

POINT REYES NATIONAL SEASHORE ASSOCIATION

*Cuentos en la Costa*

*Voices at the Seashore*

# Latino Heritage Internship Program



BY ZOE DUERKSEN-SALM

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Alicia Kelley has lived just about everywhere—all over South America to Canada to a brief stint in Arkansas—but some of her fondest memories are in the 10 years of her life spent in Brazil. She recounts family hikes, legends of Brazil often set in the Amazon Rainforest, school emphasis on environmental protection, and a specific third grade poster presentation on which she'd proudly drawn a monkey. But even with a strong love and admiration for the environment, back then she'd never imagined herself building a career out of it.

Fast forward a couple decades, and Alicia now holds the 2021 Latino Heritage Internship Program (LHIP) position at Point Reyes National Seashore, and is strongly considering a future in parks or an aligned place of work.



## Alicia Kelley

2021 LHIP Intern

*“It’s important to not only do work that is good for the planet, but to reach out to certain groups that have historically lacked access and opportunity. LHIP has given me clarity on how I can incorporate my passion for the environment and targeted outreach in my future plans.”*

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Ranger Carlo Arreglo

## LHIP's Mission

Created by the National Park Service (NPS) in partnership with Environment for the Americas, LHIP provides nationwide national park internship opportunities to Latinx-identifying young adults. The program offers a variety of internship types, “A wide range of jobs within the NPS can be internship opportunities,” Alicia explains, “Some interns are doing photography, others are out on trails, and many are doing conservation science work.” The ultimate goal of LHIP is to not only heighten the involvement of the young Latinx community in conservation and outreach at national parks through internships, but to expand NPS outreach into Latinx communities nationally to carve a space for everyone in every park.



**Kevin García López**  
2019 LHIP Intern

*“LHIP is an incredible program—from personal and professional growth to an introduction to the amazing people that work for the NPS—and LHIP alumni are living proof of its success.”*

## The History of LHIP at the Seashore

LHIP interns have been working with the NPS division of Interpretation and Resource Education at Point Reyes since 2018 when Ranger Carlo Arreglo brought on an LHIP intern in his first year at the Seashore. “In our department, sometimes it’s hard to see the products of our work because we don’t build trails or buildings, but I like to think that we help the process of building community and people,” said Carlo, “So when I was fortunate enough to get a permanent position at Point Reyes, I knew that LHIP was something I wanted to bring to the park.”

Carlo’s first experience with LHIP began before his days at the Seashore, when he brought on and supervised San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park’s first LHIP intern Eduardo. After seeing him successfully go on to become a seasonal park guide, Carlo was convinced of the program’s potential, and has continued to support LHIP interns at Point Reyes for the last four years. This year, Carlo has taken on a new position as Acting Operations Supervisor, and as such, has taken a secondary supervisory role with LHIP, so fellow Ranger Anela Kopshever has stepped in to guide Alicia through her internship.

As a Filipino American, the NPS goals of diversifying park staff and visitors is “near and dear” to Carlo’s heart. He notes this as a driving reason that he has made sure to apply for LHIP funding year after year. “It’s important to achieve our goals as agencies and park partners, to address issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion. *For me that starts with people, and trying to get people in parks.*”

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## The LHIP Impact

Programs like LHIP open pathways to park enjoyment and employment to BIPOC communities that have historically been excluded and underrepresented in national parks. By providing interns with role models from their own communities, LHIP and aligned programs encourage young people to consider career paths in which they never felt welcomed.

A recent graduate from a predominantly white university, Alícia expressed her own apprehensions in feeling somewhat unwelcome due to a lack of representation by people like her. “I don’t think I would have applied to a NPS job if it hadn’t been through a program that was specifically meant for the Latinx community,” Alícia remarked, “In general, the sciences are dominated by non-diverse members, so having these programs are essential in showing that our community is welcome in national parks.”

Brandon Barragan, the first LHIP intern supervised by Carlo at Point Reyes in 2018, also stressed the importance of providing interns with role models from their own communities as a reason he’s become a hands-on LHIP alum. Like Alícia, Brandon never imagined himself in the environmental field. Having started mowing lawns by age seven, Brandon expected he’d continue on into a career in yard work or construction. However, a moment when Barragan was eight, in which he overheard East Bay Park employees conversing in Spanish, made him realize there might be a place for him in the field. Today, Barragan works as the Outreach Manager at Point Reyes National Seashore Association (PRNSA).

“I’m really proud and happy that the Point Reyes LHIP interns are going into careers in the NPS and sister organizations,” Carlo beamed, referring to Brandon and the 2019 and 2020 LHIP interns he supervised. Kevin García López, 2019 alum, moved forward from LHIP to the Stanislaus National Forest, where he is currently surveying spotted owls. And Ruby Gonzales, 2020 alum, went on to work for a sister agency, the U.S. Forest Service. “For me,” Carlo continued, “the most tangible outcome is positioning interns for future work in public lands, conservation, and education.”



Ranger Anela Kopshever



**Brandon Barragan**  
2018 LHIP Intern

*“I’m so thankful that LHIP gave me the opportunity to get my foot through the door and be something more than what I thought I could be. Now I have the opportunity to help people like me do something similar, and be part of something bigger than themselves.”*

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**Ruby Gonzalez**  
2020 LHIP Intern

*“Imposter syndrome is the feeling that you aren’t where you’re supposed to be, you doubt your accomplishments and fear being exposed as a “fraud.” Being a 1st generation Latina this is something I struggle with. As interns sometimes we are overlooked and overworked but that is not the case here at Point Reyes National Seashore.”*

## Alicia’s LHIP Successes

Back at the Bear Valley Visitor Center, Alicia is tackling issues of diversity and accessibility head on through in-person and digital communications. While she spends most of her days at the front desk helping visitors or out on trails chatting with hikers, her favorite part of the job, and what she finds most impactful, is targeted outreach to the Latinx community. “The way outreach is normally curated, means that the Latinx community might not feel that these places are meant for them,” Alicia remarks in reference to English-forward communications and the history of low diversity in the NPS, “It is crucial that we create spaces and opportunities for specific communities, so they have the chance to experience our park. It’s not about giving them more, it’s about evening the playing field.”

This year for Latino Conservation week, Alicia planned a Lighthouse tour and talk specifically for the local Bay Area Latinx community. Joined by supervisor Anela and LHIP alum Brandon, Alicia led a hike down the lighthouse steps. As she explains the rich history of the lighthouse, including that of the Coast Miwok People on whose land the lighthouse sits, Alicia hoped to encourage a love and connection between her audience and the Seashore that could bring them back to visit time and time again.

## The Future of LHIP at the Seashore

As Alicia enters the final month of her summer internship, she reminisces on the ways she’s grown from her internship and how she’s impacted Point Reyes. Next year, the 2022 intern, while under the guidance of Carlo and Anela, can also expect to have Alicia and Brandon as mentors. The work by the four of them, plus 2019 and 2020 LHIP interns Kevin and Ruby, and all local and national LHIP affiliates, has just begun to repair a history of exclusion that has kept the voices of the Latinx and other BIPOC communities from our Seashore. We at PRNSA are committed to supporting diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts through outreach, funding, and action, and we urge the greater Point Reyes community, regardless of race or gender, to heighten these voices as well.

“I would hope that as the field gets more diverse, and Latinx representation grows, that things will change in the future,” Alicia reflected, “And I think that’s what LHIP is all about.”