ecosystems of Care & Safety
2022 marked a change in the way we work here at UTOPIA Washington. Whereas the last three years had been focused on recovery and response, this year prioritized sustainable growth as we explore what the future of this work may look like. The climate - both socially and ecologically - is changing around us, and our work must evolve alongside it.

Analysis building has been at the core of our commitment to sustainable growth, developed through collaborative strategic planning. By connecting staff, executives, community members, and allies, we have painted a picture of the inequities faced by our people, and explored pathways to combat oppression wherever it occurs.

This work started with our internal staff team, who came together for a multi-day strategic planning retreat in mid 2022. During this retreat we explored the 'why' behind UTOPIA Washington, and developed strategies to move the work forward collaboratively with our community. We continued our strategic planning efforts with the QTPI retreat in August, which opened the space to all fa'afafine, fa'atane, leitī, māhū wahine, māhū kāne, vakasalewalewa, palopa, akava'ine, lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, intersex, asexual, gender nonconforming, and gender diverse Pacific Islanders in Washington. This event centered talanoa, cultural revitalization, and fellowship, and gave us deeper insight into the needs and experiences of the people we serve.

In addition to analysis building, we have turned inward and focused heavily on team building throughout 2022. We brought more people to the table, reassessed how we divide our labor, further developed our benefits, and even expanded our community clinic to a second location to accommodate the growth of our programming. We believe in the capacity of our people to be leaders, and these changes reflect that - we are giving the time, space, and resources needed to allow those empowering this work to thrive.

Throughout all this, our focus remained on Black and Brown organizing - especially that already occurring within our communities. We formed and participated in coalitions, cohorts, and other networks centering our people, and listened intently to the lived experiences of our Black and indigenous kin when planning our steps for the coming years.

We are so grateful for the continued support of our community, our staff, and everyone else who makes this work possible. UTOPIA Washington has grown to be a cultural home for many of us, and I am honored to be at the forefront of what we are creating here together.

In Solidarity,

Taffy Maene-Johnson
Executive Director
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descendants of voyagers, lovers, warriors, peninsula people, villagers, nature co-dwellers, Tongan and Samoan wayfinders, ancestors from a time where our existence was not a thought, but a dream, of hope and ambition;

descendants of Indian, indentured slaves who made it through Colonialism and draconian leadership, descendants of Egyptian royalty who voyaged from Tanganyika o the Kaunitoni and settled in Uluda i Vuda;

children of a father's marital disciplines and mother's tough-love beatings, parents who loved and feared the Lord, a woman whose family was built on the backs of unapologetic, fearless, and strong women, a grandpa who brought our extended Aiga, nu'u, and ekalesia together;

descendants of the Land of the Rising Sun, Manu'atele, Tutuila, Savai'i, Tongatapu, St. Helena, and South Africa where the soils are enriched with the DNA of our ancestors, where Tō Sua Ocean trench meets the mist of Aleipata, Lady Taema le Tama'ita'i Sā of Tutuila, musicians from Salailua Savai'i and Magiagi, Apia; farmers and fisher people who stewarded the highest point of settlement on Tutuila island.

the smell of vaisū with ‘ulu tunu with freshly squeezed pe’epe’e topping with israelau tunu, salt spray of the ocean, sweet dried skin under the Southern sun, wet muddy grass and thick smoke on early Sunday mornings, rain early in the morning and late at night;

soot and ash when smoking breadfruit and roasted pork on a Sunday afternoon, smell of our mother’s deliciously spiced curry with enough heat to spark up our lives, freshly cooked rice scooped in steel bowls steaming out the sides, sweet and sour caramelizing on the burning wok, fresh moso’oi and the smell of burning sugar for an evening pot of kopai;

