Apache Tribe	Arizona	2000
Shoshone-Paiute Tribes	Nevada	2000
Pinoleville Pomo Nation	California	2000
Moapa Band of Paiutes	Nevada	2000
Menominee Indian Tribe	Wisconsin	2000
Lac Courte Oreilles Indian Tribe	Wisconsin	2000
Three Affiliated Tribes	North Dakota	2000
United Houma Nation	Louisiana	2000
Nez Perce	Idaho	2001
Tunica-Biloxi Tribe	Louisiana	2001
Coeur d'Alene Tribe	Idaho	2001
Lower Muskogee Creek Tribe	Georgia	2001
Cook Inlet Tribal Council, Inc.	Alaska	2001

TVR Program Initial Grant Start Date (Cont.)

TVR Name	Location	Year Began Services
Inupiat Community of the Arctic Slope	Alaska	2001
Prairie Band of Potawatomi Nation	Kansas	2001
Fort Belknap Tribes	Montana	2001
Kawerak, Inc.	Alaska	2001
Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians	Maine	2002
Central Louisiana Intertribal	Louisiana	2002
Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community	Arizona	2003
Hopi Tribe	Arizona	2003
Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation	Connecticut	2003
Metlakatla Indian Community	Alaska	2004
Skokomish and Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis Reservation	Washington	2004
Cowlitz Indian Tribe	Washington	2005
Choctaw-Apache Tribe	Louisiana	2005
Four Winds Cherokee	Louisiana	2005
Samish Indian Nation	Washington	2005
Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation	Oregon	2010
Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians	Oregon	2010
Fallon Paiute Shoshone Tribe	Nevada	2015
Spokane Tribe	Washington	2015

TVR Program Initial Grant Start Date (Cont.)

TVR Name	Location	Year Began Services
Sicangu Nation	South Dakota	2016
Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate Tribe	South Dakota	2019
Wichita and Affiliated Tribes	Oklahoma	2021
Winnebago Tribe	Nebraska	2024
Chugachmiut Tribe	Alaska	2024
Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe	Washington	2025
Pit River Tribe	California	2025



CANAR HISTORY



After the passage of the Rehabilitation Act Amendment in 1992, considerable actions were taken to enhance cultural competence in rehabilitation service delivery, increase outreach and services to persons with disabilities from diverse populations, and develop recruitment strategies of persons from diverse backgrounds to work in areas of rehabilitation. The Amendments required the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services with the U.S. Department of Education, to develop a national strategic plan, known as the Rehabilitation Cultural Diversity Initiative (RCDI) that would implement priority training on issues of cultural diversity to all programs funded under the Rehabilitation Act.

Between 1992 and 1993, several RCDI meetings were coordinated by the Region VIII Rehabilitation Continuing Education Program (RCEP) to address the current service delivery system within Section 121 (130 at the time) funded American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Services Projects (AIVRS). Issues and concerns were expressed regarding initiating and improving tribally-appropriate vocational rehabilitation service provision on reservations nationwide, since State VR services and administrative plans often conflicted with tribal norms, eventually leading to high rates of unsuccessful closures among Native American clients. As a result, on January 22, 1993, the Consortia of Administrators for Native American Rehabilitation (CANAR) was established to function as a national platform for advocating the need for effective rehabilitation service delivery for American Indians and Alaska Natives with disabilities. The CANAR serves as the official voice of Native American rehabilitation programs, which provide VR services to American Indians and Alaska Natives with disabilities who reside on or near Federal or State reservations, Alaska Native villages, rancheros, and pueblos. CANAR addresses the strengths, resources, interests, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, and informed choice (the GREAT 8) of American Indian and Alaska Native consumers so they may engage in, obtain, or retain gainful employment, including self-employment, telecommuting, and business ownership.

After the CANAR met its first five-year initiative (1993-1998), their administrative offices relocated from Region VIII RCEP at the University of Northern Colorado to the American Indian Rehabilitation Research and Training Center (AIRRTC) located at the Institute for Human Development, an Arizona University Affiliated Program at Northern Arizona University. The CANAR continues to form collaborative working relationships with Northern Arizona University through involvement with the American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Training and Technical Assistance Center - AIVRTTAC), the Northwest Indian College TVR Institute, state rehabilitation agencies, tribal health and social service programs, Capacity Building Projects, and federal services agencies, such as the U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Labor. Partnering with these organizations allows the CANAR to promote the needs of AIVRS projects and make sure their voice is heard so that American Indian and Alaska Native consumers are served in a culturally appropriate and beneficial manner.



Timeline



What Are AIVRS Projects?

AIVRS (American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Services) projects are VR projects, funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS), that serve American Indians with disabilities living on or near federal and state reservations. Their purpose is to deliver culturally appropriate VR services to American Indians that respect their cultural beliefs, identity, and informed choices to achieve their vocational goals.

1975 Navajo VR Program is established

A study from the Arizona Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) shows an increased number of state VR referrals from individuals living on Navajo tribal lands. In response, Arizona RSA provides a three-year "Innovation and Establishment" grant to the Navajo Nation to establish the Navajo VR Program (NVRP).

1978 Amendments to the Rehabilitation Act


The Rehabilitation Act (RA) of 1973 is amended to require states to provide adequate VR services to American Indians with disabilities. Under Section 130, the amended RA secures funding for American Indian tribes to develop the capacity to deliver VR services to American Indians with disabilities residing on or near tribal reservations.

1981 Navajo Nation becomes first AIVRS project

Under the amended RA, the Navajo VR Program receives the first AIVRS grant. VR cases from the Arizona and New Mexico state VR agencies are transferred to the NVRP, providing the Navajo Nation total autonomy in case management and delivery of services.

1985-86 RSA funds additional AIVRS projects

In 1985, the Northern Cheyenne and Chippewa Cree tribes in Montana receive RSA funding as AIVRS projects. In 1986, the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes in Idaho and the Confederated Salish Kootenai Tribes in Montana receive RSA funding as AIVRS projects.



1992-94 Funding for AIVRS projects increases

In 1992, new amendments to the RA result in increased funding for the AIVRS projects, and in 1996 the AIVRS project grant period is increased from three to five years.

1993 CANAR is formed

The Consortia of Administrators for Native American Rehabilitation (CANAR) is formed with the purpose of uniting AIVRS projects and acting as an agent for change in American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation.

2015 AIVRTTAC is formed

The American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Training and Technical Assistance Center (AIVRTTAC) was founded at Northern Arizona University. AIVRTTAC's purpose is to provide essential training and technical assistance to the American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Services (AIVRS) projects nationwide. This support helps tribal VR staff deliver effective, culturally relevant services to assist American Indians with disabilities in obtaining employment.

2025 As of today...

There are 93 AIVRS projects providing VR services to tribal participants in 26 states.



CANAR CONFERENCE HISTORY

2008 - 2025

YEAR	MID-YEAR CONFERENCE	ANNUAL CONFERENCE
2025	Spokane, Washington Hosted by Washington TVR Programs	Chandler, Arizona Hosted by Arizona TVR Programs
2024	Chandler, Arizona Hosted by Arizona TVR Programs	Las Vegas, Nevada Hosted by Nevada TVR Programs
2023	Niagara Falls, New York Hosted by Seneca Nation and St. Regis	Costa Mesa, California Location Conference
2022	No Conference	Tulsa, Oklahoma Hosted by Oklahoma TVR Programs
2021	No Conference	No Conference
2020	No Conference	No Conference
2019	Mashantucket, Connecticut Hosted by Mashantucket Pequot TVR	New Orleans, Louisiana Hosted by Louisiana TVR Programs
2018	Prior Lake, Minnesota Hosted by White Earth TVR	Scottsdale, Arizona Hosted by Arizona TVR Programs
2017	Tulsa, Oklahoma Hosted by Oklahoma TVR Programs	Las Vegas, Nevada Hosted by Nevada TVR Programs
2016	Baltimore, Maryland Location Conference	Alpine, California Hosted by Sycuan TVR
2015	Myrtle Beach, South Carolina Hosted by Lumbee TVR	Salt Lake City, Utah Location Conference
2014	Albuquerque, New Mexico Hosted by New Mexico TVR Programs	Panama City Beach, Florida Hosted by Lower Muscogee Creek TVR
2013	Billings, Montana Hosted by Montana TVR Programs	Portland, Oregon Hosted by Oregon TVR Programs
2012	Niagara Falls, New York Hosted by Seneca Nation TVR	Seattle, Washington Hosted by Washington TVR Programs
2011	Green Bay, Wisconsin Hosted by Wisconsin TVR Programs	Orlando, Florida Hosted by Lower Muscogee Creek TVR
2010	Myrtle Beach, South Carolina Hosted by Lumbee TVR	San Diego, California Hosted by Sycuan TVR
2009	Anchorage, Alaska - Hosted by Alaska TVR Programs	Norman, Oklahoma Hosted by Oklahoma TVR Council

CANAR CONFERENCE HISTORY (CONTINUED)

