

SPOTLIGHT - Intertribal Agriculture Council



The Intertribal Agriculture Council (IAC) was founded in 1987 to pursue and promote the conservation, development, and use of their agricultural resources for the betterment of fellow Native American people. The IAC actively integrates technical assistance (TA) to connect Native American producers and Tribes to USDA programs, services, and educational opportunities. These opportunities range from lessons in soil health in collaboration with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Indian Land Tenure Foundation (ILTF), and universities, to building youth agricultural curriculum and grant opportunities, to conservation planning through outreach. In addition to connecting Native American producers with resources, the IAC also amplifies its voting members' voices to collectively advocate for federal and state agricultural policies that better serve the needs of Native communities.

In Northwest Washington, the integration of TA kept sibling farmers Shawna Kalama and Wyatt Wiltze of the Yakama Indian Nation Reservation from going under in difficult times. The COVID-19 pandemic wreaked havoc on cattle prices, threatening a loss for their hay and cow/calf operation. The IAC's TA program connected them with the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program and a Small Business Administration grant. In doing so, it saved their operation. The IAC's successful integration of technical assistance demonstrates how vital TA support is to the continuation, sustainability, and profitability of agricultural systems. Moreover, IAC's work has shown the importance of having specialized TA programming and staff devoted to serving the needs of specific communities.



Mount Adams near Yakama Territory, WA – Credit: Jim Vallance, public domain