



ZYEP SUMMER CAMP



WHAT ARE YOU DOING THIS SUMMER?

Zuni Youth Enrichment Project's (ZYEP) Summer Camp is where it all begins. The inspiration for summer camp grew from a simple question: "What are you doing this summer?"

ZYEP founder and local pediatrician, Tom Faber, would ask his young patients this question as a lighthearted way of breaking the ice during checkups. The kids' responses led to the realization that many Zuni kids didn't have opportunities to be active and creative over the summer. Inspired by the idea that summers should be a special time for Zuni kids when they explore their lands, learn new things, make friends, and have fun, a group of community members planned ZYEP's first annual summer camp in 2009.

That first camp was a huge success for the 25 kids that participated and the size of camp, along with its impact, continues to grow today, serving 200 youth annually.



WHY SUMMER CAMP?

By integrating Zuni culture into physical activity, nutrition, and art activities, ZYEP's Summer Camp enhances the youth participants' health while deepening their connection to Zuni traditions. At camp, youth are nurtured by caring mentors that find meaningful ways to teach Zuni language, art, social dances, traditional gardening and more about what makes them special. These activities are offered alongside a conventional camp curriculum that includes science, nutrition, sports, games and self-care.

ZYEP Summer Camp goes beyond just serving campers — it provides the opportunity for Zuni teens and young adults to be summer camp counselors and role models. In preparation for these roles, the mentors engage in a leadership development program consisting of a four-day outdoor retreat to a culturally significant site, a week of professional development training and daily group sessions. ZYEP's leadership program helps the mentors develop communication, leadership and mentoring skills, set academic and career goals, gain valuable work experience, all while giving back to their community. Some of our mentors participated in Summer Camp themselves, returning to give back to the next generation of Zuni youth!

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Benefits of Summer Camp for Zuni Families

- Increase fun and activities for youth.
- Increase enjoyment of nutrition with youth consuming more water, fruits and vegetables.
- Youth feel a stronger connection to their community.
- Camp provides positive role models for children.
- Camp improves self-confidence along with teaching and reinforcing Zuni values.



Q&A with Tahlia Natachu

ZYEP Youth Development Coordinator & Former Summer Camp Youth Counselor



Tahlia was raised in Zuni and joined the ZYEP team in September of 2019. Tahlia knows the impact of ZYEP's Summer Camp better than anyone, as she served as a camp counselor for 3 years, starting when she was 16 years old. She received her Master's in Education from Portland State University and taught at Zuni Middle school before joining the ZYEP team. Tahlia's passion to care for the whole child steered her towards the multifaceted enrichment that ZYEP fosters.

Q. What is ZYEP's approach to its programming, specifically summer camp?

A. It's actually really simple and truly comes from a place of love and care. When I was a counselor during those beginning years of ZYEP summer camp, the goal was to create a nurturing space where campers could have fun, be healthy, and connect to our Zuni culture. We have always believed in highlighting the strengths of our community because that allows for our youth to see that they can strive to reach their highest potential with an incredible foundation to support them.

Q. What did you learn as a camp counselor, that informs the work you do today as a staff member?

A. We were always reminded to make each of our campers feel special. We wanted to make sure they were seen, heard, and understood every day. These are simple things like greeting them, asking them how they are, and showing interest in their lives. I loved seeing my campers' faces light up when they got to talk about something that meant a lot to them.

Q. What do you want supporters to know about ZYEP Summer Camp?

A. I want supporters to know that summer camp is life changing! Being a counselor helped me develop my career path, build my self-confidence, and connect with my community. I met some of my most influential mentors through summer camp and knowing they are right here in the community is so powerful. We see so many youth who all come from different backgrounds but when we come together during summer camp, we are reminded that we are all family, connected by our Zuni culture. ZYEP Summer Camp is something that youth look forward to every summer and I cannot think of a more impactful investment for supporters who are interested in youth development.

Q. How can supporters across the country be good allies for your work?

A. Aside from their continued generous monetary contributions that make Summer Camp possible, supporters can do a few things to amplify our story. They can follow us on social media and share this campaign with their networks to help us reach our goal. Supporters can also

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also host a virtual gathering of their friends and family with a speaker from our staff. We would also love to hear what is working to support youth in other communities across the nation. We can all build a stronger world together by striving for similar goals and caring for our youth.

Q. What challenges do you face in offering this program each summer?

A. Each year, we aim to be better than the last! With that, the number of youth we serve increases. We see this as a positive challenge because we are reaching more youth in our community for this staple summer program. This means the price tag of summer camp continues to increase each year. My dream is to be able to have sufficient, self-sustaining funding for summer camp every single year. I can't wait for my son to be able to experience ZYEP Summer Camp!

Q. What memory from being a ZYEP camp counselor sticks with you the most and why?

A. I think what I cherish the most is seeing my campers today in the Zuni community. They are pursuing their dreams, being healthy, and even becoming summer camp counselors! I am so proud of who they've become and what they are striving for because when they were so young, I recognized their greatness and their potential to be the next leaders of our community.



ZYEP Staff



Summer Camp Activities

- Zuni social dance
- Zuni art
- Physical Activity
- Nutrition
- Gardening
- Hiking to culturally significant sites
- Learning Zuni language
- Free time with mentors
- Indoor/outdoor games
- Self-care

TO LEARN MORE

For more information on ZYEP Summer Camp, contact: Joe Claunch, Ph.D., (Puyallup), Executive Director, at jclaunch@zyep.org, or Tahlia Tatachu, Youth Development Coordinator, at tnatachu@zyep.org.

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Support ZYEP's Summer Camp Fund at charity.gofundme.com/zyepsummercamp