



FRESH TRACKS ANNUAL REPORT 2024



FORUM FOR
COMMUNITY
SOLUTIONS

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Introduction

In May 2016, standing in Compton with partners from REI, My Brother's Keeper, the National Park Service, and Mayor Aja Brown, I witnessed the profound power of bringing together young leaders from Los Angeles and Arctic Village, Alaska. This expedition, which we called Fresh Tracks, marked a commitment to bridging differences through shared outdoor experiences, cultural exchange, and mutual respect. That pivotal moment highlighted the transformative potential of connecting young people from vastly different backgrounds.

By experiencing each other's cultures and building meaningful relationships, these young leaders fostered renewed faith in collective leadership and a stronger sense of community.

Today, Fresh Tracks continues to thrive, rooted in cultural revitalization, community building, and holistic well-being. Our 2024 achievements underscore our dedication to providing youth opportunities to engage with their cultural heritage and the outdoors. Drawing on lessons since that day in Compton, we create spaces for young people to honor their traditions and forge lasting connections with the outdoors. As we look to 2025, we invite those who share our vision of environmental and community stewardship, social justice, and cultural preservation to join us. By forging new partnerships, increasing access to resources, and championing community-led initiatives, we aim to amplify the voices of future leaders and create lasting, positive change.

Adelante/Onward,



Juan D. Martinez Pineda

Director, Fresh Tracks

Deputy Director, The Aspen Institute Forum for Community Solutions

Programmatic Achievements

Open Pathways Project: Strengthening Partnerships and Defining Collective Goals in 2024

Introducing Open Pathways Project (OPP)

For three years, the Outdoor Equity Network has represented a coalition of funders, policymakers, and program leaders seeking to increase youth access to the outdoors as a unifying strategy for creating collective, cross-community wellbeing. With growth and evolution, a new name emerged to better reflect the shifting landscape and the goals shaped by our working group. Our new name, Open Pathways Project, better reflects our commitment to understanding, replicating, and strengthening the powerful results of time spent outdoors and the impacts from the healing power of the outdoors for young people. Open Pathways Project represents our dedication to grow with the field and create a community that affects the change we want to see.

May 2024 Opportunity Youth Forum:

Introducing OPP to New Partners and Funders

A joint endeavor between Native Americans in Philanthropy, Fresh Tracks, and the Aspen Institute Forum for Community Solutions, the Open Pathways Project (OPP) seeks to create policy and systems change rooted in the healing power of the outdoors, culture, and Indigenous leadership and practice. In 2024, we introduced OPP to a diverse audience of supporters, partners, and funders at the Opportunity Youth Forum. We showcased OPP evolution, strategic goals, and its role in aligning programming, philanthropy, and policy for systemic change. During this forum, we announced a two-year fundraising target to expand OPP's capacity to foster cross-sector collaboration and increase access to the outdoors for BIPOC youth. Looking ahead, Fresh Tracks and OPP remain dedicated to strengthening partnerships and leveraging diverse expertise as we work toward a shared vision of community-led environmental stewardship, cultural preservation, and social justice.

December 2024 OPP Convening:

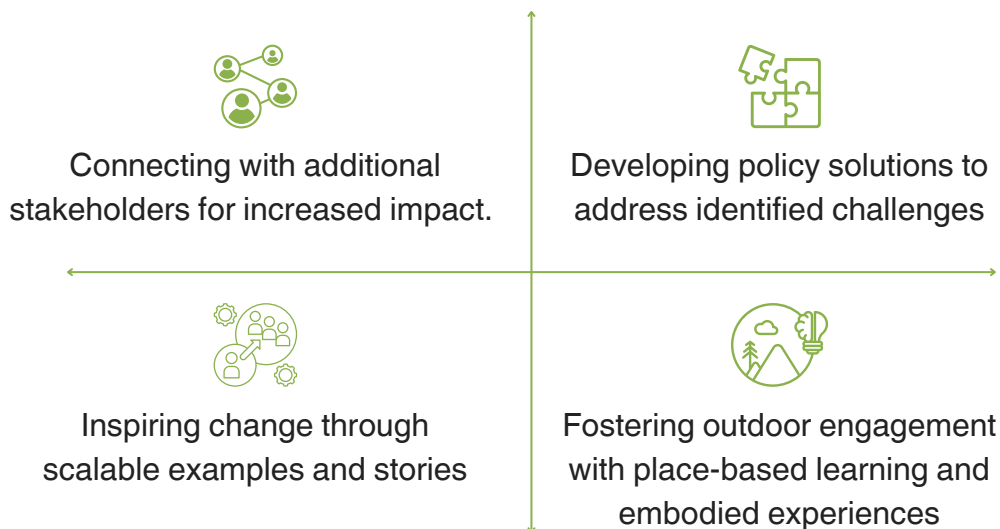
In December 2024, Fresh Tracks hosted the OPP team in Seattle, Washington for a pivotal meeting focused on defining roles, goals, and values for a Fall 2025 convening. Facilitated by Harris Solomon, the meeting brought together leaders including:

