

## BOARDS & COMMISSIONS

### CANDIDATES MEMORANDUM-Denver American Indian Commission

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|------|--|
| To   | Denver City Council                    |
| From | Mayor's Office of Boards & Commissions |
| Date | 06/08/2026                             |

#### BOARD PURPOSE

The Denver American Indian (DAIC) is tasked with advising the Agency for Human Rights & Community Partnerships Executive Director and the Mayor on issues and concerns that impact and are of importance to the American Indian community.

#### APPOINTMENT CANDIDATE PROFILES

**Term Dates:** July 3, 2026- July 3, 2029



**Thomas Allen**  
 NEOGOV System  
 Adminstrator  
 He/Him  
 American Indian -Sac and  
 Fox, Northern Arapaho, and  
 Euchee

**Bio:**

Thomas Allen is a Sac and Fox, Northern Arapaho, and Euchee Native American leader who works at the intersection of community, culture, and policy. He serves as a Strategic Advisor for H.O.S.T. and S.T.A.R., supporting initiatives that center safety, accountability, and community-driven solutions. Thomas also served on the Colorado Natural Medicine Advisory Board, offering a grounded Native perspective on emerging Natural Medicine efforts and helping ensure initiatives reflect respect, responsibility, and the lived realities of Indigenous communities. Trained in trauma-informed care, Thomas brings a steady, people-first approach to complex work. He is known for collaboration—building trust across Native communities, partners, and systems while staying anchored in cultural values. His strength lies in connecting practical strategy with traditional knowledge, ensuring that plans are not only effective on paper, but meaningful to the people they affect. Guided by relational leadership and a commitment to healing, Thomas contributes insight shaped by

Male

both professional experience and cultural responsibility. He continues to advocate for approaches that honor Indigenous sovereignty, prioritize community wellness, and create space for culturally rooted practices within modern initiatives.

**Statement of Support:**

With a restructure of the American Indian Commission all candidates interviewed are moving forward to support and engage the entire American Indian/Alaskan Native and Indigenous community.

**Candidate Answers to Additional Screener Questions:**

*Describe a previous experience that demonstrates how you would approach your role.*

In my dual roles as Colorado's NEOGOV System Administrator and a Denver American Indian Commissioner, I consistently balance data-driven systems with culturally informed perspectives. When supporting Colorado's Executive Order on skills-based hiring, I relied heavily on my professional expertise in data analysis. However, data alone cannot capture the human experience. Drawing from my specialization in historical trauma and epigenetics, I know equitable policies must be shaped by the communities they impact. When addressing Native health disparities alongside organizations like the Colorado Health Fund and AARP, I prioritize community engagement over top-down directives. By synthesizing technical data with the lived realities and cultural practices of marginalized populations, I help create holistic, inclusive solutions. On the HRCP Commission, I will bring this same approach: grounding our work in factual analysis while actively elevating diverse voices to ensure our recommendations honor and protect Denver's multifaceted populations

*Describe what goals or actions of this Mayoral administration align with your personal priorities for the City.*

My priorities align strongly with Mayor Mike Johnston's administration, particularly his urgent focus on affordable housing and compassionate, equitable solutions for our unhoused neighbors. As a founding member of the Native American Housing Circle and a Strategic Advisor for Denver's Department of Housing Stability (HOST), I am deeply committed to addressing the city's housing crisis. The Mayor's dedication to transitioning unhoused populations indoors mirrors my own advocacy to ensure historically marginalized groups are not left behind in housing and health initiatives. I believe that housing stability is fundamentally tied to human dignity—a core tenet of the HRCP's mission. As a Commissioner, I would be proud to represent a city that approaches its most vulnerable populations with empathy. I aim to leverage my housing and policy experience to help translate these shared mayoral goals into actionable strategies that protect human rights across all Denver communities.

**Reappointment?** Yes

**Term Number:** 1

**For New Appointments:**

Filling an Open Seat? No

Replacing an Expiring Seat: Denver American Indian Commission is completely vacant and there are up to 21 open seats

**Appointment Process for Seat:** Mayoral Appointment, Council Confirmation

**Term Dates:** July 3, 2026- July 3, 2029



**Bio:**

Deserea Richards (Winyan, she/her) is an enrolled member of the Oglala Lakota Nation and a proud mother, wife, auntie, sister, daughter, and community member. Grounded in her Lakota identity and lived experience, her passion for her people is central to both her personal and professional work, particularly in service to Native students and community. Originally from Rapid City, South Dakota, Deserea has spent over 20 years living in the Denver metro area, which she also considers home. Her family roots extend across South Dakota, with maternal ties to the Tuthill and Martin areas and paternal roots in Porcupine and Kyle. Deserea currently serves as the Associate Director of Native/Indigenous Student Engagement and Success at Metropolitan State University of Denver (MSU Denver), a role she has held for the past three years. This position the first of its kind at MSU Denver was long envisioned by community members and is dedicated to supporting Native student success and fostering spaces where Indigenous students can thrive academically, culturally, and personally. She also serves on the Native Nations Council Affinity Group and advocates for restorative, community-centered practices and a strong Native American Studies program. Beyond the university, Deserea remains engaged in the local Native community and is active with the Indigenous

