

Honoring Native American Heritage Month



Left photo: Maria Anderson, Director, Community Relations, shows a collection of cherished items that belonged to her great grandmother Mattie Buffalo (grinding stone and arrow), and a cradleboard, willow pine nut basket, moccasins and beadwork made by her grandmother, Josephine Buffalo Billie. Right photo: Aubree Barnum, VP, Human Resources (right), with her late grandmother, Dorothy B. Dick Yribar (left).

November 22, 2023

November is [Native American Heritage Month](#), a time to celebrate the traditions, stories and languages of Native American, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian and affiliated Island communities.

Lithium Americas (LAC) is committed to building collaborative and mutually beneficial relationships with local and Indigenous communities by proactively collaborating with key stakeholders to ensure we are addressing interests and incorporating concerns into project planning and business decisions. Respecting the rights, culture, aspirations and interests of Indigenous Peoples who neighbor LAC's operations is a priority.

Thacker Pass is founded on a decade of feedback through community engagement, and designed reflecting information collected during numerous stakeholder meetings, open houses and engagement with the Fort McDermitt Paiute and Shoshone Tribes.

LAC began local hiring even before the project's construction phase. More than 60 tribal members have expressed interest in working at Thacker Pass. So far, 14 tribal members have been hired from the Fort McDermitt Tribe and the Duck Valley Shoshone Paiute Tribe. This is a significant number, considering the Fort McDermitt reservation's population of approximately 300 people. LAC is committed to hiring locally to the greatest extent possible.

LAC joins in paying tribute to the rich ancestry and traditions of Native Americans as part of our commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), and our ongoing efforts to increase the representation of underrepresented populations in our communities and within our organization.

Following is a spotlight of two LAC Native American employees in celebration of Native American Heritage Month.

Native American Heritage Month Spotlight: LAC Winnemucca Office
Maria Anderson, Director, Community Relations



Maria Anderson, Director, Community Relations, shows a collection of cherished items that belonged to her great grandmother Mattie Buffalo (grinding stone and arrow), and a cradleboard, willow pine nut basket, moccasins and beadwork made by her grandmother, Josephine Buffalo Billie.

Maria Anderson, Director, Community Relations, is a member of the Te-Moak Tribe of Western Shoshone Indians, and was raised in Elko, Nevada. Maria works in LAC's Winnemucca Office where she directs community engagement and carries out the company's commitment to working closely with the local communities, forming partnerships with local businesses to sustainably drive economic growth as we develop the Thacker Pass project in Humboldt County, northern Nevada.

"My maternal great grandparents, grandparents, uncles, aunts are from Beowawe, NV, living in the area from the early 1800's to the 1980's. My mother and all her siblings were born in Beowawe, residing there until they moved with my grandparents to the South Fork Indian Reservation in Lee, NV. I am very proud of my Native heritage and blessed beyond words to be raised by my mother and grandparents who taught me our native culture and passed down many family traditions, which I now share and pass on to my two daughters and granddaughters."

"I was honored to provide care for both my grandparents and mother during their end of life, which is so meaningful to me. To honor my mother, I established the Dorothy B. Dick Yribar Gift to Life Scholarship through the Great Basin College Foundation. The scholarship is designed to support upper-division students residing in Elko and Humboldt counties as they pursue a degree in nursing at Great Basin College. My mother dreamed of becoming a Registered Nurse but did not have the funding to pursue a college education. The first scholarship was awarded October 13, 2023, to an Elko student pursuing a bachelor's degree in nursing."

Maria says that having the opportunity to be leading community engagement efforts for an organization with significant outreach and service to Native Americans is meaningful with her ancestry.

"When learning about the community relations role with Lithium Americas, I was intrigued to hear LAC is actively engaging with the Fort McDermitt Paiute and Shoshone Tribe. Thacker Pass is having a positive impact on our state, local communities and the Fort McDermitt Tribe by providing family supporting jobs and long-term employment thus changing many lives. I am very grateful for the many people who have helped me along the way, and in turn I want to help others and provide support to as many people as I can. This position allows me to engage with community members, understand their needs and help lead efforts in investing in our local communities, allowing for a better place for residents to live and work."

LAC is committed to continuing ongoing engagement with the Fort McDermitt Paiute and Shoshone Tribe. LAC signed a Community Benefits Agreement with the Tribe which supports ongoing dialogue, job opportunities, workforce development training and improvements to the community such as the construction of a new community center with a pre-school.

“Fort McDermitt residents have limited resources. It’s not uncommon for residents of the tribe to move away for better employment opportunities, due to the lack of good paying jobs near the reservation. Thacker Pass will allow tribe members to return to their families and community, earn a good living that provides for their families and help support their elders.”

Native American Heritage Month Spotlight: LAC Executive Leadership Aubree Barnum, VP, Human Resources



Aubree Barnum, VP, Human Resources (right), with her late grandmother, Dorothy B. Dick Yribar (left).

Aubree Barnum, VP, Human Resources is of the Western Shoshone descent. Based in the Reno office, she oversees the human resources function that support LAC’s DEI vision of cultivating and sustaining an inclusive culture that embraces diverse backgrounds and inspires each professional to achieve their highest potential in a supportive and equitable work environment.

“I am honored to be of Native heritage. I grew up learning about the culture from my great grandparents, my grandmother and my mother. When I was younger, I learned how to jingle dance and loved participating in pow wows, dancing to the beat of the drum. I was very close to my grandmother and I always listened intently and in fascination of her stories, and loved hearing her sing songs in the Shoshone language.”

“Given the connection I have with my Native heritage, it’s extremely meaningful to be leading HR efforts for a company, such as LAC, that has significant outreach to underrepresented groups with limited resources, such as the Native American community. I’m proud to work for a company that proactively supports workforce development and skills training, and provides greater access to employment opportunities for the local tribal members.”

Employment opportunities for Humboldt County, Fort McDermitt Paiute and Shoshone Tribe locals

“We are creating family-supporting paying, long-term career opportunities for locals and their families,” said Aubree. As LAC continues to advance Thacker Pass from construction to operations, the full-time workforce will continue to grow significantly. Currently, LAC has 65 full-time employees throughout the U.S., and expects to have more than 300 full-time employees once Thacker Pass is fully operational.

LAC will have a variety of full-time and part-time job opportunities with both LAC and with contractors. Positions will range from equipment operators, laborers, drilling technicians and processing plant positions, including experienced/skilled operators, electricians, maintenance technicians and various other skilled trades roles. There will also be numerous entry-level positions with training opportunities for the processing plant.

“LAC is making great progress in not only providing increased opportunities for the local Native community, but also fulfilling our commitment to hiring, locally wherever possible,” said Aubree. “LAC currently has 14 Native Americans employed, including full-time, part-time and contractor employees, some of whom had previously successfully completed LAC’s equipment operator training.”

To learn more about employment opportunities at LAC and how together, we can reshape our future, visit: lithiumamericas.com/careers/.

###