- **Courtney Aber**, National Director, BOLD & GOLD
- **Sage Innerarity**, Program Coordinator, Aspen Institute Forum for Community Solutions, Fresh Tracks

- **Martin LeBlanc**, Senior Advisor, LBC Action
- **Juan Martinez**, Director, Fresh Tracks and Deputy Director, Aspen Institute Forum for Community Solutions
- **Dylan McDowell**, Executive Director, National Caucus of Environmental Legislators
- **Erik Stegman**, CEO, Native Americans in Philanthropy
- **Andrea Wagner**, Senior Program Associate, Aspen Institute Forum for Community Solutions, Fresh Tracks

The discussions focused on legislative reform, public education, health and well-being, and public-private partnerships to fund outdoor engagement. Key decisions were made about our collective approach, and how OPP can be an innovative space for tackling challenges beyond the scope of individual organizations. Central to this work is the adoption of Indigenous storytelling and relational practices for information sharing.

We outlined the following priorities for a Fall 2025 convening:



Core values guiding these efforts include engaging communities, using intergenerational approaches, and centering Indigenous worldviews, with youth as the primary beneficiaries.

Indigenous Youth Engagement

Postsecondary Pathways for Indigenous Youth

Supporting Postsecondary Education Pathways for Rural Tribal Communities: Challenges and Opportunities, authored by Dr. Nichole Prescott, was developed within the framework of the Aspen Institute Forum for Community Solutions (AIFCS), the Opportunity Youth Forum, and Fresh Tracks. This report examines the systemic barriers Native and Indigenous youth face in accessing and succeeding in postsecondary education, including historical injustices, intergenerational trauma, cultural disconnect, and limited access to financial and academic resources.

The report highlights the importance of culturally responsive education, Indigenous-led teaching models, mentorship, and strengthened community partnerships. In alignment with these findings, Fresh Tracks conducted an in-depth exploration of postsecondary pathways for Indigenous youth, working alongside Tribal communities and educational partners to develop recommendations that honor Indigenous identities and values. These efforts lay the foundation for future initiatives aimed at increasing access, retention, and success for Indigenous students in higher education and beyond.



Learn more: [Supporting Postsecondary Education Pathways for Rural Tribal Communities: Challenges and Opportunities](#)

Native Youth Climate Adaptation and Leadership Congress: Empowering Indigenous Youth Leadership

The Native Youth Climate Adaptation Leadership Congress (NYCALC), held in Shepherdstown, West Virginia, remained a cornerstone of youth leadership development in 2024. NYCALC is a federal and non-governmental collaborative that invites Native communities to work together to address climate challenges in a changing environment. NYCALC provides workshops and learning opportunities in leadership principles, STEM, conservation, and outdoor skills for the next generation of Native leaders (rising high school seniors) and their communities.



Fresh Tracks played a pivotal role by bringing a team of eight trainers, ages 18–25, to support NYCALC's programming. During NYCALC, the Trainer Team primarily served as mentors to the college-aged Junior Faculty, facilitating workshops and sessions designed to give young leaders space for connection and healing, boost their leadership development, and bring new skills back to their communities. They also facilitated a healing talking circle in which young leaders expressed personal and community issues and experienced the support of their peers.

As an integral part of Fresh Tracks programming, the Trainer Team operates using a train-the-trainer model that emphasizes peer learning while centering cultural and community connections. This collaboration is designed to enhance cultural competency, regional community understanding, communication skills, and sensitivity to diverse cultural perspectives, equipping Native youth to lead transformational efforts in their communities and beyond.