**Deserea Richards**

**Program Coordinator for  
Native/Indigenous Student  
Support Initiatives MSU  
Denver**

Winyan/She/Her  
Oglala Lakota

Female

Parent Action Committee in Cherry Creek School District. She is currently pursuing her Master of Social Work at MSU Denver, with plans to obtain her Doctor of Social Work in the future.

**Statement of Support:**

With a restructure of the American Indian Commission all candidates interviewed are moving forward to support and engage the entire American Indian/Alaskan Native and Indigenous community.

**Candidate Answers to Additional Screener Questions:**

*Describe a previous experience that demonstrates how you would approach your role.*

In my role as Associate Director of Native Student Engagement and success at MSU Denver, I work daily at the intersection of advocacy, data, and community voice. I support over 1,096 Native identifying students through relationship building, culturally grounded programming, and systems navigation. I also collaborate with faculty, leadership, and community partners to address institutional barriers. This experience has required me to hold multiple perspectives honoring lived experiences of students while navigating institutional barriers in a solutions oriented discourse. I regularly facilitate listening sessions, analyze student needs, and translate those insights into actionable strategies, which mirrors how HRCPC commissions serve as liaisons and advocates to the Mayor. I would approach this role with a commitment to accountability, cultural humility, and collaboration ensuring community voices are not only heard, but meaningfully integrated into policy and decision making processes that advance equity across Denver.

*Describe what goals or actions of this Mayoral administration align with your personal priorities for the City.*

I am aligned with this current administration's emphasis on equity, community partnerships, and expanding access to resources for historically underrepresented communities. The work of Denver's Human Rights and Community Partnerships reflects the same values that guide my professional practice (protecting human rights, strengthening community connections, and amplifying underrepresented voices). My work centers on increasing access, improving data integrity, and building pathways for student success. Priorities that mirror broader city efforts to invest in inclusive systems and community informed solutions. I am particularly inspired by initiatives that elevate community voice in decision making, support nonprofit partnerships and address disparities across education, housing and economic opportunity. Serving on this commission would allow me to contribute to Denver where policies are shaped in partnership with community, and where equity is not just a goal, but a measurable and lived outcome for all residents.

**Reappointment?** Yes

**Term Number:** Term Number One

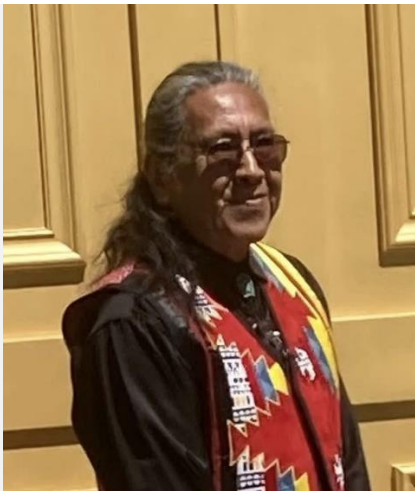
**For New Appointments:**

Filling an Open Seat? Yes

Replacing an Expiring Seat: Denver American Indian Commission is completely vacant and there are up to 21 open seats

**Appointment Process for Seat:** Mayoral Appointment, Council Confirmation

**Term Dates:** July 3, 2026- July 3, 2029



**Bio:**

Lewis Keith Tallbull

**Statement of Support:**

With a restructure of the American Indian Commission all candidates interviewed are moving forward to support and engage the entire American Indian/Alaskan Native and Indigenous community.

**Candidate Answers to Additional Screener Questions:**

*Describe a previous experience that demonstrates how you would approach your role.*

Growing up in the inner city and my experiences on my reservation I learned a lot. I was taught to think as a L/N/Dakota and look at things from a million ways or every point of view before I come to a conclusion. Today it's called thinking outside the box. I was always pushed into leadership roles on and off the reservation. The time I attended Sitting Bull College, I got elected Culture club President. I didn't run for the position. I had excused myself to go the restroom after I had been asked my point of view on our youth on the reservation. Upon my return from the restroom they nominated me as a candidate. I tried removing my name they wouldn't let me. I worked with college students and the college school board. During that time I had been put in a position as a youth coordinator in the bear soldier district. Another position I was pushed into by the chairman of the district Tom Bullhead. When all I wanted was a place to teach these young boys how to sing and make outfits for kids that wanted to dance. I advocated for my youth group with the people of the district and found myself alone in my fight to keep the gym open seven days a week. I did that for a year without being paid despite my position as a youth coordinate in the district. I've worked with the elderly throughout my life and did my best to help them. I was taught to think of others before myself my

