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## **Port Gamble S’Klallam Tribe Recognized for Highest Response Rate Among Washington State Tribe in U.S. Census**

With almost 80% of all members responding, the Port Gamble S’Klallam Tribe (PGST) has the highest response rate of any tribe in Washington state to the U.S. Census. This information comes from the Na’ah Illahee Fund, an intertribal non-profit focusing on Native female-centered activism and leadership.

As a part of their PNW Natives Count campaign, Na’ah Illahee Fund offered the 2020 Census Canoe Race, an online reader board of tribal response rates that calculated totals through August 31. By the end of the reporting period, PGST led the rankings with a full 78.8% of their membership having responded to the U.S. Census. Upper Skagit Indian Tribe (Sedro-Woolley, WA) came in second with 77.8% and the Sauk-Suiattle Indian Tribe (Darrington, WA) was third with 73.9% reporting.

In late September, Na’ah Illahee Fund honored the top reporting tribes with a virtual ceremony. PGST Chairman Jeromy Sullivan was in attendance.

During the event, Colleen Jollie, a Turtle Mountain Chippewa tribal member, who serves as a senior advisor at Na’ah Illahee Fund, said, “I am just delighted with the results I’ve seen across the state of Washington. It’s been spectacular! Our tribal response rates are triple and quadruple what they are in other states, so my hands go up to you all. I am just really proud to be here.”

In representing PGST’s achievements related to the 2020 Census, Chairman Sullivan stressed the importance of using online tools, like Facebook, to get the word out. He also thanked those involved with the PNW Natives Count campaign for reminding tribal leadership about the importance of the Census and the innovative tools they employed—such as the [2020 Census Canoe Race graphic](#)—to motivate people.

“The outreach on Facebook was significant for us and challenging our people to get that canoe out in front, that really worked. We have a pretty competitive tribe,” he said. “I really appreciate all the hard work everyone has done...it really matters in Indian Country to make sure we’re counted.”

The data from the U.S. Census is used to make federal funding decisions for tribal communities. This includes money for Title I grants, head start programs, SNAP benefits, Indian Housing Block grants, and

health programs, like Indian Health Service and Medicaid. Most Native people are served by one or more of these programs in their lifetimes. In addition, Census data is used to determine representation in Congress.

For a variety of reasons, including geographic and cultural issues, counting Native peoples in the Census has always been a challenge. All people of color are more likely to be undercounted in the U.S. Census than the white population, making programs like PNW Natives Count all the more important.

As the Washington state tribe with the highest 2020 Census reporting rate, PGST was awarded \$25,000 from the Na'ah Illahee Fund. Upper Skagit was awarded \$10,000 for the biggest self-response rate percentage increase.

The Na'ah Illahee Fund was chosen to facilitate Census 2020 reporting on behalf of the state's tribes by Washington State's Office of Fiscal Management, in collaboration with the Washington Census Alliance and the Seattle Foundation. The goal for the PNW Native Count campaign was a complete count for tribal organizations through training, technical assistance, and funding.

The 2020 Census came to an abrupt end at 11:59 pm on Thursday, October 15 after the Supreme Court sided with the Trump administration, which had petitioned the court to end a Census deadline extension early. Because of data collection challenges related to the coronavirus pandemic and unusually heavy wildfire and hurricane seasons, the U.S. Census Bureau had originally extended the deadline to October 31, which included Census workers in the field to reach those who hadn't yet responded online or by mail.

The Census Bureau now has until December 31, 2020 to tally the data and provide it to the current administration.

#### **About THE PORT GAMBLE S'KLALLAM TRIBE**

The Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe, originally known as the Nux Sklai Yem or Strong People, are descendants of the Salish people who have been well-established in the Puget Sound basin and surrounding areas since 2400 B.C. In the late 1930s, the Port Gamble S'Klallam reservation, located on the northern tip of the Kitsap Peninsula in Washington State, was established. Many of the Tribe's members, who total about twelve hundred, still live there today.

For more information about the S'Klallam Tribe, please visit [www.pgst.nsn.us](http://www.pgst.nsn.us).

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