Learn more: [Native Youth Climate
Adaptation and Leadership Congress Report](#)

Fresh Tracks Leader Moderating at Aspen Ideas: Climate 2024

Fresh Tracks was proud to have a presence at Aspen Ideas: Climate 2024, where Fresh Tracks leader Talia Davis was a speaker and moderator, sharing the stage with the Secretary of the Interior, Deb Haaland. Their discussion highlighted the importance of youth leadership in addressing climate change, focusing on the intersection of climate resilience, cultural preservation, and youth-driven solutions. Talia's participation underscored the critical need for collaborative partnerships to amplify Indigenous voices in climate action, with youth leaders offering unique perspectives on environmental stewardship. Davis also reflected on the importance of supporting youth leaders who are already on the front lines of change, highlighting the role of youth in shaping the future of environmental sustainability.



Learn more: [Amidst the Climate Crisis, Collaborative Partnerships Amplify Youth Leadership](#)

Partnerships and Collaborations

Fresh Tracks continues to strengthen its network of partners, each playing a vital role in advancing our shared mission of empowering Indigenous youth and fostering community-led solutions. By weaving together expertise, resources, and cultural knowledge, these partnerships create a powerful collective that drives meaningful change and amplifies the healing power of culture and the outdoors.

The Y BOLD & GOLD: Elevating Best Practices for Youth Well-being



Our collaboration with The Y BOLD & GOLD has been instrumental in integrating evidence-based approaches into our programs, particularly those centered on youth well-being and social-emotional learning. The Y's leadership in this space has provided proven frameworks that promote holistic youth development, emphasizing mental health, resilience, and leadership skills. By combining The Y's expertise with Fresh Tracks' mission, we have co-developed programming that empowers Indigenous youth and fosters environments in which they can thrive emotionally and socially. This partnership helps equip youth with tools to become leaders in their communities and is creating a replicable model of empowerment for young people nationwide.

National Caucus of Environmental Legislators (NCEL): Policy Advocacy for Youth and the Outdoors



The National Caucus of Environmental Legislators (NCEL) has been an invaluable partner in ensuring Fresh Tracks' mission is reflected in environmental policy discussions at state and national levels. NCEL has provided a platform for Fresh Tracks to share its vision, including a keynote address at the 2024 NCEL National Forum, where we highlighted the healing benefits of time spent in the outdoors. Beyond advocacy, NCEL actively collaborates with us to identify and crosswalk policies that create opportunities for young people to access outdoor programming. Together, we are working to shape a policy landscape that uplifts Indigenous perspectives, promotes outdoor access, and fosters leadership development, ensuring young voices are heard at a policy level.

Department of the Interior (DOI): Strengthening Federal Partnerships for Systemic Change



Developed in 2024, our Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Department of the Interior (DOI) represents a significant milestone in Fresh Tracks' effort to foster long-term collaborations with relevant federal agencies to further our policy goals. This agreement provides a framework for aligning efforts to support the preservation of Indigenous lands, strengthen community

resilience, and enhance access to outdoor resources for Indigenous youth. Through this partnership, we aim to develop initiatives that promote the healing power of the outdoors while respecting and incorporating the cultural and environmental knowledge of Indigenous communities. By working alongside the DOI, we are laying the groundwork for systemic change that ensures Native communities have equitable access to outdoor spaces, cultural preservation, and leadership opportunities.

Native Americans in Philanthropy (NAP): Amplifying Indigenous Leadership in Philanthropy



Native Americans in Philanthropy (NAP) has been a pivotal partner in co-hosting the Native, Indigenous, and Tribal Community of Practice (NITCoP). This initiative creates a space for Indigenous leaders to come together,

creates a space for Indigenous leaders to come together, share knowledge, and drive collective action on pressing issues affecting their communities. NAP's commitment to centering Indigenous leadership includes Native youth, as demonstrated by their assembly of a delegation for the White House Tribal Youth Forum and their co-hosting of a panel at the 2024 NAP conference titled *Empowering Indigenous Youth: Uniting Native Youth to Shape Policy and Philanthropy*. This panel focused on youth leadership, barriers faced by young Indigenous leaders, and shared visions for a future centered on climate resilience and cultural preservation.

This effort ensured Indigenous youth had a platform to engage in high-level policy conversations, voice their concerns, and advocate for systemic change. NAP's ability to bridge the philanthropic sector with grassroots Indigenous communities has been transformative, creating sustainable pathways to leadership and effective solutions that are deeply rooted in Indigenous values, traditions, and priorities. Their role as a convener and advocate for Indigenous voices in philanthropy has been a cornerstone of our collective success.