**Lewis "Keith" TallBull**

Retired

He/Him

Southern Cheyenne

Male

grandmother was a big influence in my life. She taught me how to give without expecting in return. I remember what it was like as a kid, as a young adult and now as a person in my fifties. I don't let anger, resentment or how people feel about me affect my judgment. I've sang and helped people in my community that have talked bad about me and didn't like me. I've helped with ceremonies for these same people, helped them bury their loved ones. I don't hold grudges and have forgiven those that hurt or spoke ill of me.

*Describe what goals or actions of this Mayoral administration align with your personal priorities for the City.*

I would love to see our youth, elderly and community in general flourish. To put the unity back in community. To build our community up, not destroy it. The best way is to lead by example, I've never done things to say look at me or have ever had a hidden agenda. A lot of natives from every tribe do not want to go home for several reasons. From the politics, nepotism, and the conditions our reservations face. Housing is a major problem for our people. People with fixed incomes face going homeless. I've faced a lot of these issues myself. Before getting on the program I'm on, I worked seven days a week to survive here. I want to help be part of the solution not the problem. I want to help provide a safe place to pray, a place free of predators who prey on your young people. Every tribe has their own unique way of praying. There are many different tribes that call Denver home and I love my little community here. I have been involved with it throughout my life. I help when called upon whether it's to sing for a wake, ceremonies, the youth. For me it's a we thing, we did this, we did that. If given the chance I would love to see what we could do to help our people in our native community.

**Reappointment?** No

**Term Number:** Term One

**For New Appointments:**

Filling an Open Seat? Yes

Replacing an Expiring Seat: Name of current serving member, if applicable

**Appointment Process for Seat:** (b) Mayoral Appointment, Council Confirmation

**Term Dates:** July 3, 2026- July 3, 2029



**Alea Richardson Swinehart**  
She/Her  
Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe  
Female

**Bio:**

Hello, my name is Alea Richardson Swinehart. I live and Aurora, CO and moved to the Denver metro area in June of 2023. I am enrolled in the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe. I am married with four children. I took time off since moving here to expand my family. I am now ready to use my free time in more culturally focused arenas. I am also endeavoring to re-enter the job force. Prior to moving to the Denver metro area, I was in law enforcement for approximately 12 years. I sew, enjoy making beadwork, quill work, and pow wow regalia. I now have time available to give back to the community and wish to serve on the Denver American Indian Commission.

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**Candidate Answers to Additional Screener Questions:**

*Describe a previous experience that demonstrates how you would approach your role.*

In my time as a Criminal Investigator, I had the privilege of sitting on a multi-disciplinary team. In that role I would sit at the table with Family and Children's Services, Doctor's, Nurses, Mental Health Professionals, Tribal Representatives, School Administration, Tribal Court Prosecutor's, and vested outside agencies. We would go over and discuss sensitive cases involving children and elders of the community that needed protective services or case management. We took a holistic approach and delved into each case individually. We would decide as a team the best use of resources available and attempt to find resolution in the safest most expedited way possible. We would then reconvene and discuss success or failures and adjust as necessary. This valuable collaboration has taught me to not only sit at a table with a variety of professionals but also to have discussions, make decisions, and corrections with a spirit of mutual respect.

*Describe what goals or actions of this Mayoral administration align with your personal priorities for the City.*

I have lived in the Denver metro area for three years and have found that it is almost too expensive to work for community members with children. I researched daycare costs for parents that must pay fully out of pocket and costs can reach as high as \$20,000 dollars per year per child. When I lived and worked in Minnesota, I was always barely outside of the income brackets for assistance. It was disheartening to know that if I made just a little less, I could apply for and receive assistance. Assistance would've impacted my family's wellbeing enormously. I challenge the city to find a way to help more families outside of income guidelines and make flexible work schedules available for parents. I really respect Mayor Mike Johnstons goal to deliver a comprehensive citywide framework to expand affordable and reliable childcare.

