

FRIENDS OF WATERFRONT PARK ANNOUNCES 2026 SUMMER SEASON (MAY THROUGH SEPTEMBER)



Building on a Record 6.8 million total visitors in 2025, the 2026 season is a citywide invitation to gather, celebrate, and meet at Waterfront Park

Additional programming during the World Cup weeks forthcoming

Seattle, WA — After welcoming more than [3.4 million people](#) to Seattle's reimagined central waterfront during its landmark [2025 Grand Opening Season](#), Friends of Waterfront Park today announces its [2026 Programming Season](#), running **May through September**—a bold, community-centered calendar of free events, cultural festivals, public art, and new creative residencies that mark the park's first full summer as a complete 20-acre civic space.

This dynamic season is anchored by signature events like Waterfront Block Party, Indigiqueer Festival, and Salmon Homecoming; a robust weekly rhythm of wellness, markets, and performances; and new investments in **community-led placemaking and storytelling**—including a Writer in Residence program with [Owen Oliver](#) and a series of temporary art installations shaped by community committees.

The 2026 season reflects a deliberate evolution: from introduction to belonging. If 2025 introduced Waterfront Park to Seattle, this summer invites the city to return—to build rituals, deepen connections, and see itself reflected across the waterfront.

"Waterfront Park was always envisioned as a place where Seattle comes together—not just for major moments, but in ways that reflect the everyday life, culture, and creativity of this city," said Hewan Teshome, Board co-chair of Friends of Waterfront Park. "What you see in this season is the result of years of partnership-building and community leadership. It's a park shaped by many voices, and a season that truly belongs to Seattle."

"This season is about going deeper—grounding our work in Indigenous knowledge and continuing to build the waterfront through community-led placemaking," said Yoon Kang O'Higgins, Senior Director of Community Impact and Programs at Friends of Waterfront Park. "At the same time, our programming is expanding who sees themselves here—welcoming communities who haven't historically been present on the waterfront and creating new pathways for people to gather, celebrate, and connect."

HIGHLIGHTED EVENTS OF THE 2026 SEASON

Indigiqueer Festival — Saturday, June 27, 2:00–8:00 pm, Pier 62

Now in its fifth year, the Indigiqueer Festival returns to Waterfront Park during Pride Weekend for a joyful, unapologetic celebration of Two-Spirit, Queer, and Trans Indigenous artistry. The festival features performances from Aiyana Reid, Kitty Keene, and Cherri Bepsi—a Two-Spirit Indigenous drag performer—alongside an artist market and workshops with Indigiqueer creatives from across the Pacific Northwest. Co-presented with Gathered in This Place. Free; registration highly encouraged.

Waterfront Block Party — Saturday, August 29, 1:00–8:00 pm, Pier 62, Salish Steps & Pier 58

The season's largest gathering returns for its fifth year, activating the full park across three distinct zones: a main stage and celebration hub at Pier 62 featuring local reggae icon, Clinton Fearon and the Boogie Brown Band, Indigenous funk band, Khu.éex', synth-pop rock band RUB, Latin jazz ensemble Todo Es, and a beer garden; participatory community workshops and hands-on experiences such as a Hustle and Soul workshop with Rhythm for the People, Bollywood Dance with Rhythms of India and a Movement Workshop with AIM (Accessible & Inclusive Movement) at Salish Steps; cultural dance and performance programming centering heritage and cross-cultural exchange such as Khmer Community of King County, Sunshine from Polynesia, and featuring ACES (Artists of Color Expo & Symposium) DJs all day at Pier 58. Partners include the Seattle Art Museum, Downtown Seattle Association, and the Seattle Historical Waterfront Association. Friends anticipates 15,000–18,000 attendees. Free; registration highly encouraged.

Salmon Homecoming — Saturday, September 19, 10:00 am–8:00 pm, Pier 58 & Pier 62

Friends of Waterfront Park is honored to partner with the Salmon Homecoming Alliance for the 34th annual Salmon Homecoming, one of the Pacific Northwest's most enduring celebrations of Indigenous culture, environmental stewardship, and the relationship between Coast Salish peoples and the return of salmon to these waters. The 2026 event expands into the newly rebuilt Waterfront Park spaces at Pier 58 and Pier 62, offering more room for vendors, canoe families, and community. Free and open to all.