Policy and Philanthropy Leadership

White House Tribal Youth Forum

In November 2024, Fresh Tracks proudly supported a delegation of 11 Indigenous youth to the White House Tribal Youth Forum, an event dedicated to amplifying Native voices and fostering youth leadership. This effort was made possible through collaboration with organizations like the Zuni Youth Enrichment Project and the Arctic Youth Ambassador Program, which brought together Indigenous youth from diverse regions and backgrounds. The delegates engaged in high-level policy discussions, providing critical input on issues affecting their communities, such as environmental justice, cultural preservation, and youth well-being.

In addition to the policy dialogues, the forum celebrated Indigenous culture and identity through events like a Native youth fashion show, which showcased traditional and contemporary designs, and a community round dance, which symbolized unity and resilience. The forum underscored the necessity of empowering Indigenous youth to take the lead in shaping policies and initiatives that directly impact their futures, demonstrating the profound impact of youth-driven, culturally-centered approaches to leadership and advocacy.



Learn more: [Fresh Tracks Delegation at the 2024 White House Tribal Youth Forum](#)

Goldman Sachs Philanthropy Forum

At the 2024 Goldman Sachs Philanthropy Forum, Fresh Tracks participated in the breakout session titled *On a Mission: Creating a More Equitable Outdoors*. This session brought together leaders and innovators to explore how philanthropic efforts can drive systemic change and support community-led solutions. The conversation highlighted the role of youth as key architects in shaping initiatives that address disparities in outdoor access and foster healing through the outdoors. Panelists shared insights on how philanthropy can better support grassroots organizations, uplift Indigenous leadership, and ensure that programs are reflective of the communities they aim to serve. Fresh Tracks' participation further solidified our role as a leader in promoting the healing powers of the outdoors, culture, and community-driven action.

The Youth and Young Adult Well-being Project

One of Fresh Tracks' major milestones in 2024 was the development of the **Well-being Tool**, a groundbreaking resource created by youth and young adults from diverse cultural affinity groups, including **American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN)**, **Black Expressions of Well-being**, and **Latine Bienestar**. This tool represents a collaborative and culturally grounded approach to understanding and measuring well-being, offering insights that are deeply relevant to the lived experiences of these communities. The Well-being Tool is designed to capture the unique intersections of cultural identity, mental health, and social-emotional development, ensuring that it resonates with the communities it is intended to serve. The tool's development is rooted in the belief that youth should be co-creators of solutions to promote well-being, making their voices and perspectives central to the process.

The Well-being Tool will be piloted in 2025. This pilot phase will allow Fresh Tracks to work closely with community partners to test, evaluate, and improve the tool in real-world settings, ensuring that it is both effective and adaptable to various cultural contexts. This approach reflects Fresh Tracks' commitment to centering youth in every aspect of its work, from design to implementation.

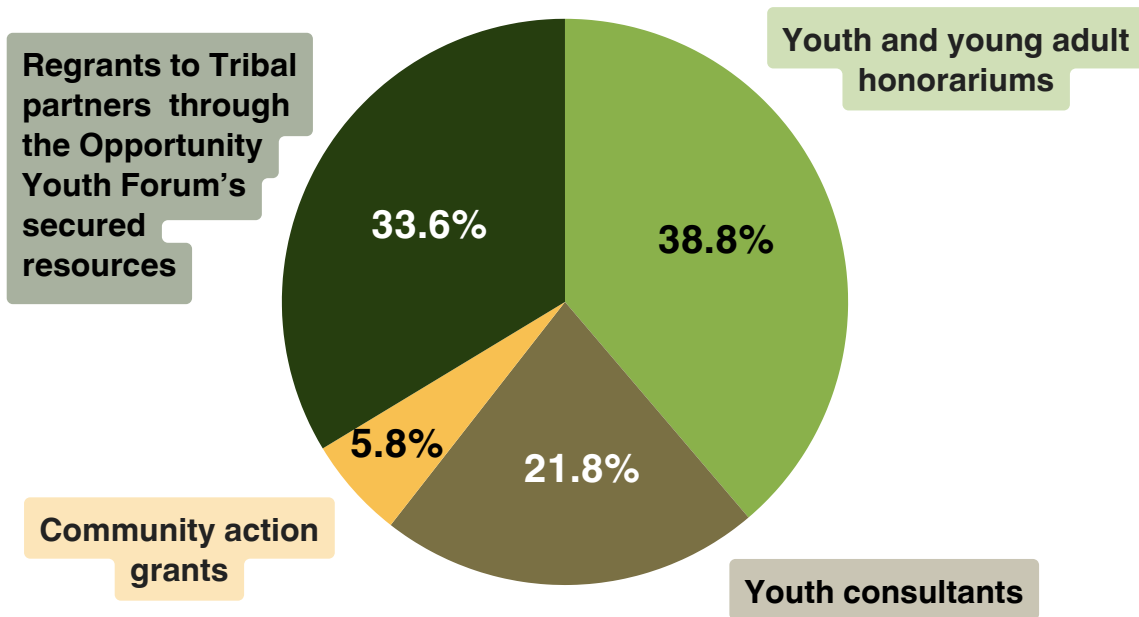
To complement the Well-being Tool, Fresh Tracks released *Centering Youth in Well-Being Research and Programming: A Guide for Adult Allies*, a resource aimed at equipping adult partners with strategies to create youth-centered environments. The guide highlights the importance of fostering trust, mutual respect, and cultural sensitivity when working with youth. By providing actionable insights, it empowers adult allies to support young people in navigating challenges and achieving their full potential. The Youth and Young Adult Well-being Project exemplifies Fresh Tracks' broader mission of empowering youth through culturally relevant, community-driven initiatives. This project underscores the organization's belief that the well-being of youth and young adults is a cornerstone of building stronger, more resilient communities.