**Reappointment?** No

**Term Number:** Term One

**For New Appointments:**

Filling an Open Seat? Yes

Replacing an Expiring Seat: Name of current serving member, if applicable

**Appointment Process for Seat:** (b) Mayoral Appointment, Council Confirmation

**Term Dates:** July 3, 2026- July 3, 2029



**Bio:**

Dustin Baird is a Lakota housing and community development professional with more than 15 years of experience working alongside Tribal Nations, Native-led organizations, small business owners, and public agencies across the United States. His work focuses on strengthening housing systems, expanding economic opportunities, and supporting effective intergovernmental collaboration grounded in Tribal sovereignty and accountability. He has led housing needs assessments in Tribal and urban communities, supported the development of Native Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs), and advanced Native homeownership initiatives nationwide, including the reintroduction of the HUD 184 loan in New York and support for the first HUD 184a loan in Hawai'i. Earlier in his career, Dustin contributed to the design and implementation of robust E911 emergency response systems serving reservations in the Dakotas. Dustin also brings extensive experience in government contracting, assisting Tribal governments and Native and locally owned small businesses in navigating federal, state, and municipal

**Dustin Baird**

Enterprise Community  
Partners Native Housing  
Program Office  
He/Him  
Lakota  
Male

procurement processes. His work emphasizes compliance, capacity building, and strategic partnerships that enable Tribes and entrepreneurs to successfully compete for and manage public contracts. He is actively engaged with Native-led organizations nationwide and maintains strong working relationships with Tribal governments in Colorado, including the Southern Ute Indian Tribe and its current Tribal Council, offering civic partners insight grounded in trusted relationships and cross-jurisdictional experience.

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**Candidate Answers to Additional Screener Questions:**

*Describe a previous experience that demonstrates how you would approach your role.*

Throughout my career, I've worked across Tribal, federal, nonprofit, and private sectors, often in roles that required bringing together diverse perspectives to move complex initiatives forward. Whether presenting before Tribal Councils, coordinating with government agencies, or working alongside community leaders, I've learned that effective decision-making starts with listening and understanding the full context of each issue. My experience spans community advocacy, strategic planning, government relations, workforce development, and complex project management, each requiring thoughtful decision making and the ability to balance policy, cultural considerations, and operational realities. I understand that effective commission service requires both independent judgment and openness to perspectives beyond one's own. I would approach my role on the HRCF Commission by bringing a broad professional lens shaped by my work with both urban and Tribal communities, a collaborative mindset, and a commitment to ensuring decisions reflect fairness, accountability, and the many distinct communities we serve.

*Describe what goals or actions of this Mayoral administration align with your personal priorities for the City.*

My priorities for Denver align with this administration's focus on equity, accountability, and inclusive community engagement particularly in how the City builds trust with historically underserved communities. I value the continued emphasis on elevating diverse voices in decision making and ensuring that policies are informed by those most impacted. I also value the administration's commitment to collaboration, bringing together community voices, local leadership, and institutional partners to address complex challenges. In my experience, lasting solutions come from that kind of coordinated approach, not isolated efforts.

Just as important is accountability, making sure commitments to communities lead to real results. I believe in being transparent, responsive, and staying grounded in how policies and decisions affect people in their everyday lives. I help when called upon whether it's to sing for a wake, ceremonies, the youth. For me it's a we thing, we did this, we did that. If given the chance I would love to see what we could do to help our people in our native community.

**Reappointment?** No

**Term Number:** Term One

**For New Appointments:**

Filling an Open Seat? Yes

Replacing an Expiring Seat: Name of current serving member, if applicable

**Appointment Process for Seat:** (b) Mayoral Appointment, Council Confirmation

**Bio:**

My name is Starlene Naranjo, I am a Full-blooded Southern Ute Tribal Elder. I reside in Denver Colo, been here for 13 years. I am a great grandmother, grandmother, mother, sister, auntie, cousin, niece and granddaughter. I come from a long line of strong Ute women who value tradition and knowledge of our culture. I am 61 yrs young. I am applying to join this commission because I feel that maybe just maybe I can help join in the fight to make this a better place for our Indigenous people here in the city of Denver and across Indian Country. I am the daughter of the late Alden B. Naranjo jr. (a gap) and the late Dorothy M. Naranjo-frost. I feel that by working together we can understand what is needed for our people and the communities we all live in. I would like to be a voice for all Indigenous people so we are forgotten people and the communities we all live in. I would like to be a voice for all Indigenous people so we are forgotten

**Statement of Support:**

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**Candidate Answers to Additional Screener Questions:**

*Describe a previous experience that demonstrates how you would approach your role.*

How do you describe knowledge? For me knowledge comes from your life experiences. All the things you were taught, shown, experienced and lived. Knowledge is something we all learn not always through school or college; it is called life.

We experience it everyday through all we do we are always learning new things from meeting people, smells, taste, sometimes we may not understand it but it is there for us to learn knowledge is what is how you approach things or people you will learn how they think, move, talk, this is knowledge.