1989 - 2007

YEAR	MID-YEAR CONFERENCE	ANNUAL CONFERENCE
2008	Niagara Falls, New York - Hosted by Seneca Nation TVR	Phoenix, Arizona Hosted by Navajo Nation OSERS
2007	Savannah, Georgia Hosted by Lower Muscogee Creek TVR	Washington, DC Location Conference
2006	Green Bay, Wisconsin Hosted by Wisconsin TVR Programs	Seattle, Washington Hosted by Western WA University
2005	Rapid City, South Dakota Hosted by Standing Rock TVR	Seattle, Washington Hosted by Western WA University
2004	Coeur d'Alene, Idaho Hosted by Coeur d'Alene TVR	Seattle, Washington Hosted by Western WA University
2003	Savannah, Georgia Hosted by Lower Muscogee Creek TVR	Seattle, Washington Hosted by Western WA University
2002	Green Bay, Wisconsin Hosted by Wisconsin TVR Programs	Seattle, Washington Hosted by Western WA University
2001	Oklahoma City, Oklahoma Hosted by Oklahoma TVR Council	Seattle, Washington Hosted by Western WA University
2000	Choctaw, Mississippi Hosted by Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians TVR	Seattle, Washington Hosted by Western WA University
1999	Choctaw, Mississippi Hosted by Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians TVR	Seattle, Washington Hosted by Western WA University
1998	Choctaw, Mississippi Hosted by Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians TVR	Seattle, Washington Hosted by Western WA University
1997	Choctaw, Mississippi Hosted by Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians TVR	Bellevue, Washington Hosted by Region 10 RSA
1996	Albuquerque, New Mexico Hosted by Region 8 RSA	Bellevue, Washington Hosted by Region 10 RSA
1995	Mid-Year Conference Begins	Bellevue, Washington Hosted by Region 10 RSA
1994	N/A	Polson, Montana Summer Institute for Section 130 AIVRS
1993	CANAR Formed in January 1993	Polson, Montana Summer Institute for Section 130 American Indian Vocational AIVRS
1989	1st Annual 130 VR Directors' Conference	Salt Lake City , Utah

CEU and CRC Credits Provided



ATTENTION

If you need CRC credits for attending this conference, you need to pick up a **GREEN** COLORED CRC attendance verification form at the registration table and have a room facilitator verify your attendance **AT EACH SESSION YOU ATTEND.**

Please be sure to list your name and email address *legibly*, and either:

1. Turn in your completed CRC form at the end of the conference in the collection box at the registration table, or
2. Scan your stamped form and email it to Adi.Schaeffer@nau.edu within 10 days of the end of the conference.

Completion of evaluation forms in each session is mandatory for receipt of CRC credits. Your CRC credits will be emailed to you by the CANAR CRC Committee.

If you need CEU credits for attending this conference, CEU certificates will be available for you to pick up at the registration desk at the end of the conference.

If you do not need CRC or CEU credits, you will not need to worry about getting these forms.

**For more information, contact:
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mary.meruvia@choctaw.org**

OR

**Adi Schaeffer, Events Manager, Northern Arizona University
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Gila River Resorts & Casinos

Wild Horse Pass Hotel Map

WILD HORSE PASS

PROPERTY MAP

5040 Wild Horse Pass Blvd.
Chandler, Arizona 85226

GILA RIVER
RESORTS & CASINOS





Welcome from the 2025 CANAR Executive Board

The CANAR Executive Board is excited to welcome you to the annual conference, held in beautiful Chandler, Arizona! We know that many of you have made a significant effort, and even sacrificed, to be here. We are deeply appreciative of your commitment and offer you our warmest, most grateful greeting.

A CANAR conference is unlike any other you will attend - the profound respect and admiration we hold for each other is always evident. The CANAR Executive Board thanks you for all the incredible, hard work you are doing for the people in your communities. This conference is our dedicated space to celebrate that collective success.

We want to recognize that Arizona is a community of many diverse Native peoples. We respectfully acknowledge and honor all these Indigenous communities. We are grateful for their enduring knowledge, wisdom, and ongoing, vibrant presence in this place.

We are especially thrilled to celebrate our powerful conference theme this year: **“Our Story: 50 Years Advancing Self-Determination through TVR.”** While this milestone specifically marks the 50th anniversary of the foundational TVR project initiated by the Navajo Nation, this celebration is truly for **all** of us. It is a powerful moment to recognize five decades of collective dedication, resilience, and success across every Tribal VR program that has followed. This half-century legacy demonstrates our shared commitment to self-determination and community empowerment, and we are here to honor that achievement together.

We invite you to engage fully in every part of the conference. Be present at the general sessions, the breakout sessions, and the evening activities to gain as much knowledge and enjoyment as possible. Allow yourself to benefit from networking and connecting deeply with other TVR staff and with our valued partners.

Finally, the CANAR Board would like to express our sincere appreciation to all of you who generously gave your time and energy to help us make this event a success. It is not possible to host an event of this scale without our many dedicated volunteers, and we are immensely grateful.

Conference Artist Spotlight



Naakaii Diné nilí. Dziłtaah Diné'e Kinyaa'aanii yashichiin. Ma'ii Deeshgiizhnii bi cheii. Na'toh Diné Tachii'nii bi nali. 'Ákót'éego 'éí Diné nilí. Donovan Pete currently serves as the Community Library Manager for the Navajo Nation Library in Window Rock, AZ, the heart of the Navajo Nation. He is highly educated, holding dual Master of Arts degrees from the University of Arizona—one in Native American Languages and Linguistics (2020) and another in Library and Information Science (2019)—which informs his unique professional approach. His



Donovan Pete

extensive background, encompassing librarianship, archivalship, graphic design, UX design, and web design, has led him on a critical journey to explore how the revitalization of the Navajo language can be effectively balanced and sustained within both the traditional library setting and the evolving digital world. Adding to his notable contributions, Donovan was recently honored to design the official CANAR Annual Conference 2025 logo, a special creation commemorating the 50th celebration of Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation.

Conference Emcees

A warm welcome and thank you to our wonderful Conference Emcees, Jim Warne and Treva Roanhorse! As our dedicated Conference Moderators, they are here to keep the energy high and guide us through a celebratory conference.

Educator-Advocate-Filmmaker Jim Warne, Oglala Lakota. Jim earned a BS from Arizona State University and a MS from San Diego State University (SDSU). He created Indigenous Continuing Education programs at SDSU Interwork Institute (1993-2015). He has written over \$50 million in grants and contracts. Currently, Jim is Community Engagement Director at University of South Dakota Center for Disabilities, Oyáte Circle Sanford School of Medicine. Jim is President of Warrior Society Development, LLC. He consults for various government agencies and Tribal Nations, including as Affiliate with UA Sonoran Center for Excellence in Disabilities. Jim helped create the USD Oyáte Circle, the Arizona Circle of Indigenous Empowerment. Jim's work is focused on disability and indigenous health. Awards include National Council on Independent Living President's Award and the Susan M. Daniels Disability Mentor Hall of Fame. Jim is a Motivational Speaker. His experience includes Congressional Testimonies, Workforce Access, Film Production, Actor/Stuntman, Professional Football, Youth Camps, Organizational Development and Higher Education Administration. Jim's Gen7 Film Productions produced "7th Generation," an Award Winning Documentary (Amazon Prime). His Emmy nominated film, "Oyáte un Itówapi - Pictures of my People" was featured on Fox NFL Pregame Show, and FOX "Voices". "Remember the Children" and "My Native America" are also award-winning films. Website: www.gen7films.com.



Treva Roanhorse, a proud member of the Navajo Nation, extends greetings with a warm 'Yá'át'ééh', with her heritage rooted in the T'ł'ógi, Tábaqahá, Kinyaa'áanii, Tódich'ii'nii clans from New Mexico. She brings a wealth of experience, having served as the former Director of the Navajo Nation Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services and as the former President of the Consortia of Administrators for Native American Rehabilitation (CANAR). Currently, Ms. Roanhorse contributes as an Advisory Council member at Northwest Indian College Tribal Vocational Institute and serves as an advisor to the Find Their Way Program: Communities for Youth Transition with the Sonora Center for Excellence in Disabilities at the University of Arizona. Throughout her

career, she has passionately advocated for American Indians and Alaskan Natives with disabilities in tribal vocational rehabilitation and related services, with her dedication revolving around ensuring equality, providing adequate services, and fostering support for the self-sufficiency of tribal members with disabilities. As a committed advocate, Ms. Roanhorse strives to be a voice for the people that the American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Services (AIVRS) aim to serve.

Banquet Cultural Entertainment

Bird Singing and Dancing by The River Group



Bird Singing and Dancing by the River group was formed in 2003 by current group leader Annette Vest and other parents and grandparents from Salt River and Lehi. They recognized a need for their children to learn about their culture and traditions as an alternative to the negative influences of the surrounding cities. The group teaches and practices both O'odham and Piipaash cultures and traditions of the community. Current Lead Singer Lynwood Vest joined the group shortly after its formation. The membership consists mainly of youth and their families from Salt River/Lehi, as well as members from O'odham sister tribes and Yuman family tribes. The group welcomes all who wish to practice their traditional ways, including those living away from their home communities, and all who are willing to learn and participate. The group travels throughout Arizona and Southern California and has even gone as far as Hawaii to share both the songs and dances of the O'odham and Piipaash. Its strength lies in the fact that the entire family—not just the children—is learning, participating, and offering support as a whole. The organization holds many food sale fundraisers to help offset all travel costs, an effort that involves the full participation of both the families and the group members.

Banquet Entertainment

James Junes,
Comedian, Motivational Speaker, Actor



James Junes is a member of the Navajo Tribe and is part Hopi. His Clans are: Red Water Clan and Bear People. He resides in Farmington, NM with his wife and their four children. He is self-employed as a Stand-Up Comedian, Motivational Speaker and Actor. James Junes is fiercely committed to converting his personal tragedies into entrepreneurial triumphs. His lifelong journey to overcome child abuse, cancer, and addiction affirmed his convictions and rooted belief that laughter holds the power to heal. For more than two decades — with much of that time spent as half of the legendary comedy duo James & Ernie — James has used his lived experience to inspire others. Junes uses his comedic background to infuse comedy into motivational speeches. Dubbing his style “humor healing,” he has toured all over the southwest, and visited different tribes around North America, including in Alaska and Canada. “I believe we can make each other better by sharing what we have endured,” Junes said. “I call my presentations ‘Humor-Healing’ because I want to inspire a lifestyle of wellness and good health.”

