

ANNUAL REPORT

2025



Prepared By:

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Executive Director

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About Us

Indian Cultural Organization's mission is to advance community resilience through traditional lifeways, and protect and restore the native species, waters, and homelands of the Winnemem Wintu.

Indian Cultural Organization (ICO) has served northern California since it was incorporated by Caleen Sisk and Maude Rogers Nightingale in 1983. Multi-generational and tribally-led, ICO prioritizes youth participation in projects to support Winnemem Wintu cultural resilience.



Winnemem Wintu youth dancing in traditional regalia.

Our Vision

The work of ICO and all of its programs follow the guidance and vision of Caleen Sisk, the Chief and spiritual leader of our tribe, the Winnemem Wintu. The ICO Board of Directors consists of dedicated volunteers, including multiple generations of Winnemem Wintu tribal members, who oversee and assist in the work of the organization. Answering to the board and Chief is the Executive Director, also a tribal member, who works closely with our ICO office staff, bookkeeper, grants manager, and project managers.



ICO Board Members

Caleen Sisk
CEO

Ron Toppi
Board Chair

Helene Sisk
Misa Joo
Sarah Haase

ICO Office Staff

Dessa Drake
Executive Director

Mark Miyoshi
*Tribal Historic
Preservation Officer*

Kayla Brown
Grant Manager

Darlene Sisk
*Administrative
Assistant*

Betti Comas
*Human Resources
Consultant*

Salmon Restoration Team

Rebekah Olstad
Project Manager

Marine Sisk
Lead Traditional Scientist

Arron Sisk
*Cultural Resource &
Fisheries Supervisor*

*Cultural Resource
Specialists:*

Cassandra Curl
Nina Sisk
Jesse Sisk
Gabriel Ward
Michelle Lent
Valerie Lent

Desiree Morse-Foley
Nate Wilson
Cas Garcia

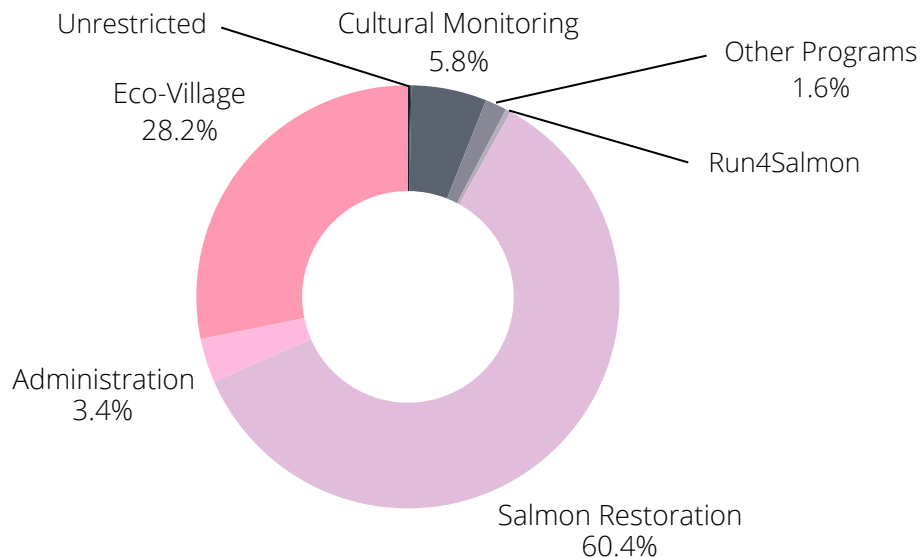
Cultural Monitors

Nicholas Wilson
Duke Ellingson
Leads

Jamie Ward
Robert Wilson
Daniel Scholfield
Aroara Steele

A Year in Review

ICO's biggest project this year was once again our co-stewardship with California Department of Fish and Wildlife through the Drought Emergency: Protecting Salmon Grant Program. We employed 13 Winnemem Wintu / tribal members through this project, with most working year round tending to the Nur (salmon) in our river and restoring habitat. Much progress was made in New Zealand, where our grant partners are sampling the salmon populations for pathogens as we work to create a pathway toward rematriation of these mountain climbing salmon back to the Winnemem Waywaket. This funding ends in early 2026.