You may not like some of the things people say but you will need to understand that not everything will go your way because we all do not think the same act the same or even live the same. Sometimes there is going to be a need to think outside the box and so you will need to learn to listen with your eyes your ears your heart and then maybe you will understand how we as Indigenous people think what their needs are their wants their dreams for a better future for our children because they are our future so we need to pave a way for them to remind them of where they come from.. We as a community as a board will need to find ways to help our Indigenous communities become strong again to come together to help each others instead of tearing each other apart we are ONE we are NATIVE we are PEOPLE not STATISTICS OR NUMBERS.

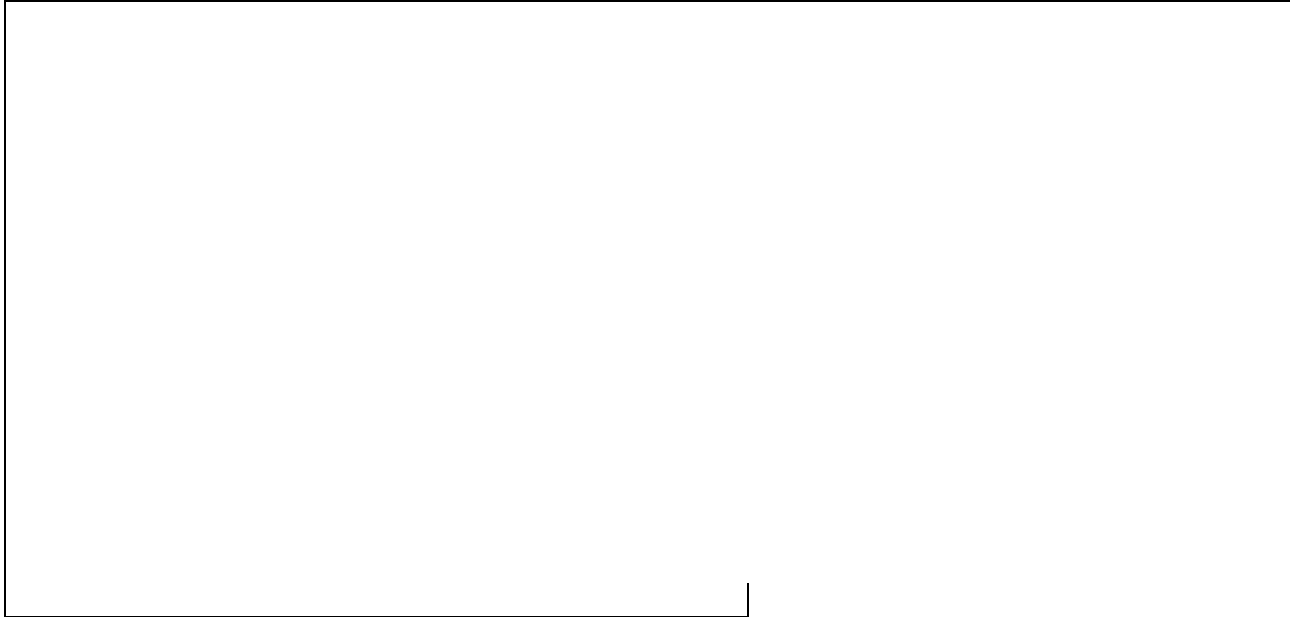
As a member of the Denver Indian Commission I would go out there to the Native communities and talk with the people hold general meeting, mingle with them get to know who you representing because we are there for them and the children who will need to know how things are done for their future. I have experienced through life that our Native people struggle for housing and all the guidelines through Federal government that has prevented some from gaining housing on or off the reservation. My example for this is my own daughter she is a handicapped person and has struggled with housing on our reservation herein Colorado, because of some red tape she is unable to have her animal with her because it goes against federal guidelines. Even though she has clearance from her doctors stating her animal is a support animal she is still being denied housing. So one of my hopes is that one day this will be understood that no matter what we as Native people will have better housing, better health care and better futures for all Indian Country.

*Describe what goals or actions of this Mayoral administration align with your personal priorities for the City.*

If elected to this board I would act accordingly to help Indigenous people here, throughout Colorado, and even beyond our state to understand that we as Native people are here and we are not going anywhere. I would go out among the people and sit down to understand how they feel.

My goal is for us to come together as a community and a city partnership to help us through actions, not just words, because "actions speak louder than words." I would like better communication among us, and for everyone to feel comfortable speaking up for us. I want this city and other non-native communities to form a better, healthier relationship. I would represent my State My HOME as proudly as I can because I am Southern Ute and I am proud of where I come from... Colorado. We all need to represent ourselves the best way we can and know how to do so. One goal is to have a voice to speak up for us in any involvement with the city and state of Colorado. To ensure our cultures and ways do not go unnoticed or unrecognized, we must not let them be "swept under the rug," so to speak. We need a partnership that will allow progress toward making the City and State better—a partnership aiming for the same goal: a better State for all to call home.