THANK YOU TO CANAR'S INCREDIBLE VOLUNTEERS! THIS EVENT WOULD NOT BE POSSIBLE WITHOUT YOU!

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The committee is currently inactive, pending the appointment of a new chairperson.

General Session

Keynote Presenters

Wednesday, December 3, 2025

8:30am - 10:15pm

Opening Ceremony and Blessing

Emma De La Cruz & Steven A. Darden

Wednesday, December 3, 2025

10:30am - 12:00pm

**Our Collective Voice in Advocating for
Culturally Responsive TVR**

Dr. Elmer J. Guy

Thursday, December 4, 2025

9:00am - 10:00am

The Importance of Culture & Language in TVR

Hoskie Benally, Jr.

Thursday, December 4, 2025

10:30am - 12:00pm

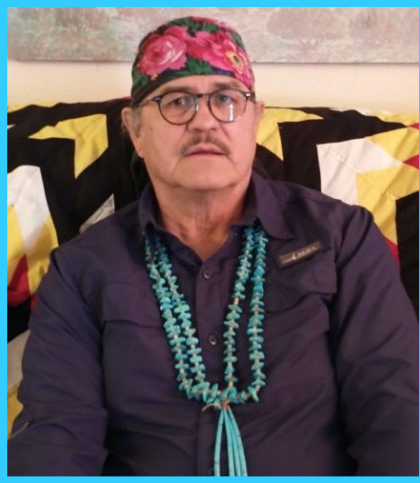
Where are we going?

Vocational Rehabilitation in an AI and XR Era

Maggie Mosher, Ph.D.

Keynote Bios

Steven A. Darden, Traditional Practitioner



Mr. Darden is a successful leader, business owner, executive, trainer, public speaker, and artist. As a traditional practitioner, he is blessed with songs and prayers passed on to him from his traditional mentors. He has 40+ years' experience in Indigenous/tribal, educational, nonprofit health & human services, municipal leadership, and administration. He is a former City of Flagstaff Councilmember and a magistrate pro tem. He is also a former adjunct faculty for Diné College. His public speaking experience spans elementary through high school graduation commencement

presentations, to keynote addresses at national professional conferences. His workshops and training sessions are diverse and numerous. People appreciate Steven's energetic and enthusiastic style of interactive teaching. He has a unique skill in captivating his audience and the individuals he is working with. Mr. Darden is an enrolled member of the Navajo Nation. His lineage include Dine' (Navajo), Cheyenne, and Euro (Sa'mi)/Mestizo.

Dr. Elmer J. Guy Our Collective Voice in Advocating for Culturally Responsive TVR

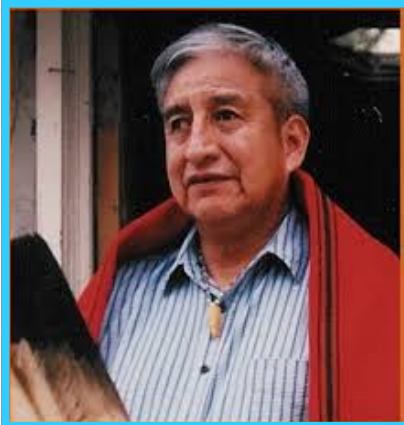
Dr. Elmer J. Guy is the President of Navajo Technical University. He has been a pivotal figure in the education sector, particularly in the Navajo community. His journey began as the executive director and deputy director of the Navajo Nation Department of Education, where he developed and implemented several programs aimed at supporting Native students. His leadership at Navajo Technical University (NTU) has been instrumental in transforming the institution into a research university, offering a Ph.D. program in Diné Culture and Language Sustainability. Dr. Guy's dedication to preserving the Diné language and culture is evident in his work, which has not only enriched the academic environment but also empowered Native students to become leaders in their communities.



Keynote Bios

Hoskie Benally, Jr.

The Importance of Culture & Language in VR



Hoskie Benally is a Diné (Navajo) spiritual leader, who resides in the town of Shiprock, New Mexico. Hoskie spent much of his childhood with his grandparents, living in the traditional ways practiced for thousands of years by the Diné. His grandfather was a sheepherder, and his grandmother was a weaver of rugs. His biological father was a medicine man who worked in a Uranium mine, and although he died when Hoskie was only three, Hoskie has continued the healing traditions of his lineage. But this path came unexpectedly to Hoskie, when at the age of 22,

he went blind within a matter of weeks from Retinitis Pigmentosa. Initially, Hoskie turned to alcohol, as depression from losing his eyesight overwhelmed him. But it was this loss of sight that would help him find his true direction. “A medicine man told me when I was going through depression, through some alcoholism, ‘you have a purpose here on Mother Earth, and through this visual impairment either you can find your purpose in life and accept your visual impairment, or you may continue to fight it and let alcohol destroy you.’ That made a lot of sense to me. I believe this is the path I’ve been chosen to walk, so I no longer question my visual impairment, but I look at it more as a blessing in finding my purpose in life.”

Maggie Mosher, Ph.D.

Where are we going? *Vocational Rehabilitation in an AI and XR Era*

Dr. Maggie Mosher leads transformative research at the intersection of artificial intelligence (AI) and extended reality (XR). With over two decades of experience as a special education teacher and assistant principal, she now drives innovation in higher education. Through over \$11 million in funded projects, Dr. Mosher develops groundbreaking instructional methods that deliver real-time, individualized instruction. She is the keynote at conferences across the world, sharing her expertise on safe, effective, and ethical AI implementation.



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This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



Breakout Sessions

Culturally Responsive VR Services as a Strength-Based, Holistic Model for Indigenous Employment

Paula Sorrell Seanez, PhD

Indigenous communities are uniquely defined by their resilience, unique strengths, and profound desire for all members to be included, regardless of differing abilities. This session will focus on the TVR journey as a strength-based, holistic approach to vocational rehabilitation. We will examine how this journey is not a solitary one, but a collective effort supported by the individual, their extended family (relatives), the community, and the TVR project staff. This collaborative framework is essential for identifying and addressing the deeply rooted impediments and challenges to achieving gainful employment. Attendees will learn practical strategies for creating safe and supportive environments where staff and clients feel welcomed and affirmed. The presentation will advocate for the continued necessity of culturally responsive service models, demonstrating that these models are necessary to uphold community inclusion and achieve meaningful employment outcomes.

Learning Objectives:

1. Justify necessity of cultural principles for ethical and effective TVR services.
2. Summarize the strength-based TVR model, including the roles of the individual, family, and community.
3. Identify three employment challenges in Indigenous communities and list culturally responsive strategies to address them.



Dr. Paula Sorrell Seanez is the Director for the Navajo Nation's Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services Program in Window Rock, Arizona. Dr. Sorrell Seanez is Navajo (Diné) and has made her career in vocational rehabilitation and special education. She has worked at the Navajo Nation program since 1992, when she returned home to provide a cultural foundation to her children through extended family. She believes in the work of American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Services (AIVRS) programs in providing culturally relevant services unique to each tribal community. She has been a mentor to many individuals who work in the field of rehabilitation and special education. She believes in capacity building and served on the CANAR board on advocacy and

education efforts in American Indians/Alaska Native communities. Her clans are Kinłichii'nii and Tó'aheedlini, Honághaahnii, (maternal grandfather) and Ashihi, (paternal grandfather). She has bachelor and Master's degrees in Rehabilitation Counseling from the University of Arizona and University of New Mexico, respectively. Prior to that Dr. Sorrell Seanez worked at New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

New Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation Directors: What You Really Need to Know But Didn't Know to Ask

Cami Falcon and Christopher Ziler

Dedicated to supporting new AIVRS administrators, directors, and managers, this session offers a critical foundation for program leadership. Utilizing a detailed PowerPoint presentation, coupled with an open discussion format, attendees will learn the essential skills and foundational knowledge required to immediately succeed in their new roles. This session serves as a practical orientation, helping new managers navigate initial challenges, understand federal reporting requirements, and build confidence in program oversight. Attendees will gain valuable insights and have the opportunity to ask specific questions about leading an effective AIVRS program.

Learning Objectives:

1. Basic terminology of Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation programs
2. The first steps a new TVR manager should take
3. Information on reports, grants, and mentorships.

Camilla Falcon (Cami) manages the TVR program for the Cowlitz Indian Tribe. She is an enrolled member with the Fort Peck Assiniboiné Sioux Tribe and a descendent of Turtle Mountain Chippewa and Blackfeet Tribes. She has a BS in Sociology from Kent State University and started working for the Tribe's program in November 2019 as a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor. Cami explains, "I have always wanted to give back and work for our Tribal communities, for as long as I can remember." Now

she is inspired by her work and takes pride in the fact that she is able to help Cowlitz Tribal members and other American Indian people reach their employment goals. Cami and her partner have two daughters, two cats, and two crazy dogs! In her free time she loves to be with her family, walk with her dogs, Zero and Mahto, hike, and travel home to Montana.



Christopher Zilar is Director of Vocational Rehabilitation for the Spokane Tribe of Indians, a role he's held since 2016. His diverse background includes teaching, HIV prevention, trucking, and advocacy. He's lobbied for the American Cancer Society and completed three medical missions to Rwanda. Christopher lives with his wife on the Spokane River near tribal land. They enjoy travel, nature, and time with their six grown kids, three grandkids, and their pets.