Qei’s burnt brown sugar when she makes Purini ni her kuro makawa ena delani buka, Mom’s homemade Sapa Sui on the return home from school and the smell of the Salish Sea in Dad's hugs after his shift at Todds Ship Yard, grandmother’s Sunday church musky perfume, blended with a fresh aroma of brewed koko Samoa, grandmother’s coconut oiled hair, wrapped in a circular coil, pinned with a gardenia, grandmother's sweet fragrance made from the Laga’ali and coconut plant;

fasi povi masima and fa'alifu taro after second session of church, mother’s Avapui hid underneath her bed, morning dew on green grass scented with blooming moso’oi flowers, mommy’s puligi steaming for hours in the ‘umu, mother’s baby oil blended with Calvin Klein Obsession perfume that leaves an uncertainty scent as it settles into the skin, Vicks on my chest, mother’s best perfumes, and pikake on a warm day;

We are UTOPIA Washington.
What began as a living conversation in 2009 between a group of fa'aafafine spearheaded by our fierce leader, Taffy Maene-Johnson, has grown and, with this Strategic Plan, now lays the groundwork for the next 3 years for UTOPIA Washington.

The last 9 months have been quite engaging for the UTOPIA Staff as we moved to expand the organization’s vision - **A world of abundance, autonomy, and harmony, where all forms of supremacy cease to exist for all life.** Many of our staff were learning to navigate the nonprofit industrial complex not having had previous experience in the nonprofit sector. We wanted to challenge staff to be expansive in their thinking through a series of visioning and brainstorming exercises. This clear vision carries greater weight in light of the pandemic and its impact on marginalized communities, health and socio-economic systems. We witnessed how destructive we have been with the land and for all life for we disrupt ecosystems under the notion that we are superior to all life including the planet and are exempt from biodiversity.

With our new vision and mission, UTOPIA Washington is invested in building sustainable ecosystems of care and safety for ourselves as workers, for our loved ones, the broader community, and with the land. UTOPIA WA aims to use key race-gender-class transformative strategies with the aim of building community power, analysis, and accountable leaders, skilling up our communities, securing our cultural home for the powerful history and legacy of this organization. We believe we can deepen our relationships without sacrificing breadth starting the relationship we hold with ourselves, our families, our community, and with the land, expanding, sharing, and co-creating this work with local, national, and global leaders and organizations who’ve been activated due to the visibility and impact of UTOPIA’s work transcending borders.

It is with an immense sense of privilege to be guided by the connection our people have to our ancestors, cultural practices, and language. Our capacity to organize and connect as queer and trans Pacific Islanders is one of many superpowers we possess and we have the responsibility to push ahead with vigor and commitment, guided by our Strategic Plan 2023-2026, to fight for collective liberation while also being in deep, intentional relationship with Black and Native communities whose connections were impacted, if not severed, due to a long history of slavery, genocide, erasure, and colonization.

We eagerly look forward to the next 3 years and to creating sustainable ways to care for our bodies, loved ones, our community, and the land.
Since 2009, UTOPIA has worked with fierce, femme, tender QTPI (queer-trans-Pacific-Islander) leaders to create and sustain a safe, welcoming, vibrant space for our communities to address basic needs, pool resources and provide mutual aid to one another, and lay the foundation for our cultural home which would serve as an anchor for communities to strengthen their connections to the land, ties to family, and more. UTOPIA was positioned well as a convener, building bridges between the Pasifika people the 2SLGBTQIA+ community.

UTOPIA is led and founded by indigenous women of color, identifying as transgender, fa’afafine, cisgender, etc. Fa’afafine is a cultural gender identity native to Samoa translated as “in the manner of a women.” This term is an umbrella term for all LGBTQIA+ people who are policed due to their proximity to women. This cultural identity and many others from the Pasifika region play an integral role in the way we care and fight for the liberation of Black/Indigenous/Queer/Trans/People-of-Color.