Learn more: [Centering Youth in Well-Being Research and Programming: A Guide for Adult Allies](#)

Investments in Youth Leadership and Community Impact

Fresh Tracks remains committed to investing in young leaders and community-driven initiatives through direct financial support. **In 2024, over a quarter of a million dollars was distributed to youth and communities through honorariums, youth consultant payments, and regrants.**



Community Action Grants: Youth-Led Impact

Fresh Tracks awarded grants to young leaders making a difference through cultural and environmental initiatives in their communities:

- **Lauren Rosenfelt:** Supported place-based art projects in Oklahoma, incorporating Indigenous ecological traditions into public installations.
- **Asa Samuels:** Led workshops on Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) at the University of Oklahoma, connecting Indigenous practices with climate action.
- **Ke'ala'iliah Ford:** Distributed over 100 native and edible plants across Hawai'i to promote conservation and biodiversity.
- **Mikayah Locklear:** Expanded the Carolina Indian Circle Archive at UNC-Chapel Hill, preserving Indigenous student histories.
- **Kainoa Azama:** Organized a youth leadership retreat on Hawai'i Island, integrating agroforestry, cultural leadership, and multimedia storytelling.

Meet The Team



Juan Martinez (he/him) is a Deputy Director at the Aspen Institute Forum for Community Solutions. He is a co-founder of Fresh Tracks, a youth-led cross cultural revolution rooted in the healing power of the outdoors. He also implements the Tribal and Indigenous Community of Practice for the Opportunity Youth Forum. His work has helped to grow the silo-breaking strategy for systems change and youth power building, while also lifting up successful stories of civic engagement and community organizing. Juan has over 15 years of nonprofit management and strategy implementation experience and was named a National Geographic Explorer in 2011 for his work to engage the rising generation of youth with the healing power of the outdoors.



Andrea Wagner (she/her) is a Senior Program Associate for Fresh Tracks at the Aspen Institute Forum for Community Solutions. She is Yup'ik, Alaskan Native and originally from Wasilla, Alaska. Andrea is deeply rooted in the traditions of her grandmother, who comes from Emmonak, Alaska, and her grandfather, from Danville, Pennsylvania, where she spent summers growing up. Andrea is dedicated to amplifying youth voices, strengthening community connections, and fostering cross-cultural collaboration. What began as her own journey as a youth in the Fresh Tracks network has evolved into a leadership role in which she implements and supports programs, oversees youth development efforts, and coordinates initiatives for the OYF Native, Indigenous, and Tribal Community of Practice. She earned her Bachelor's degree in communications, with a minor in government and public policy, from the University of Arizona in May 2022. Now based in Portland, Oregon, she shares her life with her spouse and two cats.