Wayfinding with Community: Employment and Life Skills Transition for American Indian Youth

Agnes Attakai

The primary goal of preemployment transition services is to empower American Indian youth 14 to 24 years of age with disabilities to make informed decisions about their education and career paths, develop essential job skills, and ultimately achieve meaningful and sustainable employment outcomes. The Circle of Indigenous Empowerment at the Sonoran Center for Excellence in Disabilities at the University of Arizona collaborates with tribal Nations, Arizona Vocational Rehabilitation, Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation and community partners to support and incorporate Employment First initiatives in creating an Indigenous Framework for transition services through Finds Their Way, Pre-Employment Transition Services, and the development of the Wayfinder curriculum. The transition from youth to adulthood maybe uncomfortable for American Indian youth with disabilities and their families. We acknowledge that goals for transition services need to be grounded in Native values and beliefs, braided with culturally appropriate ways youth envision their goals and aspirations and engaging community-building trust, listening to elders, and engaging those who know the land, culture, and people best. Attendees will learn how to engage tribal communities, honor cultural knowledge, and support the groundwork needed for employment services to be accepted and effective in tribal communities.

Learning Objectives:

1. Why Trust Comes First – Learn why relationship-building must happen before employment programs can take root in Tribal communities.
2. Mobilizing Community Leadership – Understand how engaging elders, families, and local leaders creates a strong foundation for employment efforts.
3. Honoring Culture in Employment Services – Discover how to align employment programs with tribal values to ensure they are accepted and effective.

Agnes Attakai, MPA, Diné (Navajo) is Director of the Circle of Indigenous Empowerment at the Sonoran Center for Excellence in Disabilities, University of Arizona. Agnes has a Master of Public Administration degree from the University of Arizona. As director, she engages and collaborates with Tribal Nations in Arizona on trainings and services in response to the identified needs of Tribal members with disabilities across the state.



TVR Outreach to Veterans & Their Families

Amy Claridge

The presentation will reach out to all individuals that have contact with Veterans and their family members thru their normal course of work, to assist them in understanding the programs available thru the Veterans Administration that the Veterans have earned while serving in the different branches of the Military. We will also introduce the attendees to the new programs available in the VA to Veterans to help them with Healthcare and Benefit access which they may or may not be utilizing.

Learning Objectives:

1. Identify the various programs and benefits available through the Veterans Administration (VA) that Veterans have earned through their military service.
2. Explain the purpose and availability of new VA programs designed to improve Veteran access to healthcare and benefits.
3. Apply knowledge of these programs to effectively inform and assist Veterans and their family members during the normal course of work.

Amy began her VA career at the Montana VA Health Care System in December 2017 as Executive Office Administrative Support. In 2018, she quickly applied for and accepted a TCF Trainee/Intern position with Voluntary Service in Montana. Upon completing her intern time, Amy accepted the position as the Chief, Voluntary Service/CDCE, and also went on to serve as the MTVAHCS Controlled Substance Coordinator. In September of 2023, she was privileged to join the VA Rocky Mountain Network (VISN19) team as one of their Minority Veteran Outreach Program Coordinators. Amy considers it an honor and privilege to work with the Nation's Veterans, Veteran Service Organizations, staff, and volunteers at the local, state, and national levels. Prior to working for the VA, she started her federal service career in the fall of 2000, working for the Department of Defense in various roles and locations.



Building Strong TVR Cases: Documentation that Tells the Story

Heather Mahlberg and Tricia Robertson

This interactive training equips Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation (TVR) staff with the skills and strategies needed to create clear, consistent, and client-centered documentation. Participants will explore the full case management process—from intake and Individualized Plans for Employment (IPEs) to progress notes and case closure—through engaging activities, real-world examples, and collaborative exercises. Using adult learning principles, the session emphasizes practical application, reflection, and problem-solving. Attendees will leave with actionable tools, checklists, and techniques to strengthen documentation quality, enhance client outcomes, and ensure program compliance. Fun, interactive elements, including a TVR-themed “Documentation Jeopardy!” game, foster engagement and reinforce learning throughout the session.

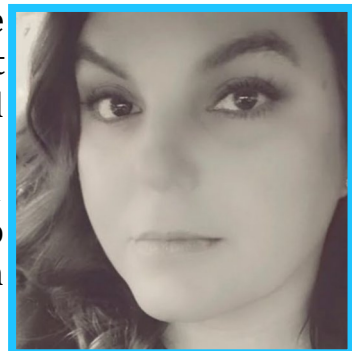
Learning Objectives:

1. Explain the importance of clear, client-centered documentation in TVR case management.
2. Identify and apply best practices for creating complete, accurate, and measurable case notes.
3. Analyze sample documentation to recognize strengths and areas for improvement.
4. Engage in interactive exercises, including TVR-themed activities, to reinforce practical skills and compliance.



Heather Mahlberg is the Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation (TVR) Coordinator with Chugachmiut, serving individuals across the Chugach Region to explore strengths, build skills, and achieve employment and education goals. An assistive technology and accessibility specialist, Heather helps break down barriers in learning and work environments, offering practical solutions with empathy and humor. She provides trainings and community workshops on accessibility, universal design, and assistive technology, empowering people to reach their potential and navigate challenges with confidence.

Tricia proudly serves as the Director of Sycuan Inter-Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation in San Diego, California, a position she has held since 2020. She is an instructor for the TVR Institute at Northwest Indian College and Chair of the CANAR Policy and Advocacy Committee. Tricia also co-founded the West Hills High School Assistance Fund. A first-generation college graduate, Tricia holds a bachelor's degree from San Diego State University, two California Teaching Credentials, and a master's degree in education. She previously had a rewarding career as a public-school teacher before transitioning to the AIVRS field. In her free time, she enjoys coaching basketball, playing games, traveling, and reading.



Roots of Integrity in Power: Indigenous Mindful Leadership for Wellness and Systemic Balance in Tribal VR

Kimber Olson, MSW, Ph.D.

Effective leadership in Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation requires more than administration—it requires presence, reflection, and integrity. This session introduces Indigenous Mindful Leadership as a model for cultivating balance, ethical decision-making, and team wellness. Participants will explore how to lead with consciousness rather than control, practicing reflective supervision and mindful communication to create psychologically safe workplaces. Using Indigenous teachings on reciprocity and relational responsibility, the workshop guides leaders in transforming policy and operations into living expressions of cultural values. Through guided reflection, peer dialogue, and brief mindfulness exercises, attendees will learn to regulate their own stress responses, model grounded leadership, and design systems that support staff wellbeing. The result: organizations that mirror the balance and integrity they strive to build in consumers' lives.

Learning Objectives:

1. Define Indigenous Mindful Leadership and its relevance to TVR programs.
2. Practice reflection and regulation skills that enhance supervisory relationships.
3. Apply stewardship-based leadership to reduce burnout and lateral stress.
4. Integrate cultural principles into policy development and organizational decision-making.

Kimber Olson, MSW, PhD (Chiricahua Apache descent) is the Founder, CEO & Principal Consultant of Juniper & Pine Consulting, LLC. Dr. Olson designs and delivers culturally grounded, healing-centered trainings for Tribal Nations, with emphasis on Indigenous regulation, trauma-responsive systems, and stewardship-based leadership. Her work bridges Indigenous knowledge systems, neuroscience, and community practice to strengthen family wellbeing, staff wellness, and early childhood ecosystems.



Traditional Indigenous Pre-ETS Development & Adaptive Athletics

Jim Warne and Cline Griggs

This presentation, led by Jim Warne (Oglala Lakota) and Cline Griggs (White Mountain Apache), will address traditional perspectives of disability services and organizational development. Jim and Cline will identify the Indigenous value systems associated with youth pre-employment training services and the creation of adaptive athletics for the Sonoran Circle for Indigenous Empowerment.

This will be an interactive, participatory session where attendees are encouraged to freely ask questions and share their perspectives and examples of programs and success stories. The session will also address challenges associated with developing programs within disability services, utilizing video and PowerPoint to encourage audience participation.

Learning Objectives:

1. Examine traditional perspectives of disability services and organizational development.
2. Identify Indigenous value systems associated with youth pre-employment training and adaptive athletics programs.
3. Discuss common challenges and best practices for developing successful programs within Indigenous disability services.



Cline Griggs from the White Mountain Apache Tribe has many years of experience serving tribal members with disabilities. He was the former director of the White Mountain Apache vocational rehabilitation program. He currently is an administrator at the Rainbow treatment center that serves many tribal members with behavioral disabilities. Cline is a traditional Apache man who applies traditional way of knowledge into his service delivery and organizational development.

Jim Warren, member of the Oglala Lakota tribal nation. Jim has over 30 years experience working with indigenous disability program development. Jim created the CIRCLE for American Indian rehabilitation and education at San Diego State University into work Institute. The rehabilitation, cultural diversity initiative RCD was the catalyst to develop the consortia of administrators for Native American rehabilitation. Jenna is currently the community engagement director for university of South Dakota Center for disabilities, Oyaáte Circle.



Maximizing Customer Service: The Power of Clear Expectations in the Customer Experience

Jonathon Cook and Rhandi Ryan

This presentation is in lecture format and explores the critical role high quality customer service plays in creating a positive customer experience. By focusing on two fundamental principles - setting clear expectations and understanding others' perspectives - we will delve into strategies to enhance customer satisfaction and trust. Based on the work of Gretchen Rubin, we will explore how different individuals respond to inner versus outer expectations and leverage those tendencies to foster successful relationships and experiences.