Since it’s inception, UTOPIA Washington has fought to empower and support our community members in advocating for their rights as workers, tenants, students, parents, and as community members. Founder, Executive Director, and fierce Fa’afafine Leader, Taffy Maene-Johnson saw an influx in the forced migration of QTPI folks to the Pacific Northwest in search of opportunities, gender affirming care, higher education, support families back in the islands, and other plans to improve their conditions, yet they were facing hardships in securing employment, housing, and other basic needs due to race-gender-class based discrimination. Community members were often engaging in survival sex work and working hard labor jobs where they aren’t being paid a livable wage and their rights are often violated.

UTOPIA Washington will continue to fight for the occupational health and safety of sex workers, autonomy for the land and our own bodies. We honor the labor, brilliance, and heart work of elders, sex workers, and many others who’ve helped us grow.

Since becoming a 501c3 organization in 2012, the visibility of Pasifika trans women and fa’afafine on social media and on the ground brought new life to UTOPIA chapters across the country and the genesis of new sibling chapters across the world.

UTOPIA Washington will continue work to shift culture and public understanding around 2SLGBTQIA+ communities within the Pasifika community and with the general public. We honor the love and commitment to the work by those who’ve come before us.
our Mission

We are actively replacing systems of oppression with **ecosystems of care and safety** for all our communities through Black and Brown organizing, prioritizing land and bodily autonomy, and reclaiming our cultural narratives.
our Vision

A world of *abundance, autonomy, and harmony*, where all forms of supremacy cease to exist for all life.
Principled Struggle - engaging in generative conflict rooted in deep love and care that helps us grow as people together

Intersectional, experiential, and cultural knowledge - our communities have the fullest picture of our shared narrative, trust it.

Agency with Urgency - centering the self determination of community members and community as a whole while taking urgent action

Sustainability - through connection to community and land - honoring our connection to all life through our Moana cultural practices

MANAfesto
Self-care and safety is interdependent on the care and safety of the broader community. We are inherently actualized and our worth isn’t tied to our ability to produce.

Ensuring one’s safety, meeting basic needs, and creating sustainable conditions for our quality of life is both an individual and community responsibility.

Respect for others and by others from a place of care, not based on ableist, capitalist views on who is dignified and worthy of respect.

Normalizing the importance and need for intimacy, friendships, and family for Black and Brown 2SLGBTQIA+ communities.

Caring for all life, the planet that cares for us, each other, and future generations.
Strategic Priorities

CREATE
the MANAscript and it’s cultural home

BUILD
sustainable ecosystems of care and safety

DEEPEN
our relationships at all fractals

EXPAND
the work across the Pasifika Global Village

ACTIVATE
our Communities

UTOPIA WASHINGTON
Skill Up Our People

Co-Create & Implement Cross-Cultural Strategy in All Areas of Our Work

Give Power To & Share Power With Community Through Intentional, Collective Leadership
Practice Care & Safety at all fractals

Build & Share Community Wealth, Knowledge, & Resources

Shift Culture through Public Education & Messaging Research to Create Real Safety

EverGreen Our Environments

SPEaC CHANGE into Action systems, policy, environmental & culture change work
Collect Our Stories, Own Our Data, & Let Our Communities Tell Their Own Stories

Make The MANAscript Accessible to All Our Communities

Co-Create the Cultural Home for the MANAscript with Our Community
FAMILY

COMMUNITY

THE LAND

SELF

DEEPEN OUR RELATIONSHIPS AT ALL FRACTALS
Deepen Multi-Generational & Multi-Cultural Relationships

Create Alignment at the Local / National / Global Level

Build Trust & Capacity, Share Power across the Pasifika Global Village
UTOPIA Washington offers our most sincere thank you for all the generous community and foundation support invested in our work in 2022. We are honored and humbled to be stewards of these resources; seeing them make such a positive impact in the lives of our community members.

2023 will be a year of greater analysis building and internal development, starting with the results of our recent strategic planning. We will be announcing our new mission, vision, and values shortly, as well as our plan for the next three years of UTOPIA Washington. We are excited to get your feedback and work with our community to further these efforts.

Thank you to all who made 2022 possible, and to those continuing to support this work in 2023.