Waterfront Writer in Residence

Friends of Waterfront Park launches a new Writer in Residence program with Owen Oliver (Quinault / Isleta Pueblo), whose work focuses on witnessing the Salish Sea through potlatch culture. The year-long residency (May 2026–May 2027) includes community writing workshops for Indigenous participants and a public program in 2027.

Community-Led Placemaking Across the Park

New this season, Friends of Waterfront Park introduces a series of **community-led placemaking**

activations developed in partnership with [community committees](#) and supported by Architects Without Borders and Uncommon Bridges. These temporary installations transform key social intersections along the park into spaces for reflection, interaction, and belonging—offering visitors opportunities for meaningful engagement beyond traditional programming.

Each project is shaped by the vision and lived experience of the communities it represents, with artists including Jackie Crane, Melvin Freeman, and E.T. Russian bringing these concepts to life through accessible, interactive design.

SPOTLIGHT AT WATERFRONT PARK — THURSDAYS, JULY 23 – SEPTEMBER 24

The Spotlight at Waterfront Park series returns for its sixth year of free Thursday evening performances, 6:00–8:00 pm, at Pier 58 and the Salish Steps amphitheater. The series highlights artists and cultural organizations from across Seattle’s vibrant creative community, offering a gateway to the diverse arts and culture scene of the region. All performances are free and open to the public; registration highly encouraged.

July 23 — Seattle Theatre Group: More Music @ The Moore, Pier 58

Kicking off the series: alumni from STG’s celebrated 25-year showcase, featuring indie-pop-rock outfit Aurora Ave (MM22) and classical Indian fusion artist Kaira Soin (MM24) on Sitar.

July 30 — Theatre Off Jackson, Salish Steps

An evening of theatre from TOJ’s companies, rooted in Seattle’s Chinatown International District and dedicated to a diverse, vital arts culture.

August 6 — Skylit Design presents Layali Al-Tarab, Pier 58

A live Arab classical music concert celebrating the traditions of tarab, in partnership with the MENA Heritage Foundation, produced by Seattle-based creative agency SKYLIT Design.

August 13 — Seattle Jazz Fellowship, Pier 58

Live jazz with the Seattle Jazz Fellowship House Band — Thomas Marriott (trumpet), D’Vonne Lewis (drums), Trevor Ford (bass), and Tim Kennedy (piano) — the acclaimed all-star quartet that leads the beloved Monday Night Jam in Pioneer Square.

August 20 — Seattle Qabila Project, Salish Steps

The Qabila Dance Company presents a celebration of Arabic folkdance from the SWANA region, inviting audiences to move, participate, and share in the joy and diversity of these traditions.

August 27 — 206 Zulu: 15th Annual Beat Masters Competition, Pier 58

The flagship hip-hop producers event from 206 Zulu, a nonprofit dedicated to the preservation and upliftment of Hip Hop culture, celebrates its 15th anniversary with head-to-head competition, producer showcases, and live performances.

September 3 — Daybreak Star Radio, Pier 58

An evening of musical, educational, and cultural programming reconnecting Indigenous, Native American, and First Nations people to their heritage. Indigenize the Airwaves.

September 10 — W.O.W. Women on the Waterfront, Salish Steps

Hosted by Teia (T.H.C.), this evening brings together powerhouse vocalists Tiffany Wilson, Jayza Duhon, and JusJada, spoken word artist Shakiah, and DeeJay HerShe in a celebration of Seattle’s women in music.

September 17 — La Quemada: Noche de Cultura featuring Aurelio Valdez, Salish Steps

A performance honoring Indigenous, Latinx, and Chicano culture from Seattle Chicano hip-hop artist and educator Aurelio Valdez, whose work is rooted in cultural heritage and deep community commitment.

September 24 — Northwest Folklife, Salish Steps

Closing the series: an evening of performances curated through Folklife's community partners, celebrating the evolving cultural traditions of the Pacific Northwest through their signature SuperFolk spirit.

ADDITIONAL EVENTS AND PROGRAMMING HIGHLIGHTS

Community Markets — Summer-long

Beyond the daily vendor rotation, Friends hosts a series of curated community markets throughout the summer. Free Flo Fit Melanin Summer (June 20, Pier 58) brings fitness, live performance, and BIPOC-owned businesses together on the waterfront. The 2026 WABA Korean Expo & Festival, in partnership with the Korean Consulate, offers three days of artisan vendors, food, and music at Pier 62 (August 14–16). Souk Seattle (August 23) embraces Arab culture through art, community, and charity. Each market is free and open to the public.