Sage Innerarity (she/her) is a Program Coordinator for Fresh Tracks at the Aspen Institute Forum for Community Solutions. Her work focuses specifically on the Native, Indigenous, and Tribal Community of Practice and the Outdoor Equity Network. Sage previously served as a Native Americans in Philanthropy 2023-2024 Native Youth Grantmaker with support from the Miwok Heritage Center. In May 2022, she received her Bachelor's

degree in English and American studies with a concentration in Native American studies from Amherst College. She is now in her final semester at Simmons University School of Library and Information Science, where she is pursuing her MLIS with concentrations in archival management and cultural heritage informatics. Sage's work with Fresh Tracks is motivated by her passions for cultural revitalization, community outreach, and (re)centering Indigenous narratives to strengthen Tribal sovereignty and self-determination. Sage is a citizen of the Lone Band of Miwok Indians, and is currently based in Boston, Massachusetts.



Martin LeBlanc is a strategic planning, public policy, and fundraising specialist with two decades of experience helping organizations expand their impact. Most recently, LeBlanc served as the Managing Director of Innovation at Sixkiller Consulting LLC, a Washington, DC based strategic advisory firm. In 2014, he created the No Child Left Inside Alliance, a coalition of nonprofits, businesses, and government agencies that successfully

advocated to establish a \$2 million program focused on outdoor education and recreation programs. With the support of the Obama Administration, LeBlanc brought together diverse stakeholders to launch Fresh Tracks, a shared leadership experience for young adults from Compton, California and Alaska Native Communities. Fresh Tracks programming included a December 2016 roundtable on Outdoor, Youth, and Diversity convened in the Roosevelt Room of the White House.



Harris Solomon is a strategist and facilitator with LBC Action, as well as an independent consultant and founder of Harris Solomon Consulting Group LLC. He brings to the table a deep grounding in urban systems, policy, and programs, having helped stand up and launch the 10 Minute Walk Campaign with The Trust for Public Land and holding previous positions with City University of New York, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and the office of former NYC Mayor Michael Bloomberg. He is based in New York City.



CJ Goulding (he/him) is a weaver, facilitator, community builder, organizer, and storyteller who invests in the growth of people, the growth of connection between people, and the growth of communities. He is committed to redistributing power and resources to achieve equity and justice. His work involves supporting leaders creating change in their communities, and shaping new narratives about our connection to community and the outdoors, like "Why I Wear Jordans in the Great Outdoors." CJ is the founder of Boyz N The Wood, which uses nature as a framework in which Black men can connect and grow as examples of positive masculinity and mental health in their communities. He currently operates as a consultant creating pathways, providing resources, and developing innovative strategies that support the outdoor and environmental sectors in their evolution toward justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (JEDI).



Dr. Nichole S. Prescott, whose traditional Myaamia name is Neehweeta, meaning She Speaks, is a proud citizen of the Miami Nation of Oklahoma (Myaamia) and is actively engaged in her tribe's cultural and language revitalization efforts. Born in an Indian Hospital in Oklahoma and raised on the Texas/Mexico border, she became the first in her family to graduate with a baccalaureate degree from The University of Texas at Austin. She went on to earn a master's degree from Miami University and a PhD from Stony Brook University. Although she calls Austin home, Dr. Prescott remains closely connected to the broader Native American community. She serves on the Governing Council of the National Institute for Native Leadership in Higher Education and the Executive Committee of the Miami University Foundation Board, which is located on lands historically and continually occupied by the Myaamiaki. She previously served on the Board of Directors for the American Indians of Texas. Currently, Dr. Prescott serves as Assistant Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs at the University of Texas System, where she leads and supports student success initiatives system-wide, focusing on the PK-20 continuum and workforce readiness. She is also a consultant for AIFCS's Supporting Postsecondary Education Pathways grant.



Maris Nyhart is a social impact communications strategist with experience across issue areas including pro-choice electoral organizing, criminal legal system reform, disaster relief, and opportunity youth advocacy. Equally at home creating big-picture strategies and getting into the weeds to execute them, she's passionate about storytelling as a tool to bring people into progressive movements and grow political power. She lives and works in Brooklyn, NY.

Acknowledgements

Fresh Tracks' work is made possible by partners including the REI Cooperative Action Fund, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Annie E. Casey Foundation, 11th Hour Project, National Recreation Foundation, Treeline Foundation, ECMC Foundation, Dorothy T. Goldman Foundation, and generous friends and partners. We acknowledge the resilience of Native communities and their leadership in movements for justice and equity. Fresh Tracks encourages all to honor the truths of the land's original inhabitants and support Indigenous leadership for an equitable future.