**Term Number:** **Term Number One** |



**Term Dates:** July 3, 2026- July 3, 2029



**Marsha Whiting**  
Assoc Director of  
Grantmaking, First Nations  
Development Institute  
She/Her  
Chippewa Cree Tribe &  
Sicangu Lakota  
Female

**Bio:**

Marsha Whiting is an enrolled member of the Chippewa Cree Tribe and also Sicangu Lakota. She currently serves as the Associate Director of Grantmaking at First Nations Development Institute, a role she returned to in 2023. With nearly 20 years of experience in Native nonprofits, Marsha has dedicated her career to strengthening both urban and reservation communities. Prior to her current role, Marsha served as Operations Director and Interim Executive Director at the Denver Indian Family Resource Center. Born and raised in Denver, Colorado, she draws inspiration from her maternal grandparents to remain an active and engaged member of the Denver Native American community. Marsha's family carries a proud legacy of service, with four generations involved in Native nonprofits. That tradition continues with her daughter, Autumn, who currently works at Native Americans in Philanthropy.

**Statement of Support:**

With a restructure of the American Indian Commission all candidates interviewed are moving forward to support and

engage the entire American Indian/Alaskan Native and Indigenous community.

**Candidate Answers to Additional Screener Questions:**

*Describe a previous experience that demonstrates how you would approach your role.*

Did not complete

*Describe what goals or actions of this Mayoral administration align with your personal priorities for the City.*

Did not complete.

**Reappointment?**

**Term Number:** Term Number One

**For New Appointments:**

Filling an Open Seat? Yes

Replacing an Expiring Seat: Denver American Indian Commission is completely vacant and there are up to 21 open seats

**Appointment Process for Seat:** Mayoral Appointment, Council Confirmation

**Term Dates:** July 3, 2026- July 3, 2029



**Alexis Vigil**  
Program Administrator, DPS  
Native American Culture &  
Education  
She/They  
Western Shoshone-Temoak  
Female

**Bio:**

Alexis Rain is a born and raised urban indian of Denver, local community organizer, poet and full time traditional knowledge keeper. Both Chicana and Western Shoshone she is deeply rooted in the city that raised her. She is motivated to be a helping force; and has always centered herself in community care and movement building. From grants to budgeting, her efforts to increase food security is at the forefront of everything she has done. She is critically aware of the pitfalls her neighbors experience so in her position as a Denver Public Library worker she bridged language and digital gaps for patrons, and built pathways for community building within her community center. As a Denver Public School/ NACE (Native American Culture and Education) alumni she has stepped into her current position with reverence. She is carving a path for her students rooted in cultural and spiritual care, efforts that she wished for as a student. Alexis has brought in many community connections within her classroom so that once students leave it they may still call upon the community connections made.

**Statement of Support:**

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**Candidate Answers to Additional Screener Questions:**

*Describe a previous experience that demonstrates how you would approach your role.*

In my role, Indigenous Rural Liaison at the Yavapai Community Action Network, I worked in a non-partisan campaign to

Female

increase voter registration specifically around native voters on local reservations. I was intentional with my relationship building with the Prescott Yavapai Apache Nation as their land is typically closed off to outsiders. I spent time in the local smoke shop owned by a tribal elder until I was invited into the community to begin outreach. I selected and trained a team to conduct our research with culturally informed practices to bring folks into our movement. On the Denver American Indian Commission, I would focus on building strong modes of communication and trust in my professional capacity to ensure equitable representation for our community.

*Describe what goals or actions of this Mayoral administration align with your personal priorities for the City.*

I am appreciative of this Mayoral administration's commitment to making Denver more family friendly. As an educator I am always trying to connect my students to the broader Denver Community encouraging them to begin networking now. The goal to get students into extra programming and begin building their work experience is invaluable support in their transition into adulthood.

**Reappointment?** Yes

**Term Number:** Term Number One

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**Term Dates:** July 3, 2026- July 3, 2029



**Bio:**

My name is Nee'eesiii'oo Biixonoo (Growing Plume). My English name is Rhyia JoyHeart. I was born into the Northern Arapaho, Eastern Shoshone & Flathead Nations. My family is from the Wind River Indian Reservation in Fort Washakie, Wyoming. I am the great granddaughter of James "Louie" and Eva Enos. I am the 7th grandchild of Angelo and Sharon (Enos) Ortegon. I am the daughter of Ruby Ortegon Thayer and Russell Thayer Dale Jr. I am a sister, auntie and friend. I currently reside in Arvada, Colorado. I work in the Behavioral Health Dept. at Denver Indian Health and Family Services as a Peer Navigator and I am working towards my Peer Support Specialist Certification. I am completing my Tribal Leadership degree at Central Wyoming College. I am the co-founder and Director of Indigenous Corporation 5280 (IndigeCorp5280).