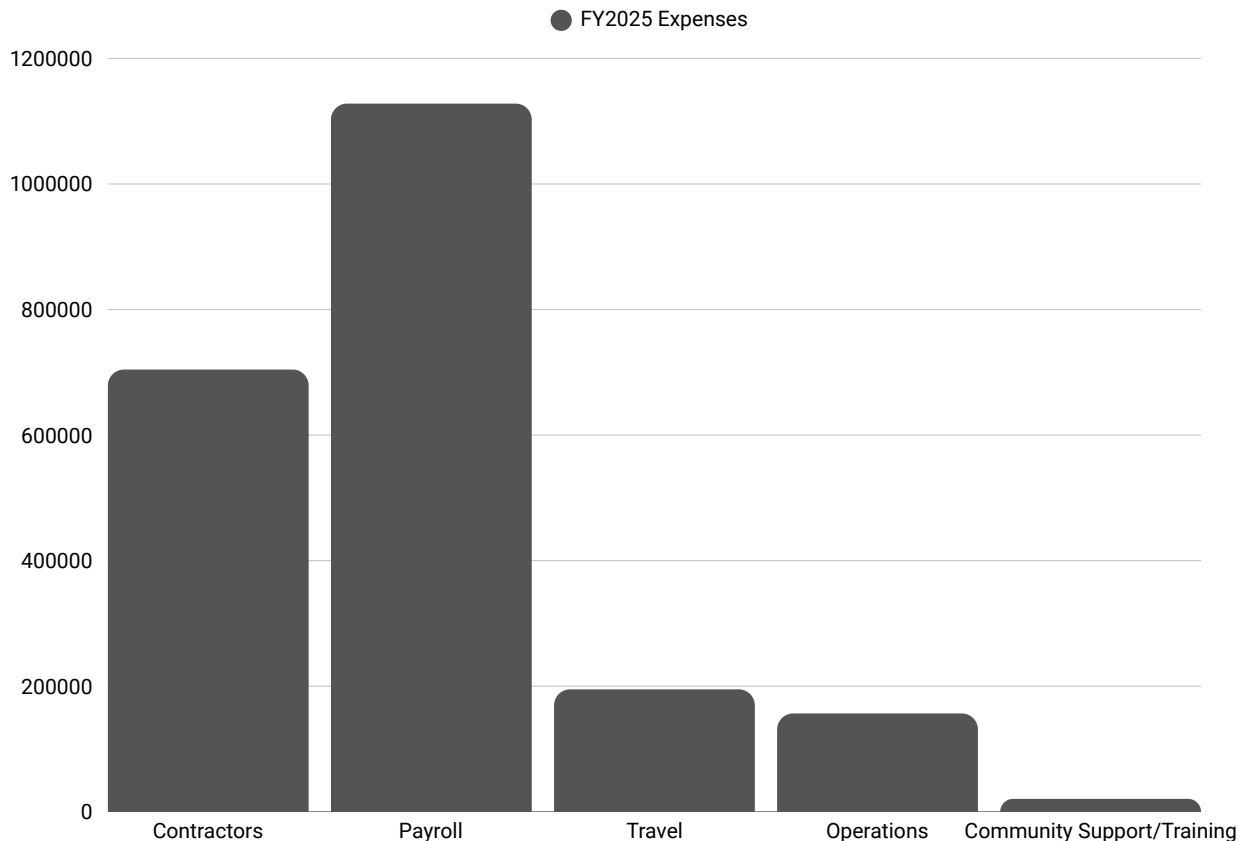
FY 2024-2025 Income

We started utilizing our California Department of Housing and Development Regional Early Action Planning (REAP) funding to advance the planning of our tribal eco-village, which we advocated to include renovations of current tribal housing. The economically and environmentally sustainable housing project we are planning will lay the groundwork for climate and fire-resilient tribal housing for our elders and families as well as a community center and other structures to support tribal and cultural activities. This funding continues through 2026.

In addition, we received support from Strategic Growth Council's Tribal Capacity Building Pilot Program, which has provided us with crucial funding to hire a grant writer/manager and train our small administrative team in grant seeking, writing, and implementation. They will continue to provide us with technical assistance through the end of the grant term in early 2027.

ICO continues to contract with various entities to provide tribal cultural monitoring within our homeland. With the help of many generous donations from organizations and individuals, ICO (with our sister nonprofit, Sawalmem) helped the Winnemem Wintu Tribe celebrate the tenth year of Run4Salmon in early June. This Indigenous women-led prayer journey retraced the route the salmon take to return to our homelands, from Ohlone territory in the Bay Delta all the way up to Buliyum Puyuuk (Mt. Shasta). We walked, cycled, ran, and paddled to raise awareness of the importance of the health of our waterways in order for our salmon to return.

We also continued our attempt to address historical trauma within the tribe, improve internal communications with employees and our personal relationships overall this last year by continuing our training with consultants in nonviolent communication. We are dedicated to continuing to find ways to bring healing to the Winnemem Wintu, while also recognizing the need to support our tribe in additional ways detailed in the next section.