Learning Objectives:

1. Learn the foundations of the Four Tendencies and how they impact behavior.
2. Explore avenues to leverage tendencies to create positive customer experiences.
3. Review strategies to improve customer service through the setting of clear expectations.

Jonathon Cook has worked with the Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services for 15 years. Starting as a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor for the Deaf, he then promoted to Programs Manager over the Deaf Services unit before transferring to the Professional Development team in 2019. Jonathon is a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor and oversees staff training for the Vocational Rehabilitation and Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired divisions.



Rhandi Ryan is a Training Specialist II with Oklahoma DRS Professional Development. She has been with the agency for three years and is a seasoned trainer with over 10 years of experience in Learning and Development (L&D). Prior to L&D, she was an Account Resolution Specialist, Quality Control Representative, and On the Job Trainer. She has a strong focus on customer service soft skills and customer experience. She recognizes that maintaining a customer-focused mindset aids in an excellent customer experience.



Out of the Box Outreach: Repurposing Games to Engage Tribal Communities in TVR

Krystal Blair and Heather Mahlberg

Traditional outreach methods—flyers, brochures, and information tables—often fail to capture attention or build trust in rural and Native communities. This presentation introduces an innovative and culturally grounded approach to outreach through game-based engagement, where familiar games are repurposed into interactive tools for sharing information, sparking dialogue, and strengthening community connections. Using examples such as TVR-opoly™, Pathways Mancala, and Solve the Barrier Clue, participants will explore how Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation (TVR) can transform play into purpose. These games promote understanding of employment pathways, disability awareness, and self-determination in ways that are inclusive, fun, and culturally relevant. This 90-minute session blends learning, play, and collaboration. After a short presentation introducing the concept and process, participants will break into small groups. Each group will play one of the repurposed games while brainstorming ways to adapt a familiar or culturally significant game to fit their own community or program goals. Groups will then share reflections, creative ideas, and lessons learned.

Learning Objectives:

1. Identify ways to repurpose familiar games to promote TVR and Independent Living (IL) services.
2. Experience how interactive play builds engagement, trust, and learning.
3. Design a culturally relevant outreach game for their community or program.
4. Recognize the link between play, cultural connection, and long-term program participation.
5. Apply creative outreach strategies to strengthen relationships and program visibility.



Krystal Blair brings over 20 years of experience in disability advocacy, case management, independent living, and program development to Chugachmiut as a Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation Coordinator. With expertise in outreach, peer support, and culturally responsive services, she is dedicated to helping individuals overcome barriers and achieve their goals. Originally from New York, Krystal has lived in Alaska since 2013, residing with her husband and spirited four-year-old daughter, Oona. Their family enjoys exploring Alaska's outdoors.

Heather Mahlberg is the Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation (TVR) Coordinator with Chugachmiut, serving individuals across the Chugach Region to explore strengths, build skills, and achieve employment and education goals. An assistive technology and accessibility specialist, Heather helps break down barriers in learning and work environments, offering practical solutions with empathy and humor. She provides trainings and community workshops on accessibility, universal design, and assistive technology, empowering people to reach their potential and navigate challenges with confidence.



AIVRTTAC Circle of Wisdom Keepers: Reclaiming Indigenous Ways of Knowing

Lee Gaseoma, Ed.D., AIVRTTAC Circle of Wisdom

Centered on the Native American talking circle tradition, AIVRS Program Directors, VR Counselors, and AIVRTTAC partners attended monthly AIVRTTAC Circle of Wisdom Keepers' Talking Circle to engage in oral storytelling and share their lived experiences, tribal indigenous world views, personal knowledge, beliefs, and understanding of tribal members who experience disabilities. A trusting Talking Circle environment led to honest communication and respectful dialogue to listen, teach, learn, and honor the importance of a collaborative journey with tribal members who experience disabilities seeking TVR services. Throughout the Talking Circles, a recognition of Native traditional practices and Western VR practices took place to look at common concerns and share strategies to improve TVR practices. The outcome of the Talking Circles allowed sharing of VR knowledge towards improvement of culturally meaningful TVR services to empower tribal members who experience disabilities to achieve gainful employment, enhance quality of life, and participate in all aspects of life.

Learning Objectives:

1. Identify diverse Native American cultural perspectives on disability within Indigenous contexts.
2. Recognize how colonization and loss of cultural identity affect Indigenous ways of knowing and the Western definition of disability.
3. Explain how traditional Native American practices align with holistic Western Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services.
4. Describe the relevance of Native American talking circles for healing, connection, and building a strong Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation (TVR) future.



Dr. Gaseoma is a member of the Hopi Tribe, and in 1999 received his doctorate in educational leadership from NAU. Dr. Gaseoma started working with the AIVRS projects as the graduate research assistant with the American Indian Rehabilitation Research and Training Center in 1999, housed at NAU-IHD. Until 2005, Dr. Gaseoma worked closely with the AIVRS projects as the director of the Capacity Building for American Indians Program, funded by RSA, providing national grant-writing workshops for existing AIVRS projects and newly eligible tribes in efforts to secure funds to provide vocational rehabilitation services

for tribal members with disabilities to prepare for and achieve gainful competitive employment. In 2015, Dr. Gaseoma first served as the project director and later served as the co-director for the AIVRTTAC Project at NAU-IHD. And currently serves as the Traditional Cultural Liaison with the second five-year RSA funded AIVRTTAC Project.

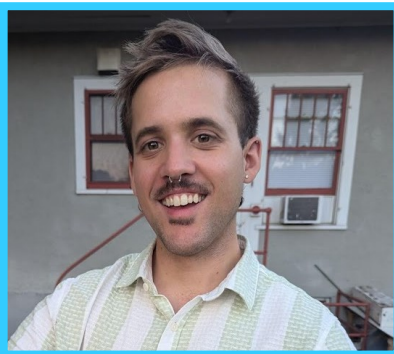
Exploring Transportation Voucher Programs with AIVRS: An Effective Solution to Transportation Access?

Luke Santore and Catherine Ipsen

This session will explore transportation voucher programs as a potential solution to transportation barriers among AIVRS consumers. Transportation vouchers allow consumers to access free or reduced-cost rides from transportation providers in the community or to reimburse volunteer drivers for mileage. Volunteer drivers can include anyone giving a consumer a ride, such as a family member or friend. Vouchers can be a powerful tool to increase consumer access to healthcare, employment, and community events. To our knowledge, the transportation voucher model has not been applied within AIVRS settings.

Learning Objectives:

1. Teach the audience about transportation voucher programs;
2. Explore transportation challenges faced by AIVRS consumers;
3. Explore tribal-specific transportation resources, including existing programs and potential funding opportunities for developing new programs;
4. Assess interest in developing a transportation voucher toolkit tailored to AIVRS programs.



Luke Santore holds a Master's degree in Sociology with a concentration in social justice and inequality. His work centers on improving transportation access for people with disabilities, particularly in rural settings. With a background in applied research methods and community-based initiatives, his other work focuses on designing and facilitating research and development projects aimed at enhancing service delivery, promoting equity, and improving the well-being of marginalized populations.

Catherine Ipsen has a Ph.D. in Multidisciplinary Studies and an M.A. in Economics. Her research interests focus on employment initiatives within the VR and AIVRS programs to improve outcomes among rural consumers with disabilities. Her peer-reviewed publications include focus on economic development, interagency linkages to promote self-employment, reasons for premature exit from the VR system, and the use of telecommunication to overcome rural barriers to service access.



Inspiring Hope with Workforce Development (Growth, Skills, and Community)

Tammy Maynor

This presentation is designed for counselors, the community, and the administrators. This presentation will demonstrate the need for programs to develop those career and technical skills that their recipients need to grow in their chosen field. Help the recipient with self empowerment and hope. Give the recipient the workplace readiness skill to be successful. Give the recipient the tools necessary to connect their identity with modern workforce pathways. Help the recipient to have the mindset to want to continue to grow and achieve their dreams.

Learning Objectives:

1. Apply hands-on training to real-world job tasks to build workplace readiness and confidence.
2. Attain industry-recognized certifications and technical skills to qualify for immediate employment opportunities.
3. Develop self-confidence and resilience by recognizing personal strengths and learning strategies to overcome barriers to employment.
4. Set and communicate effective short- and long-term career goals while practicing professional teamwork and problem-solving skills.



Tammy Maynor is an enrolled member of the Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina (LTNC). She received her bachelor's degree from the University of North Carolina at Pembroke. She also received a Juris Doctorate in 2001 from The University of Michigan. She currently serves as the Director of Governmental Affairs for the Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina, where she provides program oversight and compliance to a variety of tribal programs. She has more than 22 years of experience serving tribal communities that are underserved. Mrs. Maynor has overseen numerous federal and state grants and developed tribal policies that truly maximize services to the Lumbee People.

She is a highly trained and skilled executive leader that also serves as the Chairwoman for the Tribe's first 8(a) company known as Lumbee Tribe Enterprises LLC.

AI Tools to Maintain and Uptain Employment

Maggie Mosher, Ph.D.

This hands-on workshop gets practical. We will move from the "why" to the "how," focusing on free, accessible and tangible AI tools professionals and their clients can use today to overcome specific employment barriers. The session is structured around two key pillars: Maintaining employment (using AI for task management, communication, and accommodation) and Uptaining employment (using AI for skill-building, resume writing, and interview preparation). This is a "roll-up-your-sleeves" session designed to build confidence and provide a starter toolkit for immediate application in everyday life.