Seattle Aquarium: SEA You at the Waterfront — June through September, Pier 58 & Park Promenade

Friends partners with the Seattle Aquarium in bringing free, drop-in marine education pop-ups to the waterfront on selected dates throughout the summer. Aquarium educators visit Pier 58, the Park Promenade at Madison Street, and the Ocean Pavilion Rooftop, 11:30 am–3:30 pm.

Movement, Wellness & Play — Tuesdays & Wednesdays, Pier 62

Free and all-levels, the Movement, Wellness & Play series returns with Yoga with Mother Yoga (Tuesdays, 6:00–7:00 pm, July 21–September 29) and themed Zumba Master classes with We Move to Give (Wednesdays, 6:00–7:30 pm, July 22–September 30). Hoops on the Pier, in partnership with Rise Above, returns July 31 with a free youth basketball camp (ages 6–16) in the morning and open courts for all ages in the afternoon.

Excursion Tours: The Waterfront's Layered Histories

Two ongoing tour series invite participants to experience the waterfront as a living landscape.

Secrets of Seattle's Historic Shoreline with naturalist and author David B. Williams runs the first Tuesday of each month, July through November (10 am–12 pm). **Uncovering the History of Seattle's Central Waterfront** with HistoryLink historian Jennifer Ott — author of *Where the City Meets Sound* (2026) — offers a one-mile excursion from the Coast Salish beach that once welcomed canoes to the people and piers that shaped the modern shoreline. Jennifer's tours will occur on the fourth Thursday of the month from July 23 through October 10. Both tours are free; registration required.

Public Art: Currents of Connection

Opening May 9 at Pier 62, *Currents of Connection* is a new public art installation by Taylor Cameron (Snoqualmie) applied across a series of shipping containers. Drawing from Coast Salish design principles, the work uses pattern, line, and color to evoke salmon returning upstream, canoe paddles, and welcoming figures in regalia — honoring Coast Salish presence and inviting visitors into the waterfront with awareness and a sense of arrival. On view through the season and beyond.

Pier Party — Thursday, July 17, Pier 62 (21+)

Friends of Waterfront Park's annual summer fundraiser returns with a sunset disco on the pier. Come dressed in your best disco chic and get ready to dance the night away along the waterfront. On July 17, Pier 62 comes alive with live music, immersive art, and local food and drinks—bringing the community together for a night of connection and celebration in support of Waterfront Park. [Tickets](#) include entry, a drink during the welcome hour (6:30–8:00 p.m.), one additional drink token, heavy appetizers and desserts, and access to a photo booth and live entertainment.

Additional Community Events

The full season also includes the Seafair Summer Kickoff (June 1), the Seafair Torchlight Run & Parade (July 25), Seattle Fleet Week (July 21), the Seattle Chamber Music Society Concert Truck

at Salish Steps (June 28), a 3-on-3 Basketball Tournament in partnership with Rise Above (August 1–2), The Encanto Arts Festival (August 22) fills Pier 62 with salsa, cumbia, and mariachi; The Pinky Party queer-powered dance celebration (September 7), book sale pop-ups with Friends of the Seattle Public Library (May 24 & September 6), and three rotating community-led temporary art installations across the park promenade this summer.

The full 2026 programming season reflects years of intentional relationship-building and community investment—culminating in a cultural calendar as diverse, intergenerational, and multifaceted as Seattle itself. To explore the complete calendar of events and plan a visit, go to waterfrontparkseattle.org.

A SEASON BUILT WITH COMMUNITY

Guided by a [Cultural Master Plan](#) developed in deep partnership with artists, cultural organizations, and community leaders, the 2026 programming season reflects Friends' foundational commitment to a waterfront that belongs to all of Seattle. More than 80% of this season's programming has been developed in collaboration with Black, Indigenous, and People of Color communities.