**Rhyia Lopez**  
Peer Navigator Denver Indian Health & Family Services  
She/Her  
Northern Arapaho, Eastern Shoshone & Flathead Nations  
Female

Thank you for this opportunity to advocate for our local indigenous community.  
**Statement of Support:**  
With a restructure of the American Indian Commission all candidates interviewed are moving forward to support and engage the entire American Indian/Alaskan Native and Indigenous community.

**Candidate Answers to Additional Screener Questions:**  
*Describe a previous experience that demonstrates how you would approach your role.*  
*Describe what goals or actions of this Mayoral administration align with your personal priorities for the City.*

**Reappointment?** Yes  
**For New Appointments:**  
Filling an Open Seat? Yes  
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**Appointment Process for Seat:** Mayoral Appointment, Council Confirmation

**Term Dates:** July 3, 2026- July 3, 2029



**Tiera Brown**  
Transformative Justice Project Of Colorado, Believe in Youth Program Director and Case Manager  
She/Her  
Northern Ute

**Bio:** Tiera Brown is a dedicated public servant, community organizer, and fierce advocate for youth and marginalized communities. With a distinct focus on expanding access to justice and strengthening legal representation, she has built a career centered on uplifting BIPOC, immigrant, and system-impacted youth through direct litigation, policy work, and community education. She has previously worked in the Colorado Department of Education’s Dispute Resolution Unit handling special education centered state complaints filed by families. She was selected as the 2022 Gault Center Fellow where she helped strengthen the quality of legal representation for system-impacted youth. Tiera previously worked at the Colorado State Public Defenders Office, assisting in the representation of youth with felony and misdemeanor cases. Presently, Tiera provides pro bono legal representation to victims of domestic violence through Volunteer Legal Advocates, and to Colorado youth in need of

Female

expungement and deregistration assistance through TJP's Believe in Youth program. She also provides legal research support to the Office of Alternate Defense Counsel. Tiera currently serves as the Officer of Community Action and Advocacy for the Colorado Women's Bar Association and leads the policy committee of the Sam Cary Bar Association. She is also a volunteer for Learn Your Rights in the Community (LYRIC), where she donates her time to educate and empower Colorado youth to exercise their constitutional rights. Tiera graduated from the University of Denver Sturm College of Law in 2020 after receiving her bachelor's from Boston College. Tiera lives in Denver, Colorado with her son, their ball python, Kyle, and their growing collection of over fifty houseplant

Statement of Support:

With a restructure of the American Indian Commission all candidates interviewed are moving forward to support and engage the entire American Indian/Alaskan Native and Indigenous community.

**Candidate Answers to Additional Screener Questions:**

*Describe a previous experience that demonstrates how you would approach your role.*

The core of my life's work and the values that I embody everyday include reindigenizing, radical love, anti-racism, and collective care. I move through the world treating everybody that I meet as a human with their own lived experience that influences the way that they move through the world. I seek out work and opportunities that allow me to care for marginalized identities. I am constantly looking at myself introspectively and using what I learn to do better and grow. These values and the things I care about are evident when you look at my career as a public servant going back to 2018, the year I started law school. I've been in helping professions such as the public defenders office, The Gault Center, juvenile justice, special education, and now I work at one of the fastest growing community organizations in the state that seeks to abolish the school to prison pipeline.

*Describe what goals or actions of this Mayoral administration align with your personal priorities for the City.*

*I care about the mayor's goals of decreasing homelessness and providing safe living areas for our unhoused neighbors. I am strongly interested in public safety as well. However, I do approach public safety from a lense of community care, and not necessarily increasing police budgets. I think that the mayor has an interest in providing safe spaces for youth and ensuring that youth violence decreases, these are personal priorities that I work towards in my everyday life as well.*

**Reappointment?** Yes

**Term Number:** Term Number One

**For New Appointments:**

Filling an Open Seat? Yes

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**Term Dates:** July 3, 2026- July 3, 2029



**Bio:**

A proud Lakota Denver resident for more than 50 years, Bob Ironshield is a respected cultural leader dedicated to strengthening Indigenous identity, community wellness, and intergenerational connection. Grounded in Lakota values and lived experience, Bob has spent decades helping create spaces where Native people can gather, learn, and thrive. Bob previously served as a Youth Coordinator in Standing Rock, supporting young people through mentorship, cultural programming, and community-centered leadership during a historic moment of unity and resilience. This work reflects a long-standing commitment to uplifting Native youth and ensuring they have access to culture, guidance, and opportunity. In Denver, Bob is a co-founder of Indigenous Corporation 5280, a Native dance group formed to celebrate Indigenous traditions, promote cultural education, and build visibility for Native peoples in the metro area. Through performances and community events, the group helps preserve songs and dances while welcoming others to learn with respect. Bob also serves as President of the nonprofit

**Robert IronShield**

Construction

He/Him

Standing Rock Sioux Tribe

Male

Red Hand Society, advancing advocacy, cultural empowerment, and mutual support for Indigenous families. Through leadership, collaboration, and service, Bob continues to honor community responsibilities and inspire future generations..