Learning Objectives:

1. Participants will be able to identify and demonstrate the use of at least three different AI tools for improving their practice.
2. Participants will develop a "first steps" plan for ethically directing the use of AI with clients, considering their specific needs and data privacy.
3. Participants will develop a practical plan for introducing AI tools to clients to support job maintenance and acquisition.

Dr. Maggie Mosher leads transformative research at the intersection of artificial intelligence (AI) and extended reality (XR). With over two decades of experience as a special education teacher and assistant principal, she now drives innovation in higher education. Through over \$11 million in funded projects, Dr. Mosher develops groundbreaking instructional methods that deliver real-time, individualized instruction. She is the keynote at conferences across the world, sharing her expertise on safe, effective, and ethical AI implementation.



Healing-Centered Rehabilitation Practice Beyond Trauma-Informed Care: Culturally Driven Healing for Complex Cases and Repeat Consumers

Kimber Olson, MSW, Ph.D.

Many repeat consumers in Tribal VR programs carry layers of historical trauma, chronic stress, and co-occurring mental health or substance-use histories. Traditional approaches often focus on compliance and behavior change, rather than relational healing. This workshop reframes service delivery through a Healing-Centered, Culturally Driven lens that integrates neuroscience, Indigenous science, and community knowledge. Participants will examine how trauma and disconnection influence motivation, learning, and follow-through in rehabilitation, and practice methods to restore relational trust. Using storytelling, small-group reflection, and case scenarios, we will explore the Medicine Within and Beyond Trauma-Informed Care frameworks—tools that help providers move from “fixing” to “walking with.” Through exercises in narrative reframing, land-based mindfulness, and collaborative goal setting, participants will learn to support clients as active agents in their own healing journeys. The session provides evidence-aligned yet culturally sovereign strategies that lead to stronger outcomes and deeper engagement.

Learning Objectives:

1. Understand how historical and complex trauma affects consumer engagement in TVR programs.
2. Apply healing-centered, culturally grounded practices to strengthen relational trust.
3. Use story-based and somatic tools to support motivation and self-efficacy.
4. Identify program adjustments that align with community values while maintaining VR requirements.



Kimber Olson, MSW, PhD (Chiricahua Apache descent) is the Founder, CEO & Principal Consultant of Juniper & Pine Consulting, LLC. Dr. Olson designs and delivers culturally grounded, healing-centered trainings for Tribal Nations, with emphasis on Indigenous regulation, trauma-responsive systems, and stewardship-based leadership. Her work bridges Indigenous knowledge systems, neuroscience, and community practice to strengthen family wellbeing, staff wellness, and early childhood ecosystems.



Understanding Substance Use Disorder in Native Communities: A Culturally Responsive Approach

Jamie Emanuel and Elizabeth Boland

A great deal of stigma and misunderstanding continues to surround substance use disorder (SUD), creating barriers to effective support and rehabilitation. It is essential for Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation (TVR) professionals to approach participants with an open, unbiased mindset, free from judgment or assumptions. This presentation explores the realities of addiction, addressing five common myths and misconceptions that often contribute to stigma. Participants will gain an understanding of the two categories of SUD, the ten classes of substances, and the continuum of addiction. The session will also examine the progression of addiction, associated risks, and the pathological patterns of behavior related to substance use. Finally, the discussion will focus on practical strategies for working with TVR participants whose primary disability is SUD, including how to address impairment and apply rehabilitation services that promote recovery and lead to successful employment outcomes.

Learning Objectives:

1. Identify the two categories and ten classes of SUD substances.
2. Describe addiction's progression and its impact on daily function.
3. Recognize five myths about addiction and their link to stigma.
4. Apply culturally responsive approaches for TVR participants with SUD.
5. Develop strategies for impairment and rehabilitation supporting employment.



Jamie Emanuel leads the Training and TA Hub of the American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Training and Technical Assistance Center (AIVRTTAC) at Northern Arizona University. She directs the planning, development, and delivery of training and technical assistance to the governing bodies of Indian Tribes that receive the American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Services (AIVRS) Program grant. AIVRTTAC supports over one hundred tribes in twenty-six states. Jamie, a Lumbee tribal member, holds an M.S. in Rehabilitation Counseling from Winston-Salem State University, with a focus on rural VR counseling.

Dr. Boland is a professor and the academic program director of the MA in rehabilitation Counseling (RC) program at Western Washington University (WWU). She is also the acting director of the TVR Institute. In addition, Dr. Boland is serving as the University of Washington's Center for Continuing Education in Rehabilitation (CCER) director and holds an appointment as an professor. Dr. Boland is well-known to the rehabilitation counselor education community and has more than 25 years of experience as a certified rehabilitation counselor (CRC) and RC educator with research interests in (a) RC education, (b) return-to-work for individuals with significant disabilities, and (c) professional leadership. She holds a PhD and MS in rehabilitation psychology from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.



Project SEARCH: A Path to Competitive, Integrated Employment

Joy Burress

This session introduces Project SEARCH, a highly effective, internship-based training program focused on achieving competitive, integrated employment for individuals with disabilities. We will examine the core model, which utilizes strategic partnerships between vocational rehabilitation services, host businesses (employers), and educators to build real-world skills, professionalism, and self-advocacy. The discussion will emphasize the critical need to honor cultural values while actively addressing persistent workforce barriers. Crucially, the session will detail how the Project SEARCH framework can be successfully implemented within Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation (TVR) programs. Attendees will participate in a discussion to better understand employment barriers and leave with actionable next steps for exploring and establishing a Project SEARCH partnership within their tribal communities.

Learning Objectives:

1. Describe the foundational elements of the Project SEARCH program and its focus on achieving competitive, integrated employment.
2. Analyze partnership opportunities for Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation (TVR) programs to leverage the Project SEARCH model and improve employment outcomes for high school transition-age youth with disabilities.
3. Identify and discuss current cultural and systemic roadblocks to gaining employment in tribal communities, contributing to a broader understanding of workforce barriers.

Joy Burress is an education consultant/program manager with a background in elementary education. Prior to her current position with Project SEARCH, managed the training program for a 100+ seat scheduling center. In addition, she hosted a Project SEARCH internship site. This experience combined with 11 years of elementary education and small business ownership provides Joy with practical knowledge to apply and deliver services for individuals with developmental and intellectual disabilities.



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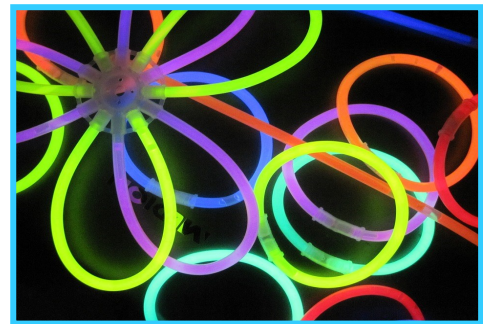
SPECIAL EVENTS

**Recovery Talking Circle
Evenings. Palo Verde AB
All in Recovery are Welcome.**



**Tuesday Night
Bingo
6pm; Palo Verde AB
Come Enjoy a Fun Evening Playing Bingo**

**Wednesday Night
Glow Walk
(First 75 to Show Up Get a T-shirt)
Meet in Palo Verde AB at 6pm**



**Wednesday All Day
"Rock Your Mocs"
Wear Traditional Clothing to Showcase
Your Unique, Individual Tribal Identities!**

AIVRTTAC Presents: The TVR Journey Guide

Hello, AIVRS Family!

AIVRTTAC and the TVR Institute have been working to gain State and Federal recognition for TVR projects as equal partners in serving Tribal members with disabilities. We have collaborated with Tribal cultural and traditional experts to incorporate ancestral and current knowledge regarding disabilities and our way of life. The result is the *TVR Journey Guide*! This new guide integrates our cultural and traditional values into the VR Process, dramatically transforming the service delivery model. We want to share the Guide with you!

What: TVR Journey Guide
When: Tuesday, December 2nd at 5pm
Where: Palo Verde AB (Main Ballroom)
We Look Forward to Seeing You There!



"YEARS OF TVR SERVICE" RECOGNITION

Name	Position	TVR Program Name	Years of
Misha Weaver	Program Coordinator	Southern Ute TVR	5
Catherine Mantor	Executive Assistant	Moapa Band of Paiutes TVR	5
Sheila Cole Conner	VR Counselor	Cherokee TVR	5
Tricia Robertson	Program Director	Sycuan Inter-Tribal VR	5
Athena Sargeant	Administrative Assistant	Colville TVR	5
Lupita Christine Cordova	VR Counselor	Moapa Band of Paiutes TVR	5
Jeremy Acosta	Lead VR Counselor	Lower Elwha Klallam TVR	5
Chrissi Ducotey	VR Technician	Lower Elwha Klallam TVR	5
Zandra Lucero	VR Counselor	Pueblo of Jemez TVR	5
Harold McGilton Jr.	Intake Specialist/Case Manager	Metlakatla Indian Comm TVR	5
Michele Gunyah	Lead Case Manager	Metlakatla Indian Comm TVR	5
Ila Weasel	VR Counselor	Standing Rock Sioux TVR	5
Tara Summers	VR Case Worker	The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde TVR	5
Kim Milek	Program Director	Great-Lakes Inter-Tribal Council	10
Linda West	Case Management Specialist	Cherokee TVR	10
Lisa Madalena	Administrative Assistant	Pueblo of Jemez TVR	10
Jacqueline John	Program Manager	Seneca Nation TVR	10
Melissa Greybear	VR Counselor	Spirit Lake TVR	10
Petra Solimon	Program Director	Laguna-Acoma Connections	10
Jason Wade	Job Placement Coordinator	Choctaw Nation TVR	15
Ben Wolf Necklace	Program Director	Standing Rock Sioux TVR	15
Christin Parrie	Administrative Assistant	Central Louisiana Intertribal TVR	15
Janine Winn	VR Case Manager	Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation TVR	15
Tim Holt	Program Manager	Choctaw Nation TVR	20
Brittney Jackson	Administrative Assistant	Choctaw Nation TVR	20
Josephine Morris	Vocational Evaluator	Mississippi Band of Choctaw TVR	20
Randy Adolph	VR Counselor	Colville TVR	20
Jana Finkbonner	Program Director	North Intertribal TVR	20
Yolanda Toya	Career Development Coordinator	Pueblo of Jemez TVR	30
Joyce Tsosie	VR Coordinator	Pueblo of Jemez TVR	30
Kasey Koster	Asst. Director/VR Counselor	Project VISIONS	30