That commitment extends to the waterfront's economic ecosystem. In 2026, 81.8% of vendors in Friends' regular vending programs are BIPOC-owned; 59% are woman-owned; and 20.5% are LGBTQ+-owned. Beginning May 20, more than two dozen local food trucks rotate through Pier 58 Plaza daily—including Wood Shop BBQ, Big Boy Filipino, Heart in Seoul, Thai-U-Up, Zamaranos – Tacos El Tajin, Spice On Curve, and Animated Cafe, among many others. Snack vendors, artisan umbrella vendors offering henna, original art, and handcrafted goods, and permanent kiosks staffed by makers like Shelley Hardwick Art, Swift Feather Crafts, and Frost & Ember keep the promenade lively from open to close, every day of the season.

Accessibility is a core design principle of the season. All signature events offer courtesy wheelchairs and sensory kits on-site. Major events—including the Waterfront Block Party, Indigiqueer Festival, and Salmon Homecoming—additionally provide ASL interpreters on stage, closed captioning via QR code, assisted listening devices, sensory tents, nursing tents, reserved priority seating, and wheelchair charging stations. Accommodation inquiries for any event can be directed to accessibility@waterfrontparkseattle.org.

WATERFRONT PARK AS A SEATTLE FAN CELEBRATION ZONE FOR FIFA WORLD CUP 2026™

This summer, Waterfront Park joins Seattle's distributed network of free fan celebration locations—a partnership announced in February alongside the City of Seattle, Seattle Center, SeattleFWC26 Local Organizing Committee, and additional civic partners. As part of the city's [Unity Loop](#) and fan celebration zone, Waterfront Park will host activities and programs during the tournament, which runs from June 11 through July 6.

Friends of Waterfront Park is also partnering with Seattle Sounders FC, Seattle Reign FC and RAVE Foundation to bring public viewing experiences to Waterfront Park during the FIFA World Cup 2026™, featuring programming from both organizations. **Full details regarding all activations at Waterfront Park during the World Cup weeks will be announced jointly at a later date.**

“Waterfront Park was created to be Seattle's place to gather—to celebrate moments big and small,” said Joy Shigaki, President & CEO of Friends of Waterfront Park. “The FIFA World Cup is a global celebration and we're proud to help cement Waterfront Park as one of our city's defining civic spaces. Through free, public programming and activations across the 20 acres, fans can come together to experience the energy of the game and get a true taste of Seattle's rich culture and natural beauty along our shoreline.”

All fan celebration sites are accessible via public transportation along the Unity Loop, including Sound Transit Link Light Rail, King County Metro, the Seattle Monorail, ferries, water taxis, and walking. World Cup fan programming at Waterfront Park will be free and open to the public; full details coming soon at <https://waterfrontparkseattle.org/world-cup/>.

###

ABOUT WATERFRONT PARK

Waterfront Park is a transformative civic space in Seattle, representing nearly two decades of community vision and innovation. Situated along the city's iconic shoreline, the 20-acre park reimagines the area once occupied by the Alaskan Way Viaduct, creating green spaces and cultural hubs that reconnect people with the water, mountains, and each other. Waterfront Park stretches from Belltown to Pioneer Square, serving as a dynamic cultural anchor for downtown Seattle.

Waterfront Park is an asset owned by the City of Seattle and stewarded through a unique public-private partnership. Friends of Waterfront Park is a non-profit that resources and manages the Park experience, programming, and community partnerships; Seattle Center operates and maintains the Park's physical spaces and leads public safety efforts. Together, this partnership ensures that Waterfront Park remains vibrant, well cared for, and welcoming to all. Visit waterfrontparkseattle.org.

ABOUT FRIENDS OF WATERFRONT PARK

Friends of Waterfront Park is the nonprofit entrusted to bring Seattle's 20-acre Waterfront Park to life—now and for generations to come. Founded in 2012, Friends manages the Park experience year-round: stewarding public spaces; curating hundreds of free programs and cultural activations; advancing a welcoming, safe environment; and building deep community partnerships that reflect Seattle's diversity and creativity.

Guided by our Cultural Master Plan—developed with input from more than 140 artists, organizers, and community leaders—Friends ensures programming that fosters connection, celebrates heritage, and expands belonging along the shoreline. In September 2025, Friends produced the Grand Opening Celebration, welcoming more than 50,000 visitors to experience the waterfront's new era as a vibrant civic space. For press inquiries, contact Shiva Shafii: shiva@waterfrontparkseattle.org.