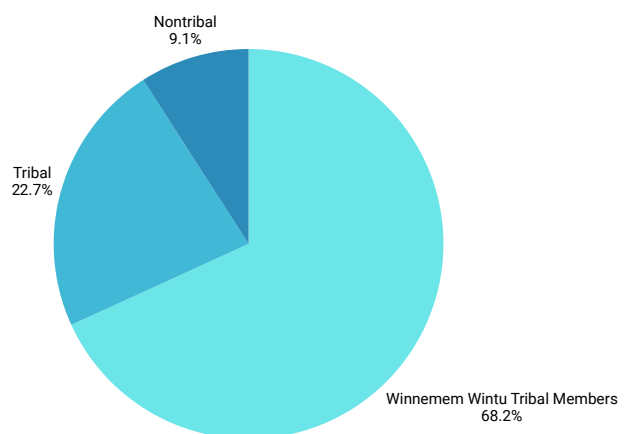


Some of the Winnemem Wintu Fisheries team working on salmon restoration.

ICO is proud to have been able to employ so many of our own tribal members this year and is extremely grateful to them, our donors, grant partners, and contractors that assisted us in all our endeavors in 2025.

Our contractors provide the expertise required for specialized grant activities, the bulk of whom support our efforts to rematriate our Nur from New Zealand - including scientists, fish and game, and a pathogen testing lab. Through additional salmon restoration funding, we also support a tribal member who advocates at the state and federal level for the recovery of our waterways, the environment, and salmon on behalf of the tribe.

Employee Demographics



We often partner with local tribal entities to provide TEK training to our staff and tribal members. ICO also contracted with nonviolent communication consultants to improve staff and tribal relations. Finally, an architect and general contractor work with us on the planning of the eco-village and improvements to current tribal housing.

Looking Ahead

As a nonprofit of a non-federally recognized tribe, ICO relies on public donations and grant funding to support our work.

ICO remains committed to strengthening the vital work of our Tribal Historic Preservation Office and other dedicated staff who ensure our programs and daily operations run smoothly. As we look ahead, one of our highest priorities is properly documenting and preserving Winnemem Wintu culture. We have already begun work on our own tribal archives and a comprehensive dictionary of the Winnemem Wintu language—essential projects that require additional funding to bring them to completion.

Another key priority is addressing the urgent housing needs of our families. While we have funds for planning, we seek support to maintain current housing as well as build our eco-village - safe, affordable tribal housing and community buildings on our ancestral lands, creating spaces where our people can live, gather, and thrive together in alignment with our cultural values.

Our salmon restoration work continues to be a central focus. We remain dedicated to securing funding to continue our co-stewardship on the Winnemem Waywaket and to build the volitional passageway to help Nur bypass Shasta Dam, restoring them to their rightful waters. We also plan to build a tribal fishery along our river to assist in rematriating our ancestral Nur from New Zealand.



Winnemem Wintu Fisheries staff adding eyed salmon eggs into the Nur Nature Base system.

Youth education is another cornerstone of our vision. ICO is dedicated to providing a place for our children to learn their language, history, and responsibilities to land and water. We aim to source funding to provide workshops and other opportunities for cultural exchange between our elders and other knowledge keepers and our youth. We will continue to partner with our sister nonprofit, Sawalmem, to compensate and honor our elders as teachers and advisors.

We are also working to expand healing and wellness programs that integrate traditional land-based practices, ceremony, and wellness education, especially for women, youth, and those impacted by trauma or substance use. Alongside this, we continue to build job skills and leadership capacity through workforce development in areas such as cultural burning, ecological restoration, and tribal governance.

Cultural initiatives remain a constant thread through all we do - funding is needed for regalia-making, intergenerational teachings, ceremonies, and community preparedness for climate-related risks.

Finally, we seek continued support for Chief Sisk's advocacy work at the international level, representing unrecognized tribes like the Winnemem Wintu at the United Nations and other global forums.

Guided by love for our ancestors and hope for future generations, we invite partners and supporters to stand with us in bringing these priorities to life - restoring our people, our lands, our Nur, and our culture for generations to come.



Winnemem Wintu tribal elder.

With Appreciation

Thank you to our local, state, federal, and international partners for their support:



Cheung Consultancy, Limited; Repass-Rodgers Foundation; Edmundo Norte & Alicia Garcia; Canticle Farm; Morgan Curtis; and numerous donors

Join Us

If you would like to learn more information about Indian Cultural Organization or would like to donate to support the work we do, please see our contact information below or scan the QR code for a quick link.



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[Visit our Website](http://indiancultural.org)