**Statement of Support:**

With a restructure of the American Indian Commission all candidates interviewed are moving forward to support and engage the entire American Indian/Alaskan Native and Indigenous community.

**Candidate Answers to Additional Screener Questions:**

*Describe a previous experience that demonstrates how you would approach your role.*

Growing up in the inner city and my experiences on my reservation I learned a lot. I was taught to think as a L/N/Dakota and look at things from a million ways or every point of view before I come to a conclusion. Today it's called thinking outside the box. I was always pushed into leadership roles on and off the reservation. The time I attended Sitting Bull College, I got elected Culture club President. I didn't run for the position. I had excused myself to go the restroom after I had been asked my point of view on our youth on the reservation. Upon my return from the restroom they nominated me as a candidate. I tried removing my name they wouldn't let me. I worked with college students and the college school board. During that time I had been put in a position as a youth coordinator in the bear soldier district. Another position I was pushed into by the chairman of the district Tom Bullhead. When all I wanted was a place to teach these young boys how to sing and make outfits for kids that wanted to dance. I advocated for my youth group with the people of the district and found myself alone in my fight to keep the gym open seven days a week. I did that for a year without being paid despite my position as a youth coordinate in the district. I've worked with the elderly throughout my life and did my best to help them. I was taught to think of others before myself my grandmother was a big influence in my life. She taught me how to give without expecting in return. I remember what it was like as a kid, as a young adult and now as a person in my fifties. I don't let anger, resentment or how people feel about me affect my judgment. I've sang and helped people in my community that have talked bad about me and didn't like me. I've helped with ceremonies for these same people, helped them bury their loved ones. I don't hold grudges and have forgiven those that hurt or spoke ill of me

*Describe what goals or actions of this Mayoral administration align with your personal priorities for the City.*

I would love to see our youth, elderly and community in general flourish. To put the unity back in community. To build our community up, not destroy it. The best way is to lead by example, I've never done things to say look at me or have ever had a hidden agenda. A lot of natives from every tribe do not

want to go home for several reasons. From the politics, nepotism, and the conditions our reservations face. Housing is a major problem for our people. People with fixed incomes face going homeless. I've faced a lot of these issues myself. Before getting on the program I'm on, I worked seven days a week to survive here. I want to help be part of the solution not the problem. I want to help provide a safe place to pray, a place free of predators who prey on your young people. Every tribe has their own unique way of praying. There are many different tribes that call Denver home and I love my little community here. I have been involved with it throughout my life. I help when called upon whether it's to sing for a wake, ceremonies, the youth. For me it's a we thing, we did this, we did that. If given the chance I would love to see what we could do to help our people in our native community.

**Reappointment?** Yes

**Term Number:** Term Number One

**For New Appointments:**

Filling an Open Seat? Yes

Replacing an Expiring Seat: Denver American Indian Commission is completely vacant and there are up to 21 open seats

**Appointment Process for Seat:** Mayoral Appointment, Council Confirmation

**Term Dates:** July 3, 2026- July 3, 2029

Insert Photo

**Bio:**

Joshua is a Dine' (Navajo) comedian based in Denver. Named one of the "Five Artists to Watch in 2025" by WestWord Magazine, Joshua was selected for the Mayors Award for Excellence in Arts & Culture in 2023. Joshua produces a Native American comedy showcase, "Bad Indian," at clubs and festivals all over the country, including Netflix is a Joke and SF Sketchiest. Joshua believes in community, serving on the Denver American Indian Commission as well as on the Board of the Denver Philharmonic Orchestra. In 2023, Joshua received the Mayors Award for Excellence in Arts & Culture. He lives at home with his partner, Rachel, and their pets, Lola, Henry, and Joanna.

**Statement of Support:**

**Joshua Emerson**

Native Comedy

He/Him

Navajo Nation

Male

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**Candidate Answers to Additional Screener Questions:**

*Describe a previous experience that demonstrates how you would approach your role.*

Did not answer

*Describe what goals or actions of this Mayoral administration align with your personal priorities for the City.*

Did not answer

**Reappointment?** Yes

**Term Number:** Term Number One

**For New Appointments:**

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