Meet Your CANAR Executive Board



President

Emma De La Cruz
State of Oklahoma DVR
Okemah, OK

Vice President

Treva Roanhorse
Former Director, Navajo Nation OSERS, AZ

Treasurer

Christopher Zilar
Spokane Tribe VR Program
Wellpinit, WA

Secretary

Jana Finkbonner
North Intertribal VR Program
Bellingham, WA



Membership Coordinator

Mary Lundy Meruvia
Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians VR Program
Choctaw, MS

Sargent at Arms

Rebecca Holland
AIVRTTAC, Northern Arizona University
Billings, MT

Former Director, Pueblo of Jemez TVR, NM

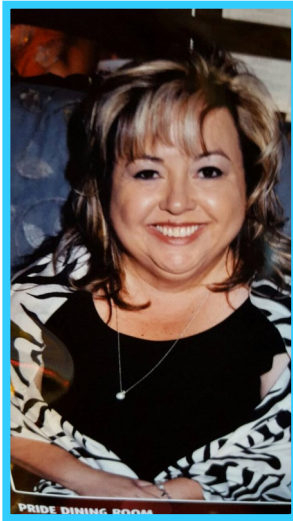
Member at Large

Amanda Race
Tanana Chiefs Conference TVR



PRESIDENT

Emma De La Cruz

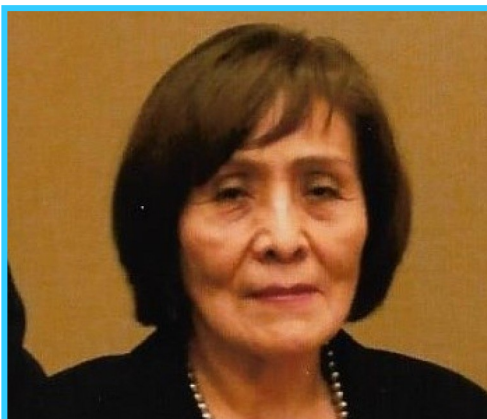


Emma is recognized as a leader who values working with others and thrives in an environment of continuous improvement. Emma has a passion to help others reach their goals and achieve their full potential. She is a licensed psychotherapist. Emma has dedicated the past eleven years to Muscogee Creek Nation, serving in a managerial capacity. Her focus has been on overseeing nonprofit federal grants dedicated to the American Indian population across a thirteen-county service area, exhibiting versatility in various roles. She currently works for the Oklahoma Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. In her role as an educator, Emma has imparted knowledge in various areas and describes herself as a lifetime learner. Students not only regard her as an educator but also as a mentor, benefiting from her guidance. Beyond the educational realm, Emma has served as a licensed psychotherapist in hospitals and outpatient clinics. Her intrinsic drive has earned her

accolades from patients who describe her as an inspiration and a compassionate presence during their times of need. As a director, she effectively leads her staff, emphasizing teamwork through her actions, not just words. Emma has successfully managed two federal grant programs, showcasing her proficiency in policy writing and grant management. Outside of work, Emma finds joy in continuous learning, volunteering, spending quality time with family, reading, and exploring new destinations through travel. Emma's multifaceted experiences and unwavering commitment reflect a professional who excels both in leadership and as a compassionate team member.

VICE-PRESIDENT

Treva Roanhorse



Treva Roanhorse, a proud member of the Navajo Nation, extends greetings with a warm 'Yá'át'ééh', with her heritage rooted in the T'ł'ógi, Tábaqahá, Kinyaa'áanii, Tódich'ii'nii clans from New Mexico. She brings a wealth of experience, having served as the former Director of the Navajo Nation Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services and as the former President of the Consortia of Administrators for Native American Rehabilitation (CANAR). Currently, Ms. Roanhorse contributes as an Advisory Council member at Northwest Indian College Tribal Vocational Institute and serves as an advisor to the Find Their Way Program: Communities for Youth Transition with the Sonora Center for

Excellence in Disabilities at the University of Arizona. Throughout her career, she has passionately advocated for American Indians and Alaskan Natives with disabilities in tribal vocational rehabilitation and related services, with her dedication revolving around ensuring equality, providing adequate services, and fostering support for the self-sufficiency of tribal members with disabilities. As a committed advocate, Ms. Roanhorse strives to be a voice for the people that the American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Services (AIVRS) aim to serve.

TREASURER

Christopher Zilar



Christopher Zilar works for Spokane Tribe of Indians as the director of Vocational Rehabilitation; he has been there since 2016. Previous to this work, he has been a truck driver, school teacher, HIV prevention specialist, and manager for a local chamber of commerce that focused on diversity and inclusion. Christopher says he receives more out of his work than he is able to give. In his current job, he witnesses respect for elders, the sanctity of life, and prioritization of family over all else. Christopher has completed three medical mission trips to Rwanda, a country in central Africa. He still has several friends living

in Rwanda, one of whom he unofficially adopted and helped move to the US. Christopher and his wife live about an hour NW of Spokane, WA, on the Spokane River right across the river from Spokane Tribe's land. They have six grown children, two grandkids, a dog, and a cat. They spend much of their free time developing their land, camping, traveling, or just sitting by the river and holding hands.

SECRETARY

Jana Finkbonner



Jana Finkbonner, is a member of the Lummi Nation. Lummi Nation is located primarily on a 5-mile peninsula, northwest of Bellingham; ancestral land includes Washington's northernmost coast and southern British Columbia. She currently lives in Bellingham with her two beautiful children, supportive boyfriend, and extended family. She has worked for the Stillaguamish Tribe of Indians as the Director of the North Intertribal Vocational Rehabilitation (NIVRP) Program for the past 16 years. NIVRP is a consortium grant that provides VR services to five Tribes in three counties. Before working with the Stillaguamish Tribe, she worked for 11 years at the Lummi Nation Employment and Training Center. Before her work

in the employment and training field, she worked for various programs at Northwest Indian College. Her dedication to providing education and vocational opportunities within tribal communities is what brings her great joy.

MEMBERSHIP COORDINATOR

Mary Lundy Meruvia



Mary Lundy Meruvia, Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC), is the Program Director for the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians' Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program. She has worked for the tribe since 1988, beginning as a Rehabilitation Counselor and Vocational Evaluator. She has been active in CANAR (The Consortia of Administrators for Native American Rehabilitation), holding office, chairing a committee, or fulfilling work tasks from 1993 when she became Program Director; and is a member of the National Rehabilitation Association and its state chapter, the Rehabilitation Association of Mississippi. She is also an appointed member of

the Mississippi State Rehabilitation Council of which she is the current Chairperson. Mary lives near Philadelphia, Mississippi. In her time outside of rehabilitation work, she enjoys following in her father's footsteps as an aspiring farmer, producing Certified Tree Farm timber and commercial beef cattle on a fourth-generation family farm. Her biggest life accomplishment has been raising three productive adults: Ouida, William, and Sophia.

SARGENT AT ARMS

Rebecca Holland



Rebecca Holland, CRC, began her career in vocational rehabilitation in 1994 and is currently a Vocational Rehabilitation Coordinator for the NAU AIVRTTAC team. Her experience includes working as a VR Counselor Supervisor for the State of Montana in Billings, and serving for 14 years as the program manager for the excellent Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation (TVR) program at the Pueblo of Jemez, New Mexico. She started her VR work as a psychometrist with the Albuquerque Veteran's Administration. Rebecca holds a Master of Science degree in Rehabilitation Counseling from San Diego State University and is certified in American Indian Rehabilitation (PET-AIR). She has held various board positions, including the State Rehabilitation Council and

currently serves on the Advisory Boards for the TVR Institute at Northwest Indian College and the University of Montana's Tribal VR Self-Employment website. Rebecca is a passionate advocate for individuals with disabilities, particularly enjoying her work with Native American/Alaska Native Tribal VR programs, and believes every human has a right to a satisfying, independent life.

MEMBER AT LARGE

Amanda Race



Amanda Race, MA, CRC, is the TVR Coordinator/Counselor for the Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC) Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation program since January 2008. She has over 30 years' experience working with people with disabilities. She has spent 25 of those years working at TCC, a Tribal Consortia of 42 Federally recognized Tribes in the Interior of Alaska. Amanda moved to Fairbanks in 1986 to attend the University of Alaska Fairbanks from Summerville, South Carolina, near Charleston Naval Base. Her father was in the Navy most of her life. She began school in Scotland and lived in Iceland, Hawaii, Ohio,

Illinois and West Virginia. Amanda received a Master's Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling from Western Washington University in December 2007 through a RSA scholarship. She has been a Certification for Rehabilitation Counselor since April 2008. Amanda was elected Member-At-Large for CANAR in December 2023 and is on the CANAR Conference Planning Committee, CRC Ad Hoc & Conference Facilitator Committees. She loves to spend time with her family in Colorado, her friends and her partner, Daniel, of 19 years. She has two cats, her fur family, and enjoys reading, playing trivia games, listening to music, watching the Fairbanks Ice Dogs hockey team and going to movies.

