



Sprinavasa Brown and Kelliane Richardson, co-founders of Camp ELSO

## Camp ELSO Gives BIPOC Students A Month of Science Learning in Nature

The STEAMED approach to environmental education combines sciences and art for creative problem-solving.

By *Saundra Sorenson*  
Of *The Skanner News*

As the summer is winding down, a new cohort of BIPOC students will return to the classroom with a greater understanding of the natural world around them – and of their own individual value to it.

Camp ELSO – Experience Life Science Outdoors – started when two college students found each other in a biology class where only three Black individuals were in attendance.

“I found one other girl that I was comfortable studying with, and her name was Sprinavasa Brown,” ELSO cofounder Kelliane Richardson said. “We created ELSO so that there would not only be three Black students in a biology class in college.”

Noting that Black students are under-represented in the fields of science, technology, engineering and math – or “STEM” – the two set out to apply their own scientific backgrounds to

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# SEATTLE INKED



PHOTO BY SUSAN FRIED

Seattle Tattoo artist Mouse works on a customer during the annual Seattle Tattoo Expo on the weekend of August 16-18 at the Seattle Center Exhibition Hall. This year's event featured over 250 top-tier tattoo artists, captivating burlesque performances, tattoo contests, DJ sets, and the return of BurlesKaraoke.

## Tony Hopson Retires As CEO Of SEI as Alum Trent Aldridge Steps Up

SEI hopes to soon serve all Black Oregonians, even beyond the Portland Metro area.

By *Saundra Sorenson*  
Of *The Skanner News*

Trent Aldridge jokes that Self Enhancement, Inc. “started with telling boys to put on deodorant at basketball practice.”

In the late eighties, Aldridge was one of those boys at the week-long summer basketball camp SEI president Tony Hopson founded.

“I was just blown away by the fact that it was just all of these Black males and it was not just about the hoop,” Aldridge told *The Skanner*, “it was about what I can do with my life moving forward, and then I had examples of it: The coaches were doing incredible things, and it was just a cool space to be in.”

Aldridge has just com-

pleted his first full month as SEI's new CEO, after mentorship from founder Tony Hopson and after a nationwide search. Despite having been along for the ride as an employee of SEI since 2000, Aldridge says he still marvels at what the organization is able to accomplish.

“There's just an awful lot going on and a lot of folks that are pushing the envelope on opportunities for Black folks to come back home and thrive, as opposed to just existing,” Hopson told *The Skanner*.

### Playing To Strengths

Hopson is stepping aside as CEO, but he's not retiring from the work.

“I've been trying to make this move for several years,” Hopson said of stepping down as CEO. “This happened because I feel like we have a very strong executive team, members who have been in the agency for a long time. Trent has been a part of our SEI world for twenty-something years, he knows the history, and he's young, with energy, and ready to move it to the next level. After 40 years, a lot of the people I dealt with have

come and gone, and I'm not a technology kind of guy, so the timing was good – but having the right people in place, I think, is the most important thing for me to be comfortable in making that move.”

Hopson established SEI in 1981, hoping to offer local Black youths a positive experience in a city he felt was neglecting them. Even with these storied, relatively humble beginnings, Hopson's talent for coalition-building was obvious from the beginning: Nike signed on as SEI's first corporate sponsor that first year, and Hopson confirmed the company has provided in-kind donations of sportswear and shoes, as well as cash donations, to SEI every year since. Hopson now sits on the board of the 1803 Fund, a \$400 million pledge from Phil and Penny Knight to rebuild the Albina neighborhood. The fund was established last year, and Hopson says he believes it the largest private gift to the African American community in U.S. history.

In 1988, the same year Aldridge participated in SEI's basketball camp, the



Tony Hopson



Trent Aldridge

city had its first gang-related drive-by shooting. Both the shooter and the victim were teens involved with SEI, and Hopson had particular insight into their dynamics. It didn't seem to be a personal vendetta, he said; Los Angeles-based rival gangs the Bloods and the Crips had just that year established a presence in Portland, and the shooting seemed to be more about affiliation.

The city saw the potential of Hopson's work and sup-

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