CONFERENCE COMMITTEE CHAIR

Darrin Cisco



Darrin Cisco is a member of the Apache Tribe of Oklahoma, and 20-year veteran of tribal VR. Since his youth Darrin was taught traditional ways by his parents, grandparents, relatives, elders, and elders of neighboring tribes. He attends, participates in, and conducts ceremonies, and other cultural events all over the country. Darrin is the proud father of five boys and five girls in which he passes on the tribal culture and

language. Darrin is one of the tribes' cultural historians and one of a very few that still speak and teach the Apache language. Darrin was appointed as the chair of the CANAR Conference and Planning Committee in June 2023.

LEADERSHIP COMMITTEE CHAIR

Rachel Allen



Rachel is the current director of the Delaware Nation Vocational Rehabilitation Program, which covers 8 counties in Oklahoma. Prior to becoming the director, Rachel served as a VR Counselor for 4-1/2 years in tribal VR. Other experience includes working as a disability determination specialist with the Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services, which consisted of processing Social Security Disability Insurance applications, working with an NIH-funded study to reduce the risk of heart disease for American Indians in SW Oklahoma through the University of Oklahoma Health Services Center (Balance), and doing contract work for the Native American parent technical assistance program (Visions). Rachel received her Bachelor of Science degrees at Oklahoma State University in psychology and zoology, and her Masters of Science in Rehabilitation Counseling from San Diego State University, where she participated in the Post Employment Training-American Indian Rehabilitation (PET-AIR) program. Rachel is a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC).

POLICY AND ADVOCACY COMMITTEE CHAIR

Tricia Robertson



Tricia M. Robertson has proudly served as the Director of Sycuan Inter-Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation in her hometown of San Diego, California, since 2020. In addition to her directorship, she is an instructor for the TVR Institute at Northwest Indian College since 2024, and she serves as the Chair of the CANAR Policy and Advocacy Committee. Tricia is the Co-founder of the West Hills High School Assistance Fund – a local non-profit organization created to offer financial assistance to West Hills High School alumni during the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath. As a proud first-generation college graduate, Tricia understands the sacrifices it takes to achieve vocational and educational success. She earned a bachelor's degree from San Diego State University. Later, Tricia went on to earn two California Teaching Credentials and a master's degree in education. These academic milestones paved the way for a rewarding career as a public-school teacher before she transitioned into the AIVRS field. For fun, Tricia coaches her daughter's basketball team, plays games especially trivia and sports with her family/friends, enjoys music, traveling, and reading.

Our Story: 50 Years of Advancing Self-Determination Through TVR

Detailed Agenda

Monday, December 1st

Start	End	Session Title	Room
9:00AM	4:00PM	CANAR Executive Board Meeting	Agave
5:00PM	7:00PM	Registration	Palo Verde Foyer

Tuesday, December 2nd

Start	End	Session Title	Presenter(s)	Room
7:30AM	8:45AM	Breakfast		Palo Verde A&B
7:30AM	5:00PM	Registration		Palo Verde Foyer
9:00AM	9:30AM	Welcome	Emma De La Cruz	Palo Verde Foyer
9:30AM	9:45AM	Break		
9:45AM	12:00PM	Membership Meeting	CANAR Board	Palo Verde A&B
12:00PM	1:30PM	Lunch (On Your Own)		
1:30PM	3:00PM	Membership Meeting	CANAR Board	Palo Verde A&B
3:00PM	3:20PM	Break		
3:30PM	5:00PM	Talking Circles		Room
3:30PM	5:00PM	Directors	TBA	Yucca
3:30PM	5:00PM	Counselors	TBA	Willow
3:30PM	5:00PM	Support Staff	TBA	Cholla
3:30PM	5:00PM	Partners	TBA	Agave
5:30PM	6:30PM	AIVRTTAC Gathering	Wayne Dagel	Palo Verde A&B
6:30PM	8:00PM	Group Activity - Bingo		Palo Verde A&B
		Dinner (On Your Own)		
8:00PM	9:00PM	Recovery Talking Circle	TBA	Palo Verde A&B

Wednesday, December 3rd

Start	End	Session Title	Presenter (s)	Room
7:30AM	8:30AM	Breakfast		Palo Verde AB
7:30AM	5:00PM	Registration		Palo Verde Foyer
8:30AM	9:30AM	Opening Ceremony	Emma De La Cruz	Palo Verde AB
9:30AM	10:15AM	Blessing	Steven A. Darden	
10:15AM	10:30AM	Break/Door Prizes		
10:30AM	12:00PM	Keynote: Our Collective Voice in Advocating for Culturally Responsive TVR	Dr. Elmer J. Guy	Palo Verde AB
12:00PM	1:30PM	Lunch (On Your Own)		
1:30PM	3:00PM	BREAKOUT SESSIONS	Presenter (s)	Room
1:30 PM	3:00PM	Culturally Responsive VR Services as a Strength-Based, Holistic Model for Indigenous Employment	Paula Sorrell Seanez, PhD	Yucca
1:30 PM	3:00 PM	New Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation Directors: What You Really Need to Know But Didn't Know to Ask	Cami Falcon, Christopher Zilar	Willow
1:30 PM	3:00PM	Wayfinding with Community: Employment and Life Skills Transition for American Indian Youth	Agnes Attakai	Cholla
1:30 PM	3:00PM	TVR Outreach to Veterans & Their Families	Amy Claridge	Agave
3:00PM	3:30PM	Break		
3:30PM	5:00PM	BREAKOUT SESSIONS	Presenter (s)	Room
3:30 PM	5:00PM	Building Strong TVR Cases: Documentation that Tells the Story	Heather Mahlberg, Tricia Robertson	Yucca
3:30 PM	5:00PM	Roots of Integrity in Power: Indigenous Mindful Leadership for Wellness and Systemic Balance in Tribal VR	Kimber Olson, MSW, Ph.D.	Willow
3:30 PM	5:00PM	Traditional Indigenous Pre-ETS Development & Adaptive Athletics	Jim Warne, Cline Griggs	Cholla
3:30 PM	5:00PM	Maximizing Customer Service: The Power of Clear Expectations in the Customer Experience	Jonathon Cook, Rhandi Ryan	Agave
		Dinner (On Your Own)		
6:00PM	7:00PM	GLOW WALK		Palo Verde AB
8:00PM	9:00PM	Recovery Talking Circle	TBA	Palo Verde AB

Thursday, December 4th

Start	End	Session Title	Presenter(s)	Room
7:30AM	8:45AM	Breakfast		Palo Verde AB
9:00AM	10:00AM	Keynote: The Importance of Culture & Language in TVR	Hoskie Benally Jr.	Palo Verde AB
10:00AM	10:30AM	Break		
10:30AM	12:00PM	Where are we going? <i>Vocational Rehabilitation in an AI and XR Era</i>	Maggie Mosher, Ph.D.	Palo Verde AB
12:00PM	1:30PM	Lunch (On Your Own)		
1:30PM	3:00PM	BREAKOUT SESSIONS	Presenter(s)	Room
1:30PM	3:00PM	Out of the Box Outreach: Repurposing Games to Engage Tribal Communities in TVR	Krystal Blair, Heather Mahlberg	Yucca
1:30PM	3:00PM	AIVRTTAC Circle of Wisdom Keepers: Reclaiming Indigenous Ways of Knowing	Lee Gaseoma, Ed.D., AIVRTTAC Circle of Wisdom	Willow
1:30PM	3:00PM	Exploring Transportation Voucher Programs with AIVRS: An Effective Solution to Transportation Access?	Luke Santore, Catherine Ipsen	Cholla
1:30PM	3:00PM	Inspiring Hope with Workforce Development (Growth, Skills, and Community)	Tammy Maynor	Agave
3:00PM	3:30PM	Break		
3:30PM	5:00PM	BREAKOUT SESSIONS	Presenter(s)	Room
3:30PM	5:00PM	AI Tools to Maintain and Uptain Employment	Maggie Mosher, Ph.D.	Yucca
3:30PM	5:00PM	Healing-Centered Rehabilitation Practice Beyond Trauma-Informed Care: Culturally Driven Healing for Complex Cases and Repeat Consumers	Kimber Olson, MSW, Ph.D.	Willow
3:30PM	5:00PM	Understanding Substance Use Disorder in Native Communities: A Culturally Responsive Approach	Jamie Emanuel, Elizabeth Boland	Cholla
3:30PM	5:00PM	Project SEARCH: A Path to Competitive, Integrated Employment	Joy Burress	Agave
6:00PM	9:00PM	Closing Ceremonies/Banquet	Cultural Entertainment/ James Junes	Palo Verde AB
9:00PM	10:00PM	Recovery Talking Circle		Palo Verde AB

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Thank You Trek Leasing, Inc.



**We are grateful to Trek
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CANAR Annual
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**Community
Support**



**Cultural
Connections**

"Save the Dates"

**CANAR Mid-Year Conference
June 2026
Green Bay, Wisconsin**

**CANAR Gathering
On Zoom
March 2026**

**CANAR Annual Conference
December 2026
